

ROLL OF THUNDER HEAR MY CRY: AN ANALYSIS OF THE UNYIELDING CHAINS RACISM ON AFRICAN-AMERICANS IN THE 20TH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

One of the dynamics that occurred in 20th-century America involves the issue of African-American racism. The purpose of the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution is to abolish slavery and end actions that lead to injustice experienced by African-American. In reality, post-slavery life is characterized by hardship despite the abolition of slavery. Through *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry* novel, it is important to analyze the roots of persistent racism toward African-Americans. In this paper, the researcher employs the qualitative method and utilizes basic tenets of Critical Race Theory by Delgado & Stefancic. The research shows, racism is not just individual acts, but also something pervasive and enduring in the social order that affects the daily lives and opportunities African-Americans. Racism is rooted in everyday life, social constructs, and voice of color that are excluded from Black history over mainstream narratives. *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry* shows that understanding racism is crucial to confronting it. The Black community's efforts to challenge biased stories are vital for equality and justice.

Keywords: African-American, Critical Race Theory, Racism, The Dynamic of the 20th

ABSTRAK

Salah satu dinamika yang terjadi di Amerika Serikat pada abad ke-20 adalah persoalan rasisme terhadap warga Afrika-Amerika. Amandemen ke-13 Konstitusi Amerika Serikat dibuat untuk menghapus perbudakan dan menghentikan berbagai tindakan yang menimbulkan ketidakadilan terhadap masyarakat Afrika-Amerika. Namun dalam kenyataannya, kehidupan setelah penghapusan perbudakan tetap dipenuhi kesulitan. Melalui novel *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, penting untuk menelusuri akar rasisme yang terus bertahan terhadap warga kulit hitam. Dalam penelitian ini, peneliti menggunakan metode kualitatif dan menerapkan prinsip dasar Teori Ras Kritis dari Delgado dan Stefancic. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa rasisme bukan hanya tindakan individual, tetapi juga sesuatu yang meluas dan mengakar dalam tatanan sosial, memengaruhi kehidupan sehari-hari dan peluang warga Afrika-Amerika. Rasisme tertanam dalam realitas sosial, konstruksi masyarakat, dan suara komunitas kulit berwarna yang sering dikesampingkan dalam narasi sejarah arus utama. *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* menunjukkan bahwa pemahaman soal rasisme sangat penting agar bisa melawannya. Upaya

komunitas kulit hitam dalam menentang narasi yang bias sangat penting demi keadilan dan kesetaraan.

Kata Kunci: Afrika-Amerika, Critical Race Theory, Dinamika Abad 20, Rasisme

A. INTRODUCTION

The 20th century created various dynamics in the development of the social and political life of American society. In fact, the 20th century is often interpreted as "the American century". This is because many important events that occurred influenced the behavior and way of thinking of the Americans, which began in the era of the First World War. Several dynamic forms of the American life have become turning point in the redefining of American culture. First, the drastic increase in the American economy compared to other European countries has affected America's lifestyle. Michon (2022) explains that World War 1 had an impact on America's prosperity as a world economic power. This was due to the increasing demand for exports of metal, machinery, and various armaments from various European countries so that at that time it became an arena for proving America's strength as a country capable of competing with the 'old countries'.

Apart from that, various technological innovation achievements have significantly resurrected the American economy, such as the development of the automobile industry in America (Buchanan, 2022). The emergence of the car industry brought changes to the lifestyle of American people who are increasingly driving to have private cars and automatically increased the production of the car industry. Besides that, car technology also improves the economy of American society because it can connect people from rural areas to cities to get various kinds of jobs.

Second, the dynamics that occurred in the 20th-century America also involved the issue of African-American racism. The injustice faced by the African nation is still one of the most important issues in understanding 'the definition of multiculturalism' which they are proud of in describing the idea of American exceptionalism. As one of the minority groups in America, Africans are still experiencing various acts of racism even though the 13th Amendment abolished the entire system of slavery in America in 1865. This is motivated by the idea of society in the South to maintain the supremacy of the white race at any cost. An example of this was the enactment of the Jim Crow laws in South America (1877-1965), known as "separation but equal" facilities for blacks and whites, affecting every aspect of Southern life at that time. As explained by Delgado & Stefancic (2017), Jim Crow aimed at preserving white supremacy after the end of slavery by applying measures, such as antiloitering laws, poll taxes, sundown provisions, and other regulations (p. 177).

Moreover, during the Great Depression that hit the American economy in the 1930s, African Americans had two more difficult conditions than white people. On the one hand, facing the economic collapse and at the same time also facing racism from the South which eventually led to the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s to 1960s. Therefore, this paper will focus on analyzing more deeply the condition of racism faced by African society in the 20th century which is reflected in the novel *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (1976).

Through the study of literature, one can gain a deeper understanding of the

cultural and societal aspects of a region. Even though the story in a novel is built through fictional characters to attract readers, these characters portray real-life issues. Adi (2021) underscores this argument, highlighting that in American Studies, literacy studies become one of the windows to understanding and interpreting the culture and situation of American society during specific period, particularly in relation to minority issues (p. 14).

Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry by Mildred D. Taylor was written in 1976. This novel portrays how African Americans coped with their struggle during the Great Depression era of the early 1930s. This novel tells the story of the lives of African Americans in Mississippi where even though slavery has ended, they still face injustice in their daily lives. Therefore, they still have to fight against racial injustice which is depicted through the characters of the Logan family from the perspective of Cassie, Logan's daughter. Taylor describes how black Americans cope with their racism struggle on a daily basis, such as how they experience negative attitudes from white Americans in so many ways for maintaining their farmland. Although, they have been freed from slavery and are now free people, Taylor leads readers to understand that black people are still trapped in continuous racism. Along the Logan family, Taylor shows their courage in fighting systematic racism, which is mostly hard to find in written narratives by white people. Therefore, based on the explanation above, this paper is interested in analyzing the root of the unyielding chains of racism toward African in the 20th century, which is reflected in the novel *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry*.

Studies concerning African-American racism theme have been conducted in several ways. The first previous studies can be seen in an article entitled *Hate at First Sight: Evidence of Consumer Discrimination Against African-Americans in the US* by Morgane Laouenan (2017). The article focuses on analyzing consumer discrimination. She states that discrimination affects African American lives. Racial prejudice results in reduced employment opportunities and employment contracts for African Americans when entering the U.S. labor market. Discriminatory practices also have an impact on the disadvantage of African Americans in expanding access to the service sectors.

The second previous study was conducted by Maria Lydevik (2014) entitled *Racism Through a Child's Eyes: A Postcolonial and Didactic Analysis of The Bluest Eye and To Kill a Mockingbird*. The article gives an insightful perspective knowledge on the negative effects of racism when experienced by children. Pecola's character as a black child in the novel *The Bluest Eye* assumes that she is ugly and unattractive compared to her white friends and she desires blue eyes like those of the white community. This thinking is caused by the beauty standard, where whiteness is associated with beauty, consequently stigmatizing blackness.

The last previous study is by *Policework in a Racist Context: A Qualitative Study of Retired African American Police Officers* by Tangela C. Dockery-Sawyer (2022). The article states the existence of racial injustice within the police force, where police officers find it challenging to secure job promotions. Moreover, black police officers are concerned about the risk of being killed by their peers when off duty. African-American officers are also more inclined to perceive the unfair treatment experienced by the black community and view demonstrations from a humanistic perspective, as opposed to white police officers who perceive

demonstrations with bias against the police.

Based on several articles that have been mentioned above, existing studies, such as those by Laouenan (2017), Lydevik (2014), and Dockery Sawyer (2022), have explored various forms of racism, including discrimination in the labor market, child perceptions of racial injustice, and the challenges faced by African-American police officers. These studies contribute valuable insights into the impacts of racism on African Americans. However, a gap remains in understanding why African-Americans continue to face systematic racism despite legal advancements like the 13th Amendment. Most previous research has focused on the effects of racism rather than investigating the underlying causes of its persistence in post-slavery America. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the roots of the unyielding chains of racism on African-American through *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry* novel. By examining this literary work, the study seeks to highlight the persistent chains of racial injustice and contribute new perspectives on how historical and social factors sustain racial inequality in America.

B. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

During analysis, this paper employs Critical Race Theory (CRT) by Delgado and Stefancic to examine that racism still occurs even though slavery has been abolished. Delgado & Stefancic state that racism is “*any program or practice of discrimination, segregation, persecution, or mistreatment based on membership in a race or ethnic group*” (p.183). Moreover, they explain that Critical Race Theory has six basic tenets for analyzing the aim of this paper (pp. 8-11).

a. Racism is ordinary, not aberrational

The idea of this basic tenet draws attention to the persistent problem of racism in contemporary culture. Many white Americans frequently associate racism with more overt and obvious manifestations, such as assaults on people of color that are physical or verbal, the activities of white supremacist organizations, or the purposeful exclusion of racial minorities from places of public accommodation, restaurants, and social gatherings. However, it is important to understand that everyday racism is the most emotionally draining and stress-inducing. These common racist actions are the rule rather than the exception. For instance, when African Americans visit facilities, they may frequently come under the attention of white store employees or security staff, who may even follow them. Minority members frequently experience a lack of common respect from their white counterparts, including being ignored, seeing grimaces or eye rolls, or overhearing sarcastic remarks directed at them in everyday situations like standing in line at the grocery store, paying for gas, or asking for help at the bank.

b. Interest Convergence

Delgado and Stefancic explain that interest convergence refers to changes towards racial equality for minority communities (Black) only occurs when the interests of the dominant society (White) politically or economically align with those of the oppressed racial groups. Discrimination continues when dominant interests do not align with the Black community's interests for equality, justice, and the elimination of discrimination. Delgado illustrates this through Derrick Bell's proposal “civil rights advances for blacks always seemed to coincide with changing economic conditions and the self- interest of elite whites. Sympathy, mercy, and evolving standards of social decency and conscience amounted to little, if anything” (p.22,

2017) that the victory of the black community in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education*, which also overlaps with the interests of white elites in America. The Supreme Court's decision that racial segregation in public schools is unconstitutional is more driven by white people's self-interest than the intent to help blacks because the United States is portrayed as a nation upholding democracy and racial equality during the Cold War. Interest convergence shows that social and legal changes usually happen not just because of justice but also because of politics, economics, or strategies that help the dominant group.

c. Social Construction.

According to this term, race is an outcome of white society's non-objective, non-scientific thinking. The term "race" refers to a made-up, constructed category, such as the classification of white people as superior and black people as inferior, and connected with negative attributes. The prevailing culture in America asserts that "race" is a categorical category. The majority of white Americans hold the belief that the black race is to some extent inferior and that physical differences are tied to a cultural hierarchy based on biology. They believe that humans are divided into different races, with some races—especially the white race—being superior to others.

d. Differential Racialization and its Consequences.

Differential racialization is the phenomenon where the dominant society assigns varying racial characteristics to different minority groups at different points in time, based on the changing needs of that society. In this case, white plantation owners thought it was convenient to portray Africans as simple-minded people who needed white supervision to keep them from returning to their "heathen" habits and as content to serve white people during the years leading up to the Civil War. This false notion was used by plantation owners to justify the enslavement of Africans. Later, however, especially when African Americans were seen as rivals with white people for jobs, they were portrayed as menacing, violent, and oddly, lazy.

e. Intersectionality and Anti-Essentialism.

Individual identities are far from being determined by race alone. They are intricate and multifaceted, influenced by a convergence of factors including class, gender, sexual orientation, political beliefs, and personal life experiences. Delgado and Stefancic emphasize that each person's identity is a complex interplay of potentially conflicting and overlapping identities, loyalties, and affiliations. For instance, one person may identify as a black, underemployed, working-class male, while another may identify as a Mexican-American lesbian. These individuals frequently encounter various forms of oppression stemming from multiple sources, making it challenging to pinpoint the exact cause of discrimination in any given situation.

f. Voice of Color.

Writers and thinkers from minority backgrounds often possess a unique perspective on race and racism that can be more insightful than that of their white counterparts. This heightened understanding is a result of their firsthand experiences with racism. Essentially, the ability to effectively address issues of race and racism, often referred to as the "voice of color," is shaped by social experiences rather than biological factors.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

This research utilizes a qualitative method. In order to give the topic being

examined a meaning that can be understood, qualitative research places an emphasis on descriptive analysis through various data gathering methods, including text and other types of data. Additionally, the qualitative method is useful for a social science study because it allows for a deeper comprehension of societal issues. Qualitative research is commonly recognized and well-known in the social sciences. Creswell (2016, pp. 290-319) highlights the acceptance and prominence of qualitative research in the social sciences, most qualitative researchers collect data through analyzing documents, observing behaviour, or conducting interviews. The primary objective of qualitative research is to comprehend specific social situations, events, roles, groups, or interactions.

This study focuses on data collection of *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry* novel. Following the outlined method of collecting the data, the primary data of the study is chosen from the elements in the text of the novel itself, which includes words, dialogues, and narratives. The first step in gathering data involves reading the novel thoroughly to identify relevant passages. Second, the researcher takes notes, paying particular attention to sections of text that include words, phrases, sentences, or clauses significant to the research. Third, the researcher organizes all the gathered data into categorized folders based on its relevance to the research topic. This process ensures the selection of appropriate data for analysis. Moreover, this research also uses secondary data from academic articles, books, online sources, and other references. The data are organized by topic to deepen understanding.

To interpret the collected data, an appropriate method of analysis is applied. The chosen data is analysed through connection, interpretation, and validation with the use of CRT theory. First, the researcher organizes the selected data for analysis by grouping it into categories related to the research theme. Second, the researcher carefully reads and examines all the data to gain a general understanding and connect it to the research question. Finally, the researcher codes the data by sorting the dialogues into categories based on CRT theory and adding comments to reflect the findings for each category.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this part, the issues of racism faced by African-Americans reflected in *Roll of Thunder* novel can be analysed using Critical Race Theory. The essence of CRT is to uncover that racism is not merely a series of individual acts but a pervasive and enduring feature of the social fabric that affects African-Americans' daily lives and opportunities. It can be manifested in refined ways, such as rejecting a person of color in employment qualification, treating less fairly in dealing with policies or in the store, different reactions when applying for a loan, lower quality in education facilities, and other acts. Indeed, the slavery system was abolished in 1865, but racial issues still haunt African-Americans, especially during the reconstruction and the Great Depression era. This paper will cover three out of six basic tenets in order to grasp the root of racism based on the novel.

a. Racism is ordinary, not aberrational

Delgado & Stefancic (2017) states that this term is a day-to-day experience for African-American in the United States. These forms of racism are the kinds that happen every day and even become 'the rule', not the exception (p. 8). In the case of this story, Logan's children (Casey, Stacey, Christopher-John, and Little Man) got unappropriated behavior every time they walk to school from a school bus filled

with mocking children by spraying the children with scarlet haze. This can be seen through Casey's narration:

...but not before the bus had sped past enveloping him in a scarlet haze while laughing white face pressed against the bus windows.

"How's come they didn't even stop for us?"

"Cause they like to see us run and it ain't our bus," Stacey said.

"Well, where's our bus?" demanded Little Man.

"We ain't got one." (Taylor, 1976, p.9).

"If we had been faced only with the prospect of the rain soaking through our clothing each morning and evening...we also had to worry about the Jefferson Davis school bus zooming from behind and splashing us with the murky waters of the road. Knowing that the bus driver liked to entertain his passengers by sending us slipping along the road...we consequently found ourselves comical objects to cruel eyes that gave no thought to our misery" (Taylor, 1976, p.32).

Those quotations indicate that everyday racism has become the 'rule' in most of the white American society in terms of black students through this story since they acknowledge blacks are not equal to whites. They mock the physique of Logan's children with the fact that black children have to walk without a school bus which is a 'rule' they have to face every day. Blacks were neglected with different treatment which was a non-verbal rule at the time and some children even had to walk long distances and dropped out of school because of the long distance.

This kind of everyday racism occurs since white Americans assume that people of color are inferior, different from others, and didn't acknowledge them as a free human. Even it is proven when the bus driver as an adult man mocked and entertained white kids by *sending black kids slipping along the road* and giving them cruel looks *that gave no thought to their misery* since white Americans view blacks as 'other'. It means that racism is normalized and accepted in society.

The separation of public transportation between African Americans and white Americans, as depicted in the novel excerpt, highlights the racial injustices faced by African society in the 20th century. Various sources provide clear evidence of this inequality, showing that colored passengers were segregated from white passengers on trains and other public transportation to reinforce to the "separate but equal" doctrine. This is evident from the quotations in the following articles:

...(in Mississippi) unlawful for any freedman, Negro, or mulatto to ride in any first-class passenger cars used by white persons. Penalty: Misdemeanor punished by a fine between \$50 to \$500; and imprisonment in county jail until fine and costs of prosecution are paid. Equal but separate accommodations to be provided for white and colored passengers. Penalty: Misdemeanor for railroad companies failing to comply, with a fine up to \$500. Conductors who failed to enforce the law could be fined from \$25 to \$50 for each offense. (The Editor of Americans All, 2024).

"(In Alabama) All passenger stations in this state operated by any motor transportation company shall have separate waiting rooms or space and separate ticket windows for the white and colored races." (National Park Service U.S, 2018)

Established from the quotations above, this refers to the '*racism is ordinary, not*

aberrational' that become a rule to the whole of South society at that time. These quotes also illustrate that the roots of racism are deeply embedded in daily life, making them difficult to eradicate. Apart from that, it is not only cases of separation of public facilities that are experienced by African Americans, but they also experience separation of schools. As in the case of Lloyd L. Gaines which is one of the important cases in the African American civil rights movement.

In 1938, Gaines sued the University of Missouri for refusing to accept him in Law school on the grounds of his skin color. In short, Gaines took the case to the Supreme Court and won his case using the 14th Amendment to the American Constitution where the state guarantees equal legal protection to American citizens and citizenship rights regardless of race (Littlejohn, 2017, pp. 572-573). Therefore, the treatment of racism has become normal behaviour in the daily life of South American society through the separation of various public facilities that took place before the emergence of the African American Civil Rights movement. American society that claims to be a nation that values individual freedom has double standards when faced with issues of racism or segregation against African-Americans. As previously learned, the first European immigrants were British colonists who wanted freedom of religion and they believed that the Catholic church could be purified of various corruptions and religious dictatorships. They were known as the Puritans. As quoted from *Outline of US History* (2010).

"Most European emigrants left their homelands to escape political oppression, to seek the freedom to practice their religion, or to find opportunities denied them at home" (Hamby, 2010, p.11).

It indicates the settlers' first glimpse of the new world has the same goal, to get a better life and to get the opportunity that they cannot pursue in their origin place. The Puritans are the group who pioneered the formation of democratic values in America because they are heading to a new world with the aim of getting freedom in living life compared to Britain which underwent the feudal system and absolute monarchy at that time. Over time, their values such as working hard and practicing religious teachings shaped American civilization. Therefore, the Puritans are not only concerned with religion, but also with the life of democracy and freedom of life. In reality, the idea of freedom only works in the interests of white America.

It can be said, the enduring chains of racism experienced by African-Americans are deeply rooted in the concept that racism is ordinary, not aberrational. It can be seen in "Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry," everyday racism manifests through consistent, normalized acts of discrimination and humiliation, such as persecution on a daily basis of the Logan children. This type of racism is a regular part of society and institutions, making it a common aspect of African-American life. The systematic segregation in public transportation and other facilities, imposed under the guise of "separate but equal," further underscores the entrenchment of racial inequality. The daily experiences of African-Americans, from school segregation to discriminatory laws, reveal how deeply ingrained and normalized racism was in 20th-century American society. This makes it challenging to eliminate such deep-seated racial biases, which still significantly impact African-Americans today.

In short, these quotes from the novel show that racism is deeply rooted in everyday life, making it hard to eliminate. During the 20th century, African-

Americans faced both economic hardships and constant racial discrimination, worsening their situation. This combination made their fight for equality and justice even more challenging. The ongoing and normalized racism created systemic barriers everywhere, both socially and institutionally. The novel highlights the persistent and pervasive nature of racism, emphasizing the need for society to address this significant issue.

b. Social Construction

Social construction in Critical Race Theory is races are not based on objective, inherent, or fixed biological or genetic differences. Instead, they are categories created and manipulated by society as needed. While people with common origins might share certain physical traits like skin color and hair texture, these traits are minimal compared to what we all have in common. They have little to do with higher-order human qualities such as personality, intelligence, and morality. Society often ignores these scientific facts, creating and assigning races with false permanent characteristics, which is a key concern of critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p.9). Based on this point of view, some white Americans believe in the inferiority of the black race. Hence, Taylor points out the issue of racism in school segregation which has been structured in such a way as to normalize the differences in facilitating white and black schools.

Sitting so close to the desk, I could see that the covers of the books, a motley red, were badly worn and that the gray edges of the pages had been marred by pencils, crayons, and ink. My anticipation at having my own book ebbed to a sinking disappointment...As Little Man said "...may I have another book please, ma'am, that one's dirty" (Taylor, 1976, pp.15-16).

These quotations identify the gift of 'a new book' from an otherwise dirty and outdated white schools to black schools. The books are transferred ownership of the many white student generations until they are in poor condition. It can be seen through the inside cover was a chart which written the condition of book was new on the date of issuance on September 1922 and the race of the student is white.

PROPERTY OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION Spokane County, Mississippi September, 1922			
CHRONOLOGICAL ISSUANCE	DATE OF ISSUANCE	CONDITION OF BOOK	RACE OF STUDENT
1	September 1922	New	White
2	September 1923	Excellent	White
3	September 1924	Excellent	White
4	September 1925	Very Good	White
5	September 1926	Good	White
6	September 1927	Good	White
7	September 1928	Average	White
8	September 1929	Average	White
9	September 1930	Average	White
10	September 1931	Poor	White
11	September 1932	Poor	White
12	September 1933	Very Poor	nigra
13			
14			
15			

Picture 1. Chart of book condition (Taylor, 1976, p. 16)

From picture 1, it can be seen in the last line that the date of last reserved to Cassie's school on September 1933, **the condition of the book is very poor**, and **written 'nigra'** as a race of book student belongs. Obviously, they didn't want the

book since they felt humiliated. As they state *"See, Miz Crocker, see what it says. They give us these books when they didn't want 'em no more"* (p.18) proving that racism is constructed based on biological factors of the race where the white race feels superior, better than the black race, and the only who deserves to enjoy good facilities is whites.

This proves in 1900s that even though slavery had been abolished, Southern society at that time still adhered to the ideology that the African race had been socially constructed under the white American race and created a system of separation between the two races, known as "separate but equal" during Jim Crow era. The separation of black and white American school facilities is a clear example of the Jim Crow laws in action, as Southern laws prohibited any mixing of public facilities between different races. Moreover, Wertheimer (2023) explains that Jim Crow schools are segregated, similar to schools during the Reconstruction era. The idea of "separate but equal" is never true, as white schools receive much more funding than schools for black students at the start of Jim Crow (p. 148).

Therefore, the situation of the Little Man character in Taylor's novel who gets school book facilities in worn out, dirty, and used conditions from white students is an illustration of the racial construction of African society after the abolition of slavery which is very rarely found in white history books. It shows through the direct perspective of the African-American community, Taylor, of dealing the detailed reality that occurred in the development of the dynamics of American life in the 20th century.

The narration delivered by Taylor corresponds to actual reality based on a collection of various reading sources in writing this paper, as stated by Professor of Political Science in Wisconsin, Russell Brooker (2024). He said there was a difference in the provision of colored school funds to white Americans by the governments of Southern countries so that the books owned by African children only received from white American school grants.

While the distinction in funding for white schools over black schools created a shortage of school facilities, this also produced a situation in the 1930s where children of color had very low academic grades compared to white students. Brooker (2024) also explained that there were a number of consequences of the lack of education funds in colored schools to the detriment of southern students including.

First, colored schools generally only have a few classes so that classrooms are filled with students from various classes and created a situation that was not conducive to learning. Second, a shortage of education funds creates an underqualified quality of teachers in teaching a given topic. This is because teachers of color receive training less frequently than white teachers. Third, teacher salaries for colored schools are less than for white schools which makes it difficult to find teachers who are as good quality as teachers in white schools.

Still related to differences in school funding and facilities for schools of color, according to an article written by Peter Irons (2004), in the 1930s school boards, especially in Southern countries that adhered to Jim Crow law, budgeted three times as much for black schools white versus black schools. For example, going through data in the 1930s, Alabama spent \$37 per white child and \$7 per colored student; Georgia spent \$32 for white students and \$7 for students of color;

Mississippi is in the \$31 and \$6 budgets, and South Carolina is at \$53 for white students and \$5 for students of color.

In addition, in the teacher salary budget causing conditions for the prosperity of African American teachers is lower than that of white American teachers. Data for the 1930s show the average salary for teachers of color was \$73 compared to \$118 for white teachers. Especially with the phenomenon of the great depression in 1929-1939 creating the vulnerability of the condition of colored teachers compared to white school teachers.

Hence, the unyielding chains of racism experienced by African Americans are also deeply rooted in the idea of social construction. Critical Race Theory suggest that races are not based on inherent biological or genetic differences, but are categories that society creates and manipulates. This constructed idea of race has led to systematic racism, represented by the segregation of school facilities under Jim Crow laws. Taylor's novel illustrates this by showing black children receiving old, worn-out books neglected by white schools, highlighting how society normalized racial inferiority and superiority.

Due to the economic collapse in the 20th century, African American faced a dual burden of financial hardship and constant racism. The lack of funding for black schools compared to white schools, as highlighted by Brooker (2024) and Irons (2004), led to inadequate educational resources for black children. This contributed to lower academic achievement and continued the cycle of inequality. The consistent and normalized discrimination against African Americans made their fight for equality and justice even more challenging.

c. Voice of Color

Delgado & Stefancic (2017) explained that the *voice of color* is the voice of a minority group that raises the issue of racism or various acts of injustice that they experience as South Africans more clearly because they are in a position to experience racism more directly (p. 11). Indeed, the majority of people understand the issue of African Americans as a form of violation of human rights that ended with the abolition of the slavery system.

However, it will be clearer and more neutral in the definition of injustice for people of color if it is explained through their direct experiences so that it will build a different perspective from the definition of injustice in African minority communities through the eyes of people of color. In the same way, through *Roll of Thunder* novel, Taylor demonstrates an awareness of African American history by rejecting and criticizing the main narrative regarding the history of Black American identity in the structure of American society.

After the abolition of slavery until the 20th century and before the African-American Civil Rights Movement took place, several American historical documents created the condition that America was a different country (exceptionalism) so that it is very rare to find other sources about the cruelty of slavery. This also relates to the era of industrialization and the adoption of modernization values in the late 19th and early 20th centuries so that the era of slavery was a disgrace to both white society and the American constitution.

This issue mainly occurs in Southern schools which do not include African American history in American history lessons, so this also results in a degradation of the understanding of African culture for the younger generation at that time. As

can be seen through this Roll of Thunder's quotation below:

Mama was in the middle of history and I knew that was bad. To make matters worse, her lesson for the day was slavery. She spoke on the cruelty of it; of the rich economic cycle it generated as slaves produced the raw products for the factories of the North and Europe; how the country profited and grew from the free labor of a people still not free (Taylor, 1976, p.139).

The narration of this scene occurs when students learn facts about African American history through direct explanations by Mary Logan. It highlights the need for African American to continue voicing the truth about their experiences. Even though white school board members come to her class and observe her lesson, she did not flinch to tell the class how cruel the slavery system is. Mama Logan's courage in speaking out about the brutality of slavery, even under watch, demonstrates how deeply-rooted racism is and why it is so important for black voices to continue telling their stories.

Obviously, Mr. Granger as one of the school boards did not approve of the way Mary act. He said, "*thought these books belonged to the country,*" interrupting Mary (p.139) and he turned the pages, stopped, and read something as said "*I don't see all the things you're teaching in here*" (p.140). Since the history that she taught "*that's because they're not in there*" (p.140) and he replied, "*Well, if it ain't in here, then you got no right teaching it. This book's approved by the Board of Education and you are expected to teach what's in it*" (p.140). Certainly, Mary said "*I can't do that. **Because all that's in that book isn't true***" (p.140).

According to this dialogue, it shows how institutional control over education perpetuates a biased version of history, effectively silencing Black voices and maintaining racial ignorance. Therefore, Taylor wants to show that teachers of the black school are being controlled by white education about teaching their own true history. Mary tries to deliver her voice of color by telling students about the real fact of American history related to the cruelty of slavery era. However, since the book is approved by the Board of Education so Mary Logan did not permit to teach what is not in the book. Yet, she insists on disapproving orders from the white School Board member by saying that all in that all information in the state textbook is not true. It costs her to no longer have a class but through Mary's character, Taylor portrayed how African-American history is omitted by white domination authority that controls their power to suit white needs.

The narration in history books mostly contains white-centric so white people have control in making grand history by omitting African-American history. They do not narrate a history where America has been inhumane to other minority American communities, such as Black Americans. Even as narrated by this novel, the history book has been approved by the board of education, which means that there are so many African American historical narratives that do not match the reality because American historical narratives generally tell about the greatness of America without including the dark history of the slave system.

Brooker (2024) also explains that the 1920s had regulations regarding the limits of material taught to students of color. As previously explained that the 1920s was a time of increasing segregation or the imposition of Jim Crow laws, the school board did not allow Southern schools to study reading materials that had the theme of independence. This is to suppress the ideas of equality among the young

generation of South Africa in order to maintain the superiority of the white American race. Various oppressions and injustices in defining African culture in the eyes of western society sooner it inspired the Harlem Renaissance movement to redefine African culture through an explosion of African American writers, artists and musician.

Hence, Taylor's novel highlights that racism remains difficult to erase because of entrenched biases and the deliberate omission of Black history from mainstream narratives. The 'voice of color' is not just about recounting historical injustices but also about actively challenging and changing the current narrative to reflect a more accurate and inclusive history. The persistent chains of racism faced by African Americans are deeply rooted in the need for the "voice of color" to counter entrenched biases. This narration also serves as a powerful reminder that these voices are crucial in combating deeply rooted biases and ensuring that the true history and experiences of African Americans are heard and understood. The novel emphasizes that racism against blacks still occurs but it can be combated by dismantling racism. The black community must confront and correct the biased historical narratives that have long been accepted as truth.

E. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, racism faced by African Americans, as shown in *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry* is deeply rooted in societal structures and everyday life, making it hard to get rid of. Using Critical Race Theory, the novel shows how racism is not just a range of individual acts, but also something pervasive and enduring in the social order that affects the daily lives and opportunities African-Americans.

Moreover, this novel set during the Great Depression, African-Americans had two situations in life that they had to go through. Besides the declining economy, they also had to face various problems of racism in life. The roots of the unyielding chains racism against African-American during the 20th century can be found through the application of the three basic tenets of Critical Race Theory.

First, *racism is ordinary, not aberrational* portrays through the Logan children's daily experiences of discrimination, like how they're mistreated by the white school bus driver. This everyday racism, where African Americans are treated as inferior, shows how deeply ingrained racial biases were in 20th-century America. This makes it tough to remove these biases, which still affect African Americans today. Second, *social construction* explains that races are categories created and manipulated by society rather than biological differences. The novel illustrates this through the segregation of school facilities and the poor condition of educational resources allocated to black children. The unequal funding of white and black schools, noted by scholars like Brooker (2024) and Irons (2004), meant black children had fewer educational opportunities, continuing inequality. Third, *voice of color* shows through Mama Logan, stresses how African Americans need to tell their own stories and challenge mainstream ideas. Despite challenges, Mama Logan teaches the true history of slavery, highlighting the importance of the voice of color in fighting deep-seated racism and ensuring African American experiences are heard.

Hence, racism is deeply rooted in everyday life, social constructs, and voice of color that are excluded from Black history over mainstream narratives. *Roll of*

Thunder, Hear My Cry reminds us of the importance of recognizing and addressing these issues to fight racism and have a more accurate understanding of history. The Black community's ongoing efforts to confront biased narratives are crucial in the fight for equality and justice.

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