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English 131 C2

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Short Assignment 2

Dear my Pal Booker,

While recently watching my favorite movie *White Chicks*, I found that the film bluntly brought up many topics of race. By presenting many racial stereotypes throughout the film, *White Chicks* challenges modern American racism through comedy and provides for the means to discuss race in America. Knowing that you enjoy watching comedies in between reading about Marxism, I thought I would share my view of the film and hopefully we can discuss how the film challenges traditional racism. Also, know that racism’s nature as a “traditional value” is due to their existence in America for a long time; racism is not necessarily a Judeo-Christian value.

**Stereotypical Presentation of Caucasians**

Simply by looking at the title, *White Chicks* presents white girls as the stereotypical wealthy Beverly Hills girls. Brittany and Tiffany Wilson are two rich and incredibly spoiled girls who are protected by cops Kevin and Marcus Copeland from a suspected kidnapper. The plot thickens when the girls scrape their faces in a small car accident, and thus refuse to attend a weekend-long party. In order to keep their jobs and apprehend potential kidnappers, the cops disguise themselves as the rich twins and take on incredibly stereotypical white personalities. When checking into the hotel under the guise of the Wilson twins, Kevin and Marcus act incredibly angry and privileged – preventing them from having to show their ID’s to the undercover FBI agent manning the desk. Kevin and Marcus act so stuck-up because they are made to portray wealthy and spoiled white teenagers. The irony is that they are adult black males – this clear juxtaposition provides a laugh for the audience, criticizing racism in the process. The stereotypes in *White Chicks* challenge the traditional racism in America using satire throughout the movie. Try to weave your summary with more pointed analysis. Think “active summary.”

**Stereotypical Presentation of African Americans**

Blacks in the film are portrayed with extremely stereotypical views, with the undercover cops regularly slipping back into their “black personas” unconsciously. Incredible athleticism to catch a purse snatcher, well endowment of male blacks, appreciation of rap music, usage of the N-word, cornrow braiding skills, as well as unbelievable dance moves (clearly done by a stunt double) were used by the black main characters. The behavior of the main characters succeeds at challenging traditional racism by making fun of their unbelievable behavior. One particular scene is where actor Terry Crews (a former NFL player) bursts out into singing “A Thousand Miles” by Vanessa Carlton, something one wouldn’t expect from a buff black man. By acting against his stereotype, this scene shows that people may not be what we initially assume.

Finally, one easily visible method in *White Chicks* that challenges racism in America is the wide variety of races present in the cast of the movie. The main characters are black – something quite uncommon a few decades ago. This allows the viewpoints of black and white characters to come together and adds to the dialogue involving race. Hopefully, Booker, you can see that *White Chicks* does an incredible job of pointing out the racist stereotypes that have been built in America today. These examples provide great evidence that this film succeeds at challenging the traditional value of racism, and I’m looking forward to your letter of agreement.

Yours always,

Wolf

Dear Wolf,

I had to watch this ridiculous movie of yours because I could tell that your argument was (as always) flawed. No movie with such a blatantly racist plotline let alone a comedian duo such as the Wayans brothers could include a challenge on racism. In fact, I believe that *White Chicks* uses racial stereotypes solely for humor and therefore is a product of the Culture Industry simply for profit. The wealthy Caucasian female stereotype that you mentioned seems to ridicule the wealthy rather than point out any sort of flaw in racism. In fact, it may encourage further stereotyping of this group. When the twins injure themselves in the beginning of the movie, they prefer staying in a hotel room to going to a weekend party simply so they are not seen. This rather extreme decision does nothing to challenge the view of spoiled brats or dumb blondes. Once again Wolf, I compare your intelligence to theirs.

In response to the racial stereotypes displayed by the African American characters in the movie, these are clearly implemented into the movie simply to make fun of blacks. Your reference to dance moves is likely from the dance-off scene between the Copeland brothers and the Vandergeld sisters. Similarly to the scene consisting of “yo mama” jokes, the Copeland brothers display a large advantage as stereotypes may suggest. You state that these examples of stereotypical behavior emerge in order to make fun of stereotypes and are meant to formulate discussions of racism. However, I believe that the Cultural Industry has simply ingrained these racist facts as humorous and are therefore decided to place into the film. *White Chicks* is simply a comedy that utilizes extreme racism in order to maximize its income. The producers of this film had no intention of tearing down stereotypes in today’s society – they instead support them through their actions. In fact, it is logical to conclude that stereotypes will be spread by what people see, and *White Chicks* certainly expands upon hurtful stereotypes.

One of the most racist characters in the film is Latrell Spencer, the former NFL star you cited in your letter. Shortly after his introduction, Latrell says “once you go black, you gonna need a wheelchair,” a strange modification of a well-known phrase that horrifyingly comes true in this film. Latrell sees a girl pass by in a wheelchair (who he had spent the night with previously) and puts a male character into a wheelchair after a night filled with drug use. Even though Latrell refers to white women as snowball or cotton tail, the only true racial slur he uses is against a black cop, “jigaboo.” This word is extremely offensive, and often used in the Southern United States. To some this word is considered as offensive as the N-word. Latrell’s ironically racist comment is only used to draw a laugh from the audience. Due to the multiplicity of this popular culture text, it is very unlikely that viewers will take Latrell’s behavior as a comment mocking racism. Your perspective, therefore, is neither the intention of the producers nor that perceived by the public. *White Chicks* is merely a product of capitalist society, and I hope you understand that the casting and acting of multiracial characters in the film is only for the use of profit – not progress.

Sincerely,

Keith M. Booker

Writer’s Memo

I quite enjoyed writing the letters between Wolf and Booker, and being able to embody somebody else’s tone while keeping each letter’s audience in mind helped define what I was writing. It was much easier to think of what to say in my essay because I could easily envision myself as one of the writers writing to the other – especially when I was Booker writing to Wolf. I chose to make Booker extremely pessimistic, in direct opposition of Wolf’s optimism involving *White Chicks*. This was *incredibly* entertaining, and made the writing process smoother and faster. In the future, I may consider writing in a definite tone throughout an essay in order to reduce decision making during writing as well as consistency. Writing these letters was quite different than writing the book review. The review was a much more familiar topic to me: it was simply summarizing and analyzing a written document, including its argument. I have done this many times in high school: note-taking is largely summary and essay-writing requires analysis. These letters involved analyzing a pop culture text, which I certainly had not done in high school. However, experience with pop culture texts in the last week has given me plenty of preparation. The analysis of *Modern Family* was particularly helpful, as it gave me something to base my analysis of *White Chicks* off of. The unfamiliarity with writing under the guise of another person was another weakness in writing these letters, but being confident in what I wrote (as well as making it entertaining for myself) helped me overcome that. The prevalence of racism within the film made writing these letters quite easy, as I could take either side of arguing if the racism was useful for challenging traditional values as either Wolf or Booker. Overall, I think I did quite well writing these letters between Wolf and Booker. Writing as both Wolf and Booker hopefully may help me define my own writing style and tone, and this experience will certainly help me write about pop culture texts in the future.

Jack,

Where you really excel here is in terms of tone and consistency. Your letter are engaging and, especially in the case of Booker’s letter, really clearly utilizes audience awareness as a guiding strategy (since Wolf suggests watching the film, Booker is able to point to scenes without too much summary, leaving room for more active analysis). The main issue is scope. In each letter, you tackle a bit too much. While the points you make seem provocative, the lack of concrete analysis and sustained focus makes them difficult to follow and, as a result, not terribly persuasive. Should you choose to revise this assignment, then, you’ll need to choose perhaps one scene as illustrative of the ways in which the films employ racial stereotypes for whatever purpose—be it deconstruction or profit. That kind of sustained focus will also allow you to demonstrate a more solid rhetorical engagement with the original articles instead of simply trying to cover the entirety of each article. You have a good framework, you just need to slow down and give yourself the time (and space) to dig deeper.