

**Specialist Writing Option C: Film Criticism**  
***The Hate U Give is not a Black Lives Matter movie***

(Adapted from Why 'The Hate U Give' Is Not a Black Lives Matter Movie, **Melina Abdullah**, LA Sentinel, October 2018)

Some are touting '*The Hate U Give*,' as "the first Black Lives Matter movie". We might, then, wonder about the choice to have Audrey Wells, a White screenwriter adapt an urban Black novel for the screen. **The film's narrative entrenches old race tropes making Black people primarily responsible for their own oppression with the film asking viewers to focus exclusively on "Black-on-Black crime".**

The film builds around Starr witnessing the killing of her childhood friend, Khalil, by a White police officer. Although Khalil's murder at the hands of a White cop is the crescendo of the film, the officer who killed him is quickly overshadowed by the neighborhood drug dealer as the primary villain, a set-up for an ongoing subtext and primary message about **"Black-on-Black" crime as the root of all evil**. Ultimately, Starr spends more time naming the neighborhood drug dealer, King, than she does talking about the police who murdered her friend. At one key point of the film, Starr's voiceover comes in, hitting the audience over the head with the film's main message - that Black communities are saved when Black folks rally together, not against murderous police, but against neighborhood drug dealers. **We must trust police to save us from the Kings of the world and bring them to justice, the film proclaims. Starr's final voiceover warns Black audiences..."Because it's not about the hate YOU give, it's about the hate WE give."**

**Starr straddles two worlds**, not quite fitting in to the all-Black, inner-city neighborhood in which she resides and not feeling at home at her affluent prep school either, where her White friends exhibit class privilege and everyday racisms. **While Starr's family is a place of refuge, her neighborhood exemplifies a narrative of poor Black folks who are inherently promiscuous and violent. She and her family are portrayed as the exceptions to this because of their ability to redeem themselves from their teenage indiscretions through adherence to a patriarchal nuclear-family structure.**

*"The Hate U Give"* is propaganda that tells us that the answer to our woes is to trust the policing system to bring an inherently pathological Black community in line. We are eager for cinematic representations of this current iteration of Black freedom struggle. As Black Lives Matters advocates, we state emphatically that this is not a "Black Lives Matter film"; it is the antithesis. We encourage Black audiences, all those who reject narratives that make Black victims of police violence responsible for their own deaths, to invest their dollars in Black film that uplifts and empowers Black communities. *"The Hate U Give"* is not that.