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### Rhetorical Analysis Essay

In "Nobody Mean More to Me Than You and the Future Life of Willie Jordan" Jamaican-American poet, essayist, activist, and teacher June Jordan amply attests to the authenticity and significance of Black English. The essay pulls the academic and personal relevance forward of language, more specifically Black English. This was published in the Harvard Educational Review in 1988 which indicates an intended audience of the white elite. This essay is a call to action, deliberately set to educate said Whites on the linguistic oppression towards Black people. This essay works as a device to enlighten minds, with hopes to shift people's perceptions.

June Jordan methodically begins this essay by acknowledging the White standardization of English; how despite being this melting pot of a country, the U.S. continues to perpetuate the idea that the white way is the right way. Jordan says, "White standards of English persist, supreme and unquestioned, in these United States". At this moment, Jordan is tackling the notion which categorizes White English as a modern form of persecution towards any other type of language or dialect. Jordan chooses to accredit White ideals to the oppression of Black people. She does this to inform her audience of what may not be so obvious to the average White person. The reader can acknowledge the issue at hand and continue to read the essay with an open mind.

At the very beginning of the essay, Jordan states: “We begin to grow up in a house where every true mirror shows us the face of somebody who does not belong there, whose walk and whose talk will never look or sound ‘right,’ because that house was meant to shelter a family that is alien and hostile to us.” June Jordan is drawing an image to promote a vision of linguistic suppression and its cycle from person to person. Jordan’s decision to create this picture is to recognize language standardization as a tactic used by the system to police this country.

In the classroom, Jordan introduces the award-winning novel *The Color Purple*, to show her students Black English in its written form. Jordan began the class discussion “ ‘So!’ I exclaimed, aloud. ‘What did you think? How did you like it?’ ... ‘Why she have them talk so funny. It don’t sound right.’ ‘You mean the language?’ ”. The students criticized how the language is ordinarily used in the novel and yet don’t make the connection between their way of talking and the writing used in the novel. June Jordan incorporates this discussion held in her classroom into the essay because she is demonstrating to her audience the lack of self-awareness within her students. Students like these are subject to years of linguistic assimilation and are taught nothing about their own culture.

Moving forward, June Jordan begins to teach a class called “The Art of Black English” whose objective was precisely to dissect the Black Language. In this class, students were instructed to create rules and guidelines for the language, prime example “Rule 2: If it’s wrong in Standard English it’s probably right in Black English, or, at least, you’re hot.”. In simple terms, this rule makes words ostracized in White English, a possible word to use in Black English. That quote is purely ethos as it pushes to express the credibility of Black English as a language. A language is widely accepted when there are rules to follow when using the language.

Aside from its academic lens, Jordan carefully navigates the reader through the story of Willie Jordan. His story involves his own journey with the class and personal involvement with language, but also the murder of his unarmed brother at the hands of a local police officer. After the death of this brother, the class begins to dive deeper into the social realm of language and its larger implications tied into race and identity. June Jordan integrates the story of one of her students to appeal to the emotions of her audience. The audience is exposed to a promising student that is faced with loss but is still able to use his Intellect to research language.

The most astounding part of this essay is the relevance it maintains over the years. Although published in 1988, this essay is a primary source for transcribing yet another year of racism. Regardless of the time, Black people undoubtedly continue to face language discrimination. In the present, prospective students can use this as a resource on how to properly educate themselves and can formulate strategies on how to combat the continuous chain of oppression.

The standardization of language is perpetuated through many years of schooling only leaving children of minorities powerless and defenseless towards the social expectation held on them. June Jordan's "Nobody Mean More to Me Than You and the Future Life of Willie Jordan", wishes to inform her white ignorant audience on language and its connection to race. Jordan understands and can attest to the standardization of White English and its effects on the educational system. Jordan writes this essay to recognize a modern form of persecution against things outside the norm. She presents the audience with the consequences of the absence of inclusive education.

### Works Cited

Jordan, June. "Nobody Mean More to Me than You and the Future Life of Willie Jordan." *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 58, no. 3, Jan. 1988, pp. 363–374.