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Recommended Citation

Berry, Andie, "When Race Does(n't) Matter: Forging a Collective Memory of 9/11 in Suzanne Collins' The Hunger Games Trilogy" (2017). *Spring 2017*. 6.

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WHEN RACE DOES(N'T) MATTER: FORGING A COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF 9/11 IN SUZANNE COLLINS' *THE HUNGER GAMES* TRILOGY

Andie Berry

Mentor: Julia Walker

September 11, 2001 stands as a singular moment in which the United States' carefully constructed image of invulnerability and exceptionalism was completely compromised. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, American citizens experienced a prolonged moment of silence as the country tried to absorb the shock. As the attacks approached their fifth, tenth, and fifteenth anniversaries, writers began to publish work that investigates the national trauma left by 9/11, but rather than provide realist accounts, many writers used imaginative, speculative narratives to address the turmoil of the events without repeating the exact gruesome nature of the attacks. National traumas often produce literary dystopias which manifest the cultural anxieties that are agitated by crisis. Yet, the dystopian genre that emerged after 9/11 is uniquely written for younger audiences and the abundance of works written for minors solidified into a young adult dystopian genre. Meanwhile, demographics are experiencing a "browning" phenomenon in which birth rates are leading a shift so that by 2060, if not earlier, the United States will be a majority-minority nation. While young adult dystopian novels such as Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* trilogy grapple with the anxieties of post-9/11 America, the presence of racial minorities remains superficial and fraught even in an imagined future. As racial and ethnic minorities start to outnumber the white majority, the social worlds created in young adult dystopian narratives ignore this emerging population and fail to reflect this population's diversity. By connecting the dystopian genre, trauma, and race, I consider three primary questions. First, what attributes are specific to the dystopian genre and how does the young adult subgenre complicate that structure? Second, what is the connection between the dystopian genre and trauma; how can trauma theory help to clarify how the dystopian genre narrates the past? Third, can race be considered a national trauma in the United States and if so, what space does it inhabit in the fictional future of *The Hunger Games*? By understanding the hidden role that race plays in structuring the unnamed trauma at the core of Collins' novel series we can see how our cultural responses to 9/11 repeat—without unpacking—the unacknowledged traumas in America's history.