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### Aerosol Art and Activism in YA: An Emerging Dialogue on Community Building

Gentrification, racial discrimination, and preserving cultural knowledge are issues that cross generational boundaries. Street art has become an emerging theme in YA literature with the ability to combine these social topics in one conversation. Although sociologists have examined the subculture of graffiti in recent years, its connection with youth media has been overlooked. The literature from social science describes how street art works on multiple levels as a form of social protest, a language with its own unique set of symbols and signifiers, and a way to build community. This paper will combine social theory with art and literary criticism to examine the recent rise of street art in YA literature. Examples include the fantasy series *Shadowshaper* (2015) and *Shadowhouse Fall* (2017) by Daniel José Older and *You're Welcome, Universe* (2017) by Whitney Gardner. Not only do these novels have diverse characters and complex female protagonists, but also contribute to a growing conversation within YA literature around discrimination, gentrification, and community building. Both books reference current events about gentrification, such as the fight for a Bedford Historic District and the 5Pointz Lawsuit, which situates their themes firmly in the real world despite fictional and even supernatural plots. Much like a graffiti park holds layers of conversations between artists, the aim of this paper is to deconstruct how these YA novels use street art as a symbol and tool to weave together complex social issues.