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Close Reading Essay Thesis Statement and Rationale

In the film *Sorry to Bother You*, director Boots Riley uses the “white voice” to convey how people of color must often increase their proximity to whiteness to achieve success in corporate America, demonstrating the racial bias that exists within this institution.

The movie introduces to us Cassius Green, a young African American man living in his uncle's garage. Cassius or Cash, is struggling to make his due rent for his uncle, and his life is pretty much the perfect example of the working class struggle. Cash's journey to success, or rather his journey of losing himself to make it in a capitalism world, begins when the old man tells Cash about the “white voice” At his dead-end telemarketing job, he realizes that he can really improve his sales by using a “white voice” while making his sale calls. However it is very important to realize that this “white voice” isn't just changing the pitch or tone of your voice to sound, it's about taking over a whole new personality.

This personality is one that embodies stereotypical traits often associated with white individuals in Corporate America: politeness, non confrontational, and an air of privilege (meaning someone to have certain benefits because of position in their economic or social position.) As Cassius practices and perfects his "white voice," his fortunes in the company take a dramatic upswing. He starts making more sales, earns promotions, and gains access to the elusive upper echelons of corporate power. His transformation into a successful

telemarketer is nothing short of miraculous, but it comes at a cost, a disconnection from his authentic self and his community as we clearly saw in the movie how Detroit left him because he was acting like himself no more.

The "white voice" serves as a powerful symbol for the lengths to which people of color sometimes go to fit into the predominantly white corporate world. It's a survival mechanism, a mask they put on to be heard, to be seen as non-threatening, and to be considered for promotions. Now, let's really get into the specifics of what Cassius is hiding. He is concealing his true self, his identity, his cultural background, and his genuine emotions. Cassius is hiding the very essence of what makes him, more so in a racial way in terms of his authentic "WHITE" voice and persona. He suppresses his natural way of speaking, his personal experiences, and the nuances of his identity. He hides his frustration with the system, his anger at racial injustice, and his connections with his community. So why is he hiding all of this? The answer lies in bias, prejudice, and discrimination against people of different races in the corporate world. Cash understands that his true self, how he acts, his personality, might not be accepted or rewarded in this environment. He hides his true identity to fit in, to make a living, and to achieve success within a system that values conformity over diversity, where clearly, being white is truly ruling over everyone in the lower class. Riley doesn't stop at the surface level of Cassius's transformation. He delves deeper into the inner workings of the corporation he works for (WorryFree). WorryFree is portrayed as a morally bankrupt entity that exploits not just its employees but also the very essence of their humanity. The company's CEO, Steve Lift, literally being displayed and shown as the epitome of corporate greed and amorality. His vision for

WorryFree involves turning employees into modern-day slaves through a process that is as bizarre as it is dehumanizing. The "white voice", in this context, becomes just one manifestation of the dehumanizing lengths people are willing to go to in order to be successful in this system. The movie properly shows the disturbing reality that some individuals, in their pursuit of success, may become inferior and lost in systems that take advantage of inequality and exploitation.

Boots Riley properly showed the racial bias inherent in corporate America through the lens of the "white voice." He forces us to see the uncomfortable truths about the compromises individuals make to achieve success in a system that's rigged against them. This is not just a movie about telemarketing, it's a public service announcement, something that hopefully people will see, mainly the fact that people are going in corporate america. Moreover, Riley's use of surrealism and absurdity in the film serves as a sharp critique of the absurdity of real-world racial biases and corporate exploitation. The absurdity of the "white voice" concept is mirrored in the absurdity of WorryFree's business model, forcing viewers to recognize the irrationality of the racial bias present in the corporate world.

"Sorry to Bother You" isn't just a film, it's a social commentary, a call to action. It invites us to reflect on the state of racial bias and inequality in our society, particularly within corporate structures. The movie challenges us to think about the lengths to which people are willing to go to fit into a system that often works against them. Moreover, "Sorry to Bother You" compels us to question our own complicity in systems of oppression and exploitation. Are we, knowingly or unknowingly, adopting our own "white voices" in

various aspects of our lives? Are we complicit in perpetuating racial bias and inequality by conforming to norms that are fundamentally unjust?

In conclusion, "Sorry to Bother You" is not just a movie; it's a social and cultural statement that challenges our perceptions and forces us to confront the uncomfortable realities of racial bias within corporate America. Boots Riley's ingenious use of the "white voice" concept to represent the sacrifices individuals make to fit into a system that often devalues their true identity. The film encourages us to break free from the confines of conformity and challenge the systems that perpetuate racial bias and inequality. The movie leaves an indelible mark on its viewers, inspiring them to question, reflect, and take action in the pursuit of a more just and equitable society, one where individuals are not forced to increase their proximity to whiteness to achieve success, and where they can proudly be their authentic selves without fear of retribution.