

**Twentieth Century American Drama**  
**Prof. Merin Simi Raj**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Madras**

**Lecture - 41**  
**Hansberry's Day in the Sun Part 2**

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celebrating 50 Years



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A Raisin in the Sun Revisited

Author(s): J. Charles Washington

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We are looking at this play *A Raisin in the Sun*. We begin by looking at this essay 1988 essay which is revisiting the play after about three decades of 1959 after the play premiered in Broadway. We realize that another three more decades have passed since the publication of this essay and many of the observations continued to remain true.

The essay addresses the universal themes which are part of this play.

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## *A Raisin in the Sun* Revisited



### J. Charles Washington

It seems incredible that *A Raisin in the Sun*, which opened on Broadway in 1959, has reached the ripe old age of twenty-nine and even more incredible that its creator, Lorraine Hansberry, who died in 1965 at the age of thirty-four, has already been gone twenty-three years, for she is still spoken of with passion and reverence by a younger generation of writers and critics whom she encouraged and influenced. (Some of these are Julian Mayfield, Douglas Turner Ward, and Margaret B. Wilkerson, whose collective voices are



So, the essay is a 1988 essay.

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Ward, and Margaret B. Wilkerson, whose collective voices are heard in the Winter 1979 issue of *Freedomways* devoted entirely to Hansberry's life and art.) What has inspired them is not only the quality of her art, but also her courage and commitment. Hansberry was fearless and brash enough to declare that art does have a purpose, and that purpose is to change things (*To Be Young* xiv). She was not afraid to write a play about social problems because she understood that "there are no plays which are not social and no plays that do not have a thesis" (*To Be Young* 133).

In the eyes of some critics, however, *A Raisin in the Sun* was passé almost before it closed, because they saw it only as a protest play or social drama about a Black family's struggle to buy a house in a white neighborhood. In *Confrontation and Commitment*, C. W. E. Bigsby reflects this critical point of view: "For all its sympathy, humour and humanity, . . . [*A Raisin in the Sun*] remains disappointing. . . . Its weakness is essentially that of much Broadway naturalism. It is an unhappy crossbreed of social protest and re-



It begins by offering a tribute to this play *A Raisin in the Sun* which opened on Broadway in 1959 and it is also paying lovely tribute to Lorraine Hansberry who actually tragically had died at the age of 34. The critic, the writer here, the author here is also positioning this play in terms of its historical reception, in terms of its acceptances performance and trying to showcase how this continues to be relevant and how these discussions continue to be how this play continues to generate a lot of socially committed discussions.

There are certain qualities, certain personal qualities of the playwright that the critic is noting over here what has inspired them is not only the quality of her art, but also her courage and commitment. This play essentially is seen as a play about social problems because look at the acknowledgement over here. She was not afraid to write a play about social problems because she understood that there are no plays which are not social and no plays that they that do not have a thesis.

There is a certain meta quality about this play as it addresses the social issues in very direct way but, also in a slightly unconventional way as we would begin to see.

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humour and humanity, . . . [A Raisin in the Sun] remains disappointing. . . Its weakness is essentially that of much Broadway naturalism. It is an unhappy crossbreed of *social protest* and reassuring resolution" (156, emphasis added). Even more damaging and unsound is the evaluation of critic Harold Cruse who, in *The*



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J. Charles Washington holds the Doctor of Arts degree in the teaching of English from The Catholic University of America. A specialist in Afro-American literature, his primary focus is on Afro-American drama. He is currently a Lecturer in the Department of English at Howard University.

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The question of a black family and moving into a white neighborhood is at the heart of this play, but at the same time we realize that it is not done in a way that usually raise questions and were beginning to be addressed particularly in the 1950s.

So, given the time of the setting of the play, the setting of the play and this was performed in the late 50s and early 60s, the matter of fact, the tone about this play needs to be much appreciated, . So, in the eyes of some critics as it this essay also points out it was largely seen as a protest play or a social drama about a Black family struggled to buy a house in white neighborhood.

It was also seen as the unhappy crossbreed of as the critic over here is also quoting Charles Washington is also quoting another work which says there were lot of critics

who thought that this is just an unhappy crossbreed of social protest and reassuring resolution.

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J. Charles Washington



*Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, observes that the play is “the most cleverly written piece of glorified soap opera” he has ever seen (278).<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, more perceptive critics, such as Julius Lester in his introduction to *Les Blancs*, early on recognized the play for what it really is: a work of art that contains universal and universally American themes that make it a significant contribution to American dramatic literature. In her recent biography of Hansberry, Ann Cheney writes that “. . . the simple eloquence of the characters elevates the play into a universal presentation of all people’s hopes, fears, and dreams” (55).

For Hansberry, there was never a conflict between the play’s specific social value and its universal literary value because the



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specific social value and its universal literary value because the latter was inextricably bound to and grew logically out of the former: “I believe that one of the most sound ideas in dramatic writing is that in order to create the universal, you must pay very great attention to the specific. Universality, I think, emerges from the truthful identity of what is” (*To Be Young* 128). Regarding *Raisin*, Hansberry observed that, while



... there are no waving flags and marching songs at the barricades as Walter marches out with his little battalion, it is not because the battle lacks nobility. On the contrary, he has picked up in his way, still imperfect and wobbly in his small view of human destiny, what I believe Arthur Miller once called “the golden thread of history.” He becomes, in spite of those who are too intrigued with despair and hatred of man to see it, King Oedipus refusing to tear out his eyes, but attacking the Oracle instead. He is that last Jewish patriot manning his rifle in the burning ghetto at Warsaw; he is that young girl who swam into sharks to save a friend a few weeks ago; he is Anne Frank, still believing in people; he is the nine small heroes of *Little Red Riding Hood*; he is Michaelangelo creating David and Beethoven hunting



But, as we go deeper into the play we understand that it is not essentially that, but it is a perhaps something very cleverly written about this piece which cannot be dismissed as a social override in some sense. This article now also focuses on how perhaps Hansberry had positioned this work as and when she was creating the work as and when she was putting it out for production performance.

For Hansberry, there was never a conflict between the play's specific social value and its universal literary value because the latter was inextricably bound and grew logically out of the former. So, this is one of those very rare works of art where the social commitment and the universal literary value are perfectly in sync with each other.

According to her own words, one of the soundest ideas in dramatic writing is that in order to create the universal, one must pay great attention to the specific universality that emerges from the truthful identity of what is. So, here we find an attempt to define what art is.

We find that there is an attempt to define what art is, to define what is universal, to define how the ideas in dramatic writing can also have a lasting social relevance to different communities across the globe in some sense. This is not confined to a specific time, it is not confined to a specific geographical location and we also find that it is not just about race either.

It could be any kind of discrimination, any kind of social stratification which would perhaps which would perhaps cast a shadow on the work, shadow on the way people interact with each other, how communities are supposed to work.

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He is Michelangelo, and Beethoven in people; he is the little black boy of Little Rock; he is Michelangelo creating David, and Beethoven bursting forth with the Ninth Symphony. He is all those things because he has finally reached out in his tiny moment and caught that sweet essence which is human dignity, and it shines like the old star-touched dream that is in his eyes. ("Willie Loman" 7)

The dignity of Walter's character is present long before the end of the play, "when he marches out with his little battalion." However, the fact that Walter's dignity is somewhat obscured from view has led many readers, critics, and viewing audiences to misunderstand him and his true intentions. I agree with Douglas Turner Ward that "it is not Walter Lee's action at the end of the play, as meaningful as it is to his development and inspiring to the audience, but his central presence and thrust *throughout the play*" that should be emphasized (224-25). The overpowering personality of Lena Younger, particularly her moral rectitude and selfless



We just take a look at this excerpt, there are no waving flags and marching songs at the barricades as Walter marches out with his little battalion, it is not because the battle lacks

nobility. On the contrary, he has picked up in his way still imperfect and wobbly in his small view of human destiny, which Arthur Miller once called the golden thread of history. He becomes, in spite of those who are too intrigued with despair and hatred of man to see it, King Oedipus refusing to tear out his eyes, but attacking the Oracle instead.

He is that last Jewish patriot manning his rifle in the burning ghetto at Warsaw; he is that young girl who swam into sharks to save a friend a few weeks ago; he is Anne Frank, still believing in people; he is the nine small heroes of Little Rock; he is Michelangelo creating David and Beethoven bursting forth with the Ninth Symphony. He is all those things because he has finally, reached out in his tiny moment and caught that sweet essence of which is human dignity, and it shines like the old star-touched dream that is in his eyes.

This is very interesting the way she is positioning social protest. It could be in Beethoven symphony, it could also be in the way Anne Frank saved herself and her family it could also be seen in a burning ghetto in Warsaw. So, what we find over here is that the idea of social protest is being treated in a very different way altogether.

So, here as we continue to read, the dignity of Walter's character is present long before the end of the play, when he marches out with his little battalion. However, the fact that Walter's dignity is somewhat obscured from view has led many readers, critics and viewing audiences to misunderstand him and his true intentions.

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So, he is also quoting a Douglas Turner Ward that it is not Walter Lee's action at the end of the play, as meaningful as it is to his development and inspiring to the audience, but his central presence and thrust throughout the play that should be emphasized. So, it is more about the process over here than what one gets out of it.

So, in fact, if we take a close look at all the plays that we have read during this course we would find that it is never about how it ends, it is never about the what happens at the climax, because most of the times it is the some mega event has already happened, death has already happened, the failure has already happened, it is all about the individual trying to negotiate his or her way through that process.

It is a very succinctly put over here, the presence and thrust throughout the play. So, the action is something which keeps happening throughout the play.

There is a process, there is an evolution which happens and in that process we find that the society that the play is part of where the characters are set in. It also becomes an object of critique that also becomes something, that gets reevaluated, that also becomes something that we realize has to undergo a radical change in order to accommodate the many changing belief systems the many changing ideologies.

The overpowering personality of Lena Younger particularly her moral rectitude and selfless nature tends to overshadow Walter.

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nature, tends to overshadow Walter, and this accounts in part for the tendency of many readers and audiences to focus their attention almost entirely on her. Unfortunately, this violates the equal balance or proportionate share of the spotlight which each deserves and which the structure of the play calls for.

Some months subsequent to the play's opening, Hansberry regarded the lack of a central character as a flaw in *Raisin* ("Willie Loman" 7). "I am not certain," writes Douglas Turner Ward, "that, in creating Walter Lee, Lorraine was even fully cognizant of the extent of her accomplishment. Indeed, I think a close reading of the play reveals her ambiguity" (225). There is room for disagreement here, with both the author and with Ward's concluding statement. There is no ambiguity in the writing itself, except for the play's ending where the author intentionally shifts



This accounts in part for the tendency of many readers and audiences to focus their attention almost entirely on her. Unfortunately, this violates the unequal balance of proportionate share of the spotlight which the structure of the play calls for. It is also drawing attention to the dramatic and theatrical arrangement when a play is getting performed unlike the other genres are.

We know that there is a way in which all characters occupy the stage space and that itself in some sense a very egalitarian presentation of the characters where we find that the just like screen time, the stage presence is something through which we can evaluate the kind of importance that is being given to each of these characters.



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...focus from *Raisin's* primary to its secondary meaning in order to satisfy the needs of her Black audience. Rather, misunderstandings and misinterpretations tend to involve the inappropriate moral standards used to measure Walter's character. Our literary judgments, to a large extent, are determined by our own moral standards, by our adherence to the rules society deems appropriate. Generally, these standards differ according to the sex of the individual: A good man, for instance, is strong, aggressive—masculine—, whereas a good woman is sweet, gentle—feminine. It is a grievous error to assess Walter's character by a set of moral standards somewhat more applicable to his mother, whose actions rarely receive censure even though they are far less than ideal. The consequence is a diminution of Walter's strength and dignity, which are in every respect equally as great as, if not greater than, his mother's. Compounding this mistake is the common failure to distinguish between appearance and reality. Judging Walter on his surface actions, as opposed to his deeper, underlying motives and



There is also some bits some extra bits outside of the text which is being shared over here. Some months subsequent to the play's opening, Hansberry regarded the lack of a central, character as a flaw in *Raisin*. So, he says that in creating Walter Lee, Lorraine was even fully cognizant of the extent of her accomplishment. Indeed, a close reading of the play reveals her ambiguity.

It is about who is the central character over here if we read through the play that is something which will keep oscillating in terms of whether it is Walter or it is the Younger's, who is the central character and whose story essentially becomes takes the central piece over here.

It says how we frame literary judgments, something which gets foregrounded over here is also. Our literary judgments, to a large extent, are determined by our own moral standards, by our adherence to the rules society demands appropriate.

When we are looking at a piece of art, when we are looking at any genre, fiction, drama, poetry, the way we are looking at that a piece of work as a literally piece as an aesthetic piece it is very heavily overshadowed by the kind of rules by which we live, by the kind of moral compasses that we use to judge life in general.

Generally, these standards differ according to the sex of the individual: A good man, for instance, a strong, aggressive masculine –, whereas, a good woman is sweet gentle

feminine. It is a grievous error to assess Walter's character by a set of moral standards somewhat more applicable to his mother, whose actions rarely receive censure even though they are far less than ideal.

Again, if you look at the the kind of plays that we have looked at so far, as body of American writing American theatre, we find that the way each of these characters are positioned are like they are set against the larger society and the way the audience are expected to treat them they expected to respond to them expected to evaluate and judge them that also has a very large bearing on it has the very large bearing on how our the morally as readers as critics we have been conditioned as well.

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distinguish between appearance and reality. Judging Walter on his surface actions, as opposed to his deeper, underlying motives and traits of character, one misses his real significance, which Ward has correctly identified: "Lorraine's real triumph . . . is the depiction of Walter Lee as a complex, autonomous character who thinks and acts not as an author's marionette, but as a harbinger of all the qualities of character that would soon explode into American reality and consciousness" (224). To fail to see this complexity is to fail to see the essence of the play and, hence, its aesthetic value; for, as Ward also observes, Walter is both structurally and thematically the play's dramatic focal point: "It is Walter Lee, the bearer of aims and goals that have been conditioned by the prevailing values of the society, who is, dramatically, most representative. It is Walter Lee . . . who emerges as the most unique creation for his time and ours.



It further says, to fail to see this complexity here. He just he gives us excerpt, "Lorraine's real triumph is the depiction of Walter Lee as a complex autonomous character who thinks and acts not as an authors marionette, but as a harbinger of all the qualities of character that would soon explode into American reality and consciousness."

So, regardless of the aspects of race and gender which are discussed over here we find that this play is so essentially a critique of how American society functions. It is about American reality and consciousness, it is about the many ideas which are soon becoming ways of life over there. So, to fail to see this complexity is to fail to see the essence of the play, and hence it is aesthetic value.

For as ward also observes Walter is both structurally and thematically, the plays dramatic focal point it is Walter Lee, the bearer of aims and goals that have been conditioned by the prevailing values of the society who is dramatically most representative. So, here to irrespective of the race angle irrespective of the conditioning in terms of race and gender we find that the Walter Lee becomes the central character who's conditioned by the modern American society which is also driven by the notion of the American dream.

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It is his behavior throughout the play . . . which gives the play prophetic significance . . ." (225).

If one is able to discern this "prophetic significance," even though Lena overshadows Walter, the lack of a central character is of little consequence. In fact, the dual protagonists and the conflict centered on their differing ways of looking at the world are what give the play dramatic tension as well as intellectual and emotional appeal. In addition, this duality provides a structure that points to the primary meaning of the play—the tragedy of Walter's reach for the American Dream. The intent of this essay is to restore the proper balance between Lena and Walter by focusing on him and his mode of thinking, as well as on the American and Afro-American values which formed his character. "As Lorraine Hansberry always emphasized," but some critics are wont to ignore, "A Raisin in the Sun was not just a human document . . . , but a play



It is Walter Lee who emerges as the most unique creation for his time. It is his behavior throughout the play which gives the play a prophetic significance. We also find that the way most of these American plays have been conceived it becomes almost impossible not to see a character either in alignment or in terms of his or her departure from these larger than life iconic positioning of the notion of the American dream.

If one is able to discern this prophetic significance even though Lena overshadows Walter, the lack of a central character is of little consequence. In fact, the dual protagonists and the conflict centered on their differing ways of looking at the world are what give the give the play a dramatic tension as well as intellectual and emotional appeal.

There are multiple things coming together over here while we are trying to judge the play. He comes to the central point over here, In addition, this duality provides a

structure that points to the primary meaning of the play – the tragedy of Walter’s reach for the American dream, .

If we closely examine the other plays that we have read through, there is always a character who is trying to reach for the American dream and there are different forms of tragedies which befall them, not because the American dream has been conceived in essentially fundamentally in a faulty way.

Because the means to reach it, there have been certain templates which were laid out and it is about success, if it is about prosperity, there are certain ways in which success and prosperity were always already defined which by default meant that a few will succeed and a few will also fail.

The tragedy over here happens when one central character or one family is trying to reach for that play perhaps not using the usual templates, not using the usual tools. So, it is not essentially a failure, but it is a tragedy. So, whatever we had been looking at so far whether we are looking at Willy Loman or the Tom in *The Glass Menagerie*, they are not essentially failures they are the in some sense tragic heroes as well .

They have been doing things perhaps not in the way that is required to meet the goals which have been already set over there. So, it is in some sense a tragedy a tragedy of life, a tragedy of an individual or an entire tragedy which befalls the entire family itself and we also find that we saw this in Arthur Miller’s plays as well, the individual tragedy, the national tragedy what befalls a family it is all intertwined as well.

This critique of the American dream becomes a very central theme for most of these plays; because only once you begin to critic that you begin to there is a possibility of opening up the layers and to examine what actually went wrong or what did not really work.

So, the intent of this essay is to restore a proper balance between Lena and Walter by focusing on him and his mode of thinking, as well as on the American and Afro-American values which formed his character, So, while this essay is largely talking about striking a balance between these characters of Lena and Walter, what I am also most interested in is on looking at the African-American values, the American as well as the afro American values which are getting foregrounded over here.

It in one sense celebrates the diversity, celebrate the crux of the American dream that anything is possible for anyone irrespective of the background or irrespective of the ethnicity that they belong to which historically has been proven, right in the American context multiple times, but at the same time this play is trying to look at the race as a specific problem which needs to be understood within the context of the American society.

There are certain international elements which come in there are these cultural elements which come in where race, ethnicity, culture they all are do not become homogeneous factors at all. Those are some of the things that we would talk about in detail when we are looking at the play as well.

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"*A Raisin in the Sun* was not just a human document . . . , but a play of ideas: a political and philosophical statement" (Nemiroff 4).

Ironically, the positive qualities of character which should lend dignity to Walter's character, such as his iron will, his high expectations of himself, and his determination to succeed, are those which often reduce him to the role of villain when he is compared to his mother. Hers may be a more positive image, but this is due to the fact that she must rely on, and fight with, Walter using the only tools available to her—patience, understanding, selflessness, and love—even though these may be, indeed are, genuine expressions of her character. Moreover, though it appears that she relinquishes her role as head of the household out of concern for Walter's welfare, she is no doubt quite happy to lay that burden down. Significantly, this occurs after she has taken a step toward the realization of her own dream by purchasing the house, an act which would seem to nullify Walter's dream. However, no real enmity exists between Walter and his mother. for though opposites



So, as Lorraine Hansberry always emphasized, but some critics are would not to ignore *A Raisin in the Sun* was not just a human document, a play of ideas a political and philosophical statement. This is where the play becomes extremely important. It is not just about how a certain character Walter or Lena would have responded to a certain situation, it is more like a philosophical treaties.

It is showing us a certain context, a certain situation where perhaps most characters with the same kind of social situation, the same kind of ethnicity would have ended up behaving in the same way. So, that is something which is very powerful about the works

which try to foreground say for instance race, caste or a gender, those are intensely private experiences.

But, at the same time due to the social conditioning, due to the cultural and moral expectations which come from specific kinds of social conditioning. We find that it is not just about individuals, it becomes something bigger than that. It is something very structural very systemic the critic over here is not just about the choices that one individual made it, not just about the choices that one family made, but it is about the choices into which they are being forced into, the choices which do not operate as choices at all.

So, which is why it is also seen as a political and philosophical narrative over here. So, ironically the positive qualities of character which should lend quality to Walter's character such as his high expectations of himself. We find a very powerful description of Walter's characters, unlike some of those characters the protagonist in Arthur Miller's drama.

We find that here is a character who knows what he is doing at some level he is quite sorted. But, that does not really save him from being a from meeting his tragedy, his iron will, his high expectations of himself, his determination to succeed, are those which often reduce him to the role of villain when he is compared to his mother.

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relinquishes her role as head of the household out of concern for Walter's welfare, she is no doubt quite happy to lay that burden down. Significantly, this occurs after she has taken a step toward the realization of her own dream by purchasing the house, an act which would seem to nullify Walter's dream. However, no real enmity exists between Walter and his mother, for though opposites in their ways of looking at the world and in their responses to it, they are character types united by love for each other and for their family; both seek to improve the conditions affecting their lives.

That Walter seems to many to possess an inordinate degree of self-respect and to expect too much out of life for himself and for his family may have more to do with viewers' perceptions than with Walter's actions. If one has been conditioned to expect little, as many Blacks have been through racism, or to believe that Blacks deserve and are entitled to little, as some members of society have been led to believe, then the demand for any degree above this



Hers maybe a more positive image, but this is due to the fact that she must rely on, and fight with, Walter using the only tools available to her – patience. We find these dichotomies over here which are gender-oriented as well. Patience, understanding, selflessness, and love, these may be the genuine expressions of her character.

Moreover, though it appears that she relinquishes her role as head of the household, out of concern for Walter's welfare, she is no doubt quite happy to lay that burden down. Significantly, this occurs after she has taken a step toward the realization of her own dream by purchasing the house, an act which would seem to nullify Walter's dreams.

There is this notion of the American dream in pursuit of that we find there are a lot of these micro dreams as well the individual dreams, the family dreams. If you again go back and think about all the plays that we have done so far we find that there are in each play, there is a character or a set of characters who have their own set of dreams.

Some of their dreams, some characters have dreams which are in alignment with how the notion of American dream is defined, but some characters like *The Glass Menagerie*, Tom, , he has dreams which are not perfectly in alignment with the guarantee of success and prosperity that comes out of the larger structural notion of the American dream.

However, no real enmity exists between Walter and his mother, for though opposites in their ways of looking at the world and in their responses to it, they are characters, they are character types united by love for each other and for their family; both seek to improve the conditions affecting their lives. Here, we can also find parallels between the families, like the family in *All My Sons*.

They are not making enemies within their own families, they are driven by different perspectives, driven by different sets of ideologies, and their notion of social commitment is very different. But, what unites them is this love for each other. They stay committed to each other and at that point the love for the family, the love to save the family, the commitment towards the family becomes bigger and more magnificent than the commitment towards those abstract notions which govern the running of the country or which govern the many idealistic definitions which are out there.

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and takes place in a different landscape. . . . she is usually literally tied down to her children" (xx). Because Lena Younger's children, though fully grown, and family come first, her purchasing the house they need so badly may seem to viewers of the play a much more sensible idea than Walter's wanting to open a business.



Yet the root of the conflict between them goes deeper than this. Lena Younger's thinking is restricted by time. Hers is the thinking of a Black woman born near the turn of the century in a racist American society, and she does not understand the modern ways and thinking of her children. "Something has changed," she tells Walter. "You something new, boy. In my time we was worried about not being lynched and getting to the North if we could and how to stay alive and still have a pinch of dignity too . . . Now here come you and Beneatha—talking 'bout things we ain't never even thought about hardly, me and your daddy. You ain't satisfied or proud of nothing we done. I mean that you had a home: that we kept you



To look at Lena Younger's character a bit more in detail hers is the thinking of a black woman born near the turn of the century in a racist American society, she does not understand the modern ways and thinking of her children. Something has changed, she tells Walter. You something new, boy. In my time we was worried about not being lynched and getting to the North if we could and how to stay alive and still have a pinch of dignity too.

Now, here come you and Beneatha – talking about things we are not never even thought about hardly, me and your daddy. You are not satisfied or proud of nothing we done.



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nothing we done. I mean that you had a home; that we kept you out of trouble till you was grown; that you don't have to ride to work on the back of nobody's streetcar— You my children—but how different we done become" (62). As this statement makes clear, racial conditioning has had as profound an impact on her life as that of gender. Her experiences with discrimination as a young woman in the South affected her thinking. While they did not destroy her self-esteem, they did color her outlook on life, narrowing her perspective and restricting her beliefs about what a Black person could reasonably expect to achieve in American society. The only way a Black person could escape discrimination in the South of that time was to move to the North. Though it was a compromise, the action she took meant that she was a fighter who took the step that many of her generation did in order to make a meaningful change in her life. In fact, she is still a fighter, and she proves it by buying the house to bring about the change she now feels is needed for her family's welfare. As she says. "When the world gets ugly



"I mean that you had a home; that we kept you out of trouble till you was grown; that you do not have to ride to work on the back of nobody's streetcar – You my children – but how different we done become." This statement makes clear, the racial conditioning which has had a profound impact on her life just like gender.

So, there is a racial conditioning, there is a racial profiling just the way it works for gender which is very clear over here which operates in very different ways even within the same family across generations. So, this is a positive impact that this play is also having in terms of highlighting the possibilities which are out there.

So, in some sense it is celebrating the many prospects which are out there, which have been opened up due to say the diversity that American dream seems to accommodate that kind of diversity, but on the other hand it is also making it clear to us there are certain kinds of divides which cannot be entirely bridged. Her experiences with discrimination as a young woman in the South affected her thinking.

So, while they did not destroy her self-esteem, they did color her outlook on life, narrowing her perspective and restricting her beliefs about what a Black person could reasonably expect to achieve in American society. So, the promise of access, the promise of prosperity, the promise of material success, it all works differently it is all received differently depending on your social conditioning as well.

, that is something that we see and her life here. The only way a Black person could escape discrimination in the South of that time was moved to the North. So, this is something we will see in a number of other works too like you look at an American fiction Faulkner who talks about South as being this extremely regressive patriarchal system, where it is not easy on being on either side , it really does not help because it is that the racial conditioning is that deep seated.

So, here also you get the sense of this North – South divide and this escape becomes not just a psychological escape one has to move from one territory to the other in order to escape this kind of a conditioning. So, this movement, this is something again something we it is very different from the other plays that we have looked at for the rest of them there is the divide is more in terms of the rural urban divide.

We look at Arthur Miller's plays, we look at *The Glass Menagerie*, and the difference is largely in terms of the exposure and the access and the tools that you find in the rural and the urban settings. And, here it is more about the mindset, it is more about the mindset which governs predominantly governs in each of these different North and the South settings.

Though it was a compromise, the action she took meant that she was a fighter who took the step that many of her generation did in order to make a meaningful change in her life. In fact, she is still a fighter, and she proves it by buying the house to bring about the change she now feels is needed for her family's welfare. As she says, when the world gets ugly enough, a woman will do anything for her family. Her belief in this change, which is her version of the American Dream, sets her at odds with her son Walter.

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time was to move to the North. Though it was a compromise, the action she took meant that she was a fighter who took the step that many of her generation did in order to make a meaningful change in her life. In fact, she is still a fighter, and she proves it by buying the house to bring about the change she now feels is needed for her family's welfare. As she says, "When the world gets ugly enough, a woman will do anything for her family" (62). Her belief in this change, which is her version of the American Dream, sets her at odds with her son Walter. Like her earlier move to the North, the purchase of a suburban Chicago house reflects a compromise



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So, we have two different ways of looking at this play now. On the one hand, there is a certain tragedy which is inherent in these limited access to the worlds that put forward the notion of American dream, on the other hand there is also different versions of American dream, gendered versions, racial versions there are different versions of the American dream depending on your location, your gender location, your say the rural or the urban location, the south and the north and more importantly the way in which one locates oneself ethnically in terms of ethnicity in terms of race.

So, this is what fundamentally it is the in the pursuit of this American dream that they differ this is again something that we would see in Arthur Miller's plays as well they will believe in the American dream, but the pursuit of it the thing is that they do or do not do to reach there that is what sets them apart and that is what sometimes even end up tearing these families apart.

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*J. Charles Washington*



or acceptance of less than she deserves or is entitled to. Hers is, in short, not the true American Dream, but a second-class version of it reserved for Black Americans and other poor people. Considering all the obstacles she has had to face as a Black woman, one can hardly fault her for what she does. Nevertheless, her dream is unacceptable to Walter, who will have nothing less than the complete American Dream, since her version of it only amounts to surviving, not living in the fullest sense.

Unlike his mother, Walter has managed to escape almost completely the crippling inferiority that destroys many Blacks, men in particular. In order to help determine how he managed to acquire the strength to dream his dream, one might examine what is most American about Walter and his thinking, for it is his acceptance of American values, rather than stereotypes, myths, and untruths about Blacks, that enables him to dream and act in a typically American



Like her earlier move to the North, the purchase of a suburban Chicago house reflects a compromise. Or acceptance of less than she deserves or is entitled to. Hers is, in short, not the true American Dream, but a second-class version of it reserved for Black Americans and other poor people. So, this perhaps is a greatest contribution of a play like this while it is critiquing, while the other plays have also been critiquing the notion of the American dream, this is a play which says that there are different versions of the American dream.

There are second best versions, a second class version as it is reserved for the Black Americans, other poor people the others, the immigrants, for the refugees. So, there is there are different versions of the American dream and it is not just a monolithic thing to which everyone can subscribe to.

Considering all the obstacles she has had to face as a Black woman, she can hardly fault her for what she does. Nevertheless, her dream is unacceptable to Walter, who will have nothing less than the complete American Dream, since her version of it only amounts to surviving, not living in the fullest sense. So, the conflict also comes over here when a character like Walter wants more than his share quote unquote his share.

Lena has in her mind a certain notion of what she can subscribe to, what she can get out of this notion of the American dream, where the the boundaries are drawn, where the limitations are made more visible, but Walter refuses to accept the second class version.

Walter refuses to accept these different versions he would want to go for the best version which is made available out there.

We find that it operates in various ways not just in terms of caste. *A Zoo Story* was also there are different versions of the American dream based on your class location as well.

So, all of these plays in a nutshell what they are also trying to foreground is that there are many different versions of American dream depending on one's location. There are certain things which we can easily access, there are certain things which are entirely out of bound for us and there are certain things may be torn down version a more adulterated version of it would be given to you as well.

We will continue looking at these critical ways in which the play has been read and also spend some time talking about the finer details about characterization about the major themes which have been fore grounded in this play *A Raisin in the Sun*.

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in particular. In order to help determine how he managed to acquire the strength to dream his dream, one might examine what is most American about Walter and his thinking, for it is his acceptance of American values, rather than stereotypes, myths, and untruths about Blacks, that enables him to dream and act in a typically American way. As Hansberry has stated, ". . . Walter Younger is an American more than he is anything else" ("Willie Loman" 8). Foremost is his belief in the value which holds that, in the land of opportunity, anyone can become anything he wants to be. While the play contains no explicit evidence to support this conjecture, the fact that this democratic ideal is the most cherished of those which form the American consciousness—indeed, is synonymous with the freedom that America stands for—means that Walter would be affected by it, as all Americans are. Believers in this myth let nothing stand in their way, as he does not. For him, this includes racism, which he barely considers until he is directly confronted with it in Act II, Scene 2, in the person of Carl Lindner, who tries to bribe

