Chapter-I

Introduction

Literature encompasses written works that express ideas, emotions, and experiences through storytelling, poetry, essays, and plays. It serves as a reflection of society, culture, and human nature, allowing readers to explore different perspectives and gain insights into the human condition. Studying literature provides opportunities to analyse themes, characters, and literary devices, fostering critical thinking and empathy. It offers a means of connection across time and space, as readers engage with the thoughts and experiences of authors from various backgrounds and historical periods. Overall, literature is both a form of artistic expression and a tool for understanding ourselves and the world around us. American literature encompasses a vast array of literary works spanning from the colonial period to the present day. It reflects the diverse cultural, historical, and social experiences of the American people. From the early writings of Native American tribes to the works of influential figures like Mark Twain, Emily Dickinson, Langston Hughes, and Toni Morrison, American literature explores themes such as identity, freedom, justice, and the American Dream. It has evolved over time, incorporating various literary movements such as realism, modernism, and postmodernism, while continually grappling with issues of race, class, gender, and national identity. Through novels, poetry, essays, and plays, American literature offers insights into the complexities of the American experience and serves as a mirror to the nation's evolving cultural landscape. American literature, the body of written works produced in the English language in the United States. Like other national literatures, American literature was shaped by the history of the country that produced it. For almost a century and a half, America was merely a group of colonies scattered along the eastern seaboard of the North

American continentcolonies from which a few hardy souls tentatively ventured westward. After a successful rebellion against the motherland, America became the United States, a nation. By the end of the 19th century this nation extended southward to the Gulf of Mexico, northward to the 49th parallel, and westward to the Pacific. By the end of the 19th century, too, it had taken its place among the powers of the world—its fortunes so interrelated with those of other nations that inevitably it became involved in two world wars and, following these conflicts, with the problems of Europe and East Asia. Meanwhile, the rise of science and industry, as well as changes in ways of thinking and feeling, wrought many modifications in people's lives. All these factors in the development of the United States molded the literature of the country. Lorraine Hansberry (May 19, 1930- January 12, 1965) was an African American playwright and author of political speeches, letters, and essays. Her most famous work, A Raisin in the Sun, was inspired by her family's legal battle against racially segregated housing laws in the Washington Park Subdivision of the South Side of Chicago during her childhood. Lorraine Hansberry was born in Chicago, Illinois, Hansberry was the youngest of four children of Carl Augustus Hansberry (a prominent real estate broker) and Nannie Louise Perry, and niece of William Leo Hansberry. She grew up on the south side of Chicago in the Woodlawn neighborhood. The family then moved into an all-white neighborhood, where they faced racial discrimination. Hansberry attended a predominantly white public school while her parents fought against segregation. Hansberry's father engaged in a legal battle against a racially restrictive covenant that attempted to prohibit African-American families from buying homes in the area. The legal struggle over their move led to the landmark Supreme Court case of Hansberry v. Lee, 311 U.S. 32 (1940). Though victors in the Supreme Court, Hansberry's family was subjected to what Hansberry would later describe as a "hellishly hostile white neighborhood." This experience later inspired her to write her most famous work, A Raisin

in the Sun. Hansberry attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison, but found college to be uninspiring and left in 1950 to pursue her career as a writer in New York City. She worked on the staff of a Black newspaper called Freedom. It was at that time she wrote A Raisin in the Sun. The play was a huge success. It was the first play written by an African-American woman and produced on Broadway. It also received the New York Drama Critics Award making Hansberry the youngest and first African American to receive the Award. Lorraine Hansberry took the title of A Raisin in the Sun from a line in Langston Hughes's famous 1951 poem "Harlem." Hughes was a prominent black poet during the 1920s Harlem Renaissance in New York City, during which black artists of all kinds- musicians, poets, writersgave innovative voices to their personal and cultural experiences. The Harlem Renaissance was a time of immense promise and hopefulness for black artists, as their efforts were noticed and applauded across the United States. In fact, the 1920s are known to history as the Jazz Age, since that musical form, created by a vanguard of black musicians, gained immense national popularity during the period and seemed to embody the exuberance and excitement of the decade. The Harlem Renaissance and the positive national response to the art it produced seemed to herald the possibility of a new age of acceptance for blacks in America. Langston Hughes was one of the brightest lights of the Harlem Renaissance, and his poems and essays celebrate black culture, creativity, and strength. However, Hughes wrote "Harlem" in 1951, twenty years after the Great Depression crushed the Harlem Renaissance and devastated black communities more terribly than any other group in the I Inited States. In addition, the postWorld War II years of the 1950s were characterized by "white fligrit," in which whites fled the cities in favor of the rapidly growing suburbs Blacks were often left behina deteriorating cities, and were unwelcome in the suburbs. In a time of renewed prosperity, blacks were for the most part left behind. "Harlem" captures the tension between the need for black expression and the

impossibility of that expression because of American society's oppression of its black population. In the poem, Hughes asks whether a "dream deferred"-a dream put on hold-withers up "like a raisin in the sun." His lines confront the racist and dehumanizing attitude prevalent in American society before the civil rights movement of the 1960s that black desires and ambitions were, at best, unimportant and should be ignored, and at worst, should be forcibly resisted. His closing rhetorical question- "Or does [a dream deferred] explode?"-is incendiary, a bold statement that the suppression of black dreams might result in an eruption. It implicitly places the blame for this possible eruption on the oppressive society that forces the dream to be deferred. Hansberry's reference to Hughes's poem in her play's title highlights the importance of dreams in A Raisin in the Sun and the struggle that her characters face to realize their individual dreams, a struggle inextricably tied to the more fundamental black dream of equality in America. A Raising in the Sun portrays a few weeks in the life of the Youngers, an African- American family living on the South Side of Chicago in the 1950s. When the play opens, the Youngers are about to receive an insurance check for $10,000. This money comes from the deceased Mr. Younger's life insurance policy. Each of the adult members of the family has an idea as to what he or she would like to do with this money. The matriarch of the family, Mama, wants to buy a house to fulfill a dream she shared with her husband. Mama's son, Walter Lee, would rather use the money to invest in a liquor store with his friends. He believes that the investment will solve the family's financial problems forever. Walter's wife, Ruth, agrees with Mama, however, and hopes that she and Walter can provide more space and opportunity for their son, Travis. Finally, Beneatha, Walter's sister and Mama's daughter, wants to use the money for her medical school tuition. She also wishes that her family members were not so interested in joining the white world. Beneatha instead tries to find her identity by looking back to the past and to Africa. As the play progresses, the Youngers clash

over their competing dreams. Ruth discovers that she is pregnant but fears that if she has the child, she will put more financial pressure on her family members. When Walter says nothing to Ruth's admission that she is considering abortion, Mama puts a down payment on a house for the whole family. She believes that a bigger, brighter dwelling will help them all. This house is in Clybourne Park, an entirely white neighborhood. When the Youngers' future neighbors find out that the Youngers are moving in, they send Mr. Lindner, from the Clybourne Park Improvement Association, to offer the Youngers money in return for staying away. The Youngers refuse the deal, even after Walter loses the rest of the money ($6,500) to his friend Willy Harris, who persuades Walter to invest in the liquor store and then runs off with his cash. In the meantime, Beneatha rejects her suitor, George Murchison, whom she believes to be shallow and blind to the problems of race. Subsequently, she receives a marriage proposal from her Nigerian boyfriend, Joseph Asagai, who wants Beneatha to get a medical degree and move to Africa with him (Beneatha does not make her choice before the end of the play). The Youngers eventually move out of the apartment, fulfilling the family's long-held dream. Their future seems uncertain and slightly dangerous, but they are optimistic and determined to live a better life. They believe that they can succeed if they stick together as a family and resolve to defer their dreams no longer. Themes, Motifs & Symbols Themes Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

Chapter-II

Racism in the United States has been a major issue since the colonial era and the slave era. Heavy burden of racism in the country have fallen upon African Americans.Major racially structured institutions included slavery, native American reservations, segregation, residential schools, and internment camps. Racial stratification hasoccurred in employment, housing, education and government. Formal racial discrimination was largely banned in the mid-20th century, and it came to be perceived as socially unacceptable and/or morally repugnant as well, yet racial politics remain a major phenomenon.Racist attitudes, or prejudices, are held by a substantial portion of the US population.Discrimination against African Americans, Latin Americans, and Muslims is widely acknowledged. Members of every major American ethnic minority have perceived racism in their dealings with other minority groups.

I was born black and female" said Lorraine Hansberry addressing a Black Writers Conference. She thus acknowledged the significance of these immutable aspects of her identity, of being black and female. This double consciousness marked her writing, which she produced in the midst of the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement which heralded the second wave of the women's movement. This dominated her life and her work. Rejecting the limits placed on her race and her gender, she employs her writing and her life as a social activist to expand the meaning of what it meant to be a black woman.

The play ‘A raisin in the Sun’ is based on her childhood experiences of desecrating a white neighbourhood. It won the New York drama critics circle award as the best play of the year. She was the youngest American, the fifth woman and the first black to win the award. Her success opened the gate for a generation of modern black actors and writers who were influenced and encouraged by her writing.Hansberry’s own life is interweaved in this play. However, the central theme of A Raisin in the Sun reveals how racism in the housing industry, government, religious leaders, and average Americans supported the segregated housing environment of Chicago.

Racism is prejudice, discrimination, or hatred directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior. Many people assume that racism is very simple, or black and white, so to speak; however, it is not that simple. The major theme throughout playwright Lorraine Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun is how racism impacts daily life for this multi-generational family, not only in relations between black and white people, but also amongst blacks themselves.

The title of the play is taken from Langston Hughes’s poem HARLEM and draws our attention to the dreams of the various characters, and the effect of having those dreams deferred. As a child, Hansberry sat quietly when the noted poet Hughes came to visit her father. Even then the seeds of the quiet celebration of life. A Raisin in the Sun must have been germinating. Surely she was moved by Hughes poem, from which the final title of the play is derived.It would be most befitting to quote the Hughes’ poem as acknowledged in the title page of Hansberry’s A Raisin in the Sun

The setting of A Raisin in the Sun is a ghetto of Chicago, where most blacks lived. These districts consisted of overpriced, overcrowded, and poorly-maintained apartments and homes. In the ghettos, crime rates were high and public services were limited. Most blacks living in the ghetto

had hopes of leaving to better suburban neighborhoods, but segregated housing kept them stuck in the ghetto. The housing industry was the greatest cause of racism in Chicago. Within the housing industry, many social scientists observed that "real estate agencies play the largest role in maintaining segregated communities". Real estate agents made enormous profits manipulating white fears of integration and black desires to escape the ghetto, as evidenced by the lucrative practice of blockbusting.

A real estate agent would encourage a black family to move to an all-white neighborhood. Housing costs within the white neighborhoods were much lower than black neighborhoods, so some black family would attempt to move, despite threats from future white neighbors. After the black family moved in, nervous whites feared their property values would crash. The real estate agent would then purchase much of whites' houses well below their market value, and resell them well above their market value to blacks wanting to flee the ghetto. This lucrative bait-and-switch procedure could double real estate agencies' profits within two years. Whites who experienced blockbusting held hard feelings towards blacks which sometimes turned violent.

Real estate agents also fostered the segregation in Chicago by developing separate housing markets for blacks and whites. In 1917, the Chicago Real Estate Board condemned the sale and rental of housing to blacks outside of city blocks contingent to the ghetto. Conditions did not change in the next half-century, and blacks interested in a home or apartments were usually shown only ghettos or transition neighborhoods. Real estate agents limited blacks' housing options by rarely offering them housing opportunities outside the ghetto. The real estate industry literally trapped the black family in the ghetto. The real estate industry was aided in segregating Chicago by unfair costs of living within the housing industry. Landlords charged black families high prices for low quality housing, and the average black family in the ghetto had to pay 10% more in housing

taxes and fees than in a comparable white neighborhood. Higher housing costs limited blacks' opportunities to move to better neighborhoods by taking away a large portion of their income. In addition, most white landlords did not maintain their slum properly, leading to poor living conditions. Many black families suffered these higher housing costs and poor living conditions within the ghetto because they could not save enough money to move to a cheaper suburban neighborhood.

The protagonist of the play, Walter Lee Younger is a dreamer and he wants to be rich and devises plans to acquire wealth with his friends. He wants to invest his father's insurance money in a liquor store venture. His dream is nullified by Harvis as he cheats Walter in the end of the play.

Beneatha Younger is an intellectual and she attends college. She has a dream of becoming a doctor and struggles to pose her identity as a well-educated Black woman. Lena Younger Mama is Walter and Beneatha's sensitive mother and the head of the family. Mamawants the apartment in which they all live always be neat and polished.The Youngers struggle to attain these dreams throughout the play, and much of their happiness and depression is directly related to their attainment of, or failure to attain, these dreams. By the end of the play, they learn that the dream of a house is the most important dream because it unities the family. All the dreams are unfulfilled. The Younger family is alienated from the white middle class culture; however, they harbor their materialistic dreams as the rest of the American Society.

This play is based on racial prejudice, the tension between Whites and Black in American society. White people are the settlers of America and black people were brought into the country as slaves. The white never wanted to live along with the black; they consider Black people as untouchables. This racial prejudice is purposefully spread by one section of the white people. They

are called racist or fundamentalists. They want to retain their identity and want to divide the society. Such people are against integration. Violence is the weapon by which they threaten the black people. This play portrays the sufferings of Black people and the feelings of different characters. There is a strain in the black family about how to react to the oppressing white community.

A Raisin in the Sun notes that the housing industry has a racist nature because of the discrepancies in housing cost between black and white communities and their separate housing locations. Walter and Ruth are stunned that Mama purchases a house in an entirely white neighborhood, because moving to a white neighborhood could put their lives at risk. Mama explains why she was unwilling to stay in the black community when she states, "Then houses they put up for colored in the areas way out all seem to cost twice as much as other houses. I did the best I could," also noting that the new houses built for blacks is located in their own segregated communities.

In A Raisin in the Sun, Beneatha expresses the cynicism that many minority intellectuals, including Lorraine Hansberry, held towards religion in the light of white Christian leadership favoring segregation. “Mama tells Beneatha that she will be a doctor someday, "God willing." Beneatha "dryly" replies to Mama that "God hasn't got a thing to do with it," later says, "God is just one idea that I don't accept. I get tired of Him getting credit for all the things the human race achieves through its own stubborn effort”. Beneatha lost the hope in Christianity and also in God because of the dominance of people.Hansberry further reveals her own attitude towards religion when Mama folds over, begging God for strength, as she realizes that Walter has lost all their insurance money. Beneatha tries to gain her mother's attention to help her, speaking to her

"plaintively". This implies that she is pleading with her mother as a parent to an emotionally immature child.

Karl Lindner also provides a reflection of some racist Christian leaders. He is dressed professionally and described as "a gentle man; thoughtful and somewhat labored in his manner". He speaks to the Youngers in a pious tone, saying, "Most of the trouble exists because people just don't sit down and talk to each other." Ruth replies, "You can say that again mister," while nodding as she might in church.Hansberry shows further textual evidence that Linder represents religious leadership as Beneatha tells Mama about Linder's offer to their family. She says, "He talked about Brotherhood. He said everybody ought to learn how to sit down and hate each other with good Christian fellowship". Linder even sounds like the Reverend Parker of Deerfield when he states, "you've got to admit that a man, right or wrong, has the right to want to have the neighborhood he lives in a certain kind of way." Both men gently discusssegregation in a religious manner.

After Carl Hansberry sued to remain in his new neighborhood, "howling mobs" surrounded the Hansberry's house. At one point a brick hurled through their window barely missed Lorraine's head before embedding itself in their wall. This violence, from the perspective of many whites, was unfortunate, for as long as both races remained separate, conflict was unnecessary. When integration threatened the carefully crafted white society, violence ensued.

The role of individual racism within segregated housing in Chicago is an important focus of A Raisin in the Sun. When Ruth and Walter first hear the news that they will be moving to Clybourne Park, they are shocked. Walter looks at his mother with "hostility," while Ruth's stunned response is, "Clybourne Park? Mama, there ain't no colored people living in Clybourne Park." Walter

becomes bitter as Ruth tries to adjust to the shock. They realize that their lives could be at risk from an irate vigilante if they move into a white neighborhood.

The characterization of Karl Linder is a scathing commentary on white northern racism at the personal level. He appears innocuous, "quiet-looking," "middle aged," and "a gentle man". He explains to the Youngers that "most of the trouble exists because people just don't sit down and talk to each other". He is calm, patient, and "almost sadly" warns the Youngers that they will be in physical danger they move into Clybourne Park. However, by desiring to keep the Youngers from Clybourne Park, he is implying to them, as Mama says, "they aren't fit to walk the earth". Like Bob Danning, Karl Lindner says, "I want you to believe me when I tell you that race prejudice simply doesn't enter into it". At the end of the play, when Walter triumphantly kicks him out of the house, Karl's true character is as weak and shallow as that of thewhites who openly support housing segregation. The Younger family ignores his veiled threats and concentrates on Walter, the unexpected hero. Karl's last line is a lame, "I sure hope you people know what you're getting into". She was worried about her personal survival from lynching and hate crime. It seems as though her children have lost sight of the benefits of the new society. They simply see the problems they face as monumental, illustrating the relativity of the plight of society.

Asagai voices a wise opinion of his African people. He wants to teach them and help them become educated men and women. He does not want the color line or racial distinctions to change their opportunities. However, Asagai never refers to his people as "negroes" or "blacks." Instead, he always refers to them as Africans and villagers, erasing the color line and placing a national one in its place: a line less hatred.When Lindner does in fact arrive at the Younger's home, Walter Lee has digested Mama's words. He tells Lindner that his family has pride and cannot be bought by money or color. It is through these words that Walter emerges a mature man. Hansberry was

also looking at internalized racism: the idea that black people in America have become so accustomed to the treatment they receive from white society that they treat members of their own community with similar disdain. There are several examples of internalized racism in the play.Early on in the play, Walter Lee pleads with his wife to be heard, but she won't listen. He specifically blames 'colored women' for keeping the black man down. They don't understand about building their man up and making them feel like they are somebody.

Like they can do something.' Lena responds: 'There are colored men who do things.' To which Walter Lee snorts.'No thanks to a colored woman Just a group of men, tied to a race of women with small minds!' Walter Lee blames his wife for hindering him from accomplishing his dreams. He hates that he feels so trapped on one side by white society's reign on success and on the other side by a woman who won't let him try to be better.

A Raisin in the Sun is a play by Lorraine Hansberry that examines how racial prejudice affects an African-American family and obstructs them from fulfilling their dreams. The play centers around, The Youngers', an African American family living in Chicago's South Side. Essentially, the major theme which characterizes the play is the theme of racism and its impact on the multi-generational family. Notably, the impact of racism is seen not only in how whites and blacks relate but also in how blacks relate with themselves. The author uses the various characters in the play to highlight the theme of racial discrimination, seen in job discrimination and segregated neighborhoods, detailing how it affects the Younger family and the entire society at large.

The issue of job discrimination is presented in the character of Ruth, who falls sick, yet fears contacting her employer since she feels that she will be easily replaced. Notably, this shows that she feels replaceable and is aware that her employer is not concerned about her wellbeing and thus

cannot sympathize with her, citing that she will be immediately replaced. Lena suggests that Ruth should tell her employer that she is down with the flu since this is an illness that white people can also get, making it believable (Hansberry, 1984). This brings up the idea that white employers discriminate against black employees and are quick to discredit them even in instances where they are sick and cannot go to work. The author uses Ruth's character to shed light on job discrimination and how it affects African Americans in the workplace.

The author uses the character of Mr. Lindner to reveal the theme of racial discrimination, which is seen in the segregation of neighborhoods. In the family's quest to move into a white neighborhood, they are confronted by Mr. Lindner, who represents the governing body of the Clybourne Park neighborhood (Jose, 2014). Mr. Lindner tries to persuade the family not to make a move into the all-white neighborhood, even going as far as bribing them to ensure that they do not move there. Mr. Lindner and the entire white neighborhood do not view this family as worthy of living in a white neighborhood, which depicts racial discrimination in the United States (Napitupulu & Fang, 2022). In one scene, Mr. Lindner tells the family that for the happiness of everyone concerned, Negro families should not intermingle with White families and that each of them ought to live in their neighborhood (Hansberry, 1984). The author thus reveals the plight of many families in the United States who are not tolerated in various neighborhoods due to racism.

In sum, the author has utilized the different characters in the play to shed light on the theme of racism and its effects on the Younger family and the entire society. Frustration and exhaustion characterize the beginning of the play as each person in the Younger family struggles to live and be relevant in the racist society. The unfolding challenges that the family faces due to the difficult economic situation make it difficult for them to achieve the dreams they harbor. The segregated neighborhoods where blacks are not allowed to live with whites depict a long line of racism rooted

in the past yet still ongoing in the modern day. The play sheds light on the plight of many families that are subjected to racial discrimination in the form of job discrimination and segregated neighborhoods.

Racial discrimination is the main theme of the book, strongly reflecting the situation that prevailed during the 1950s in the United States, a time when the story's Younger family lived in Chicago's South Side ghetto. Racial discrimination led to the city being carved into two distinct parts – the first housing whites only, and the other housing blacks. A majority of blacks did not accept the idea of assimilating into the dominant white culture on the grounds that by doing so they would fit into white perceptions about their behavior and actions and thereby would be demeaning themselves. Blacks were searching for separate self-identities based on a celebration of their culture and heritage. They wanted to be treated as equally (like whites) contributing members of society, in pursuit of the American Dream. All the minor characters in the book indulge in actions that reflect the racial discrimination prevailing at that time.

George Murchison, the rich black suitor of Beneatha Younger, believes that assimilating into white society is the only way to attain riches and the admiration of others. Instead of feeling pride in his African heritage, and like other black members of the community, resist racism, George in fact supports racism by willingly submitting to white culture. When Beneatha says he ought to be more considerate about the causes blacks were fighting for, he arrogantly replies: "Forget it baby! There ain't no causes" (Hansberry, p. 136). He even goes to the extent of using his God given sharp intellect and debating ability to ridicule other blacks . Due to his perceived pro-racist stance, George becomes increasingly repelling to other blacks .

Joseph Asagai is the exact opposite of George Murchison. He is a forceful Nigerian character, an African intellectual (Hansberry, p. 42), who takes fierce pride in his African heritage (Hansberry, p. 72). Having fallen in love with Beneatha, he tries to awaken pride of her heritage in her by giving her Nigerian costumes to wear and fondly calling her 'Alaiyo' . He pleads with her to marry him and accompany him to his native Nigeria that he promises she would like so much, it would feel as though she had "only been away a day" (Hansberry, p. 130)}. While Asagai represents a powerful African model that other blacks can proudly emulate, he is guilty of supporting an important pillar of racism – suppression of women. When Beneatha, in response to his proposal of marriage, says she is not interested in a storybook romance, but wants to become an independent and liberated woman, Asagai heaps scorn on her wishes, saying: "Liberated women are not liberated at all!" (Hansberry, p. 50).

Willy Harris, Walter Younger's black partner in his liquor store project cheats him and runs away with the investment money (Hansberry, 118). Instead of helping Walter try to improve his finances and position in life for himself and his family, Willy instead adds more problems to the Youngers' already heavy financial burden. Willy's action proves that he is a betrayer of his fellow black, and by association, a betrayer of the entire black community and the causes they were fighting for.Mrs. Johnson, neighbor of the Younger family, represents the typical black person too scared to assimilate with whites in a predominantly white neighborhood. She tries to scare the Younger family into not moving into the all-white Clybourne community by recalling incidents where blacks were badly intimidated in similar situations (Hansberry, p. 104).

Karl Lindner portrays the typical "white Aryan", arrogantly secure in the power of his race and its belief that blacks are not fit to live in the same neighborhood as them. He is chosen by the all-white Clybourne community to make the Youngers "try and understand their [whites'] problem,

and the way they feel" (Hansberry, p. 105); the problem being the entry of a black family into the all-white community would create insecurity for the residents. The whites even authorize Lindner to pay the Youngers money in return for staying away from their sheltered community. Lindner comes very close to achieving his mission when Walter agrees to take the money and sign a binding contract (Hansberry, p. 141), only to be thwarted at the last moment when Walter has a change of heart.

Despite many constitutional amendments enacted after the end of the Civil War, African-Americans were still denied many civil rights one hundred years later, which affected all aspects of their lives. Lorraine Hansberry, author of A Raisin in the Sun, used her family's experience with discrimination as inspiration for the Younger family in order to shine a light on the specific racism that resulted from the residential segregation that dominated Chicago's housing industry post WWII. The playwright depicts the Youngers' substandard living conditions, the boundaries placed on their housing choices, and Lindner's pretense of community outreach, as emanating from the racially restrictive housing covenants that existed at that point in history. And, Hansberry ultimately portrays how this racism follows the Younger family even as they pursue a better life outside the ghetto.

Hansberry effectively establishes that the Youngers are unhappy and disappointed, living in an overcrowded ghetto apartment in a black neighborhood. And, that they have not fulfilled their dream of the comfortable life they feel they have earned. The play opens with a graphic description of the family's apartment and its mediocre furniture whose "primary feature now is that they have clearly had to accommodate the living of too many people for too many years' ' (Hansberry 977). Not only is the furniture overused and "tired," but the carpet is "worn" and is "showing its weariness" (Hansberry 977). In addition to the depressing physical state of the apartment is the

fact that it must be shared by three generations, forcing Travis to sleep on the couch, Lena and Beneatha to share a room and the whole family to use a common hall bathroom. Added to this are the unsanitary conditions as evidenced by Beneatha spraying insecticide and Travis playing outside with rats. Gordon describes the environment in her article, "Somewhat like War," "Hansberry uses the bloody demise of a [rat]... to establish a pervasive reality of ghetto life early in the play. Where there is little or no municipal sanitation service or landlord upkeep, rats and roaches thrive" (Gordon 127).

This lack of sanitation on behalf of landlords adds to the decreased quality of life experienced in the ghetto. As Gordon further explains about the play's setting, "[l]locating the Younger family in Chicago's South Side, Hansberry directly engages crises produced by ghetto economies and dehumanizing living conditions, restricted educational access, and explosive encounters along urban color lines" (Gordon 123). Not only is their present environment hampered by the poor conditions, but their future is as well–-life in the ghetto impacts generations to come due to the lack of good school districts. It is this segregated and inferior lifestyle that is the root of friction between those who have no choice but to live in the ghetto and those who have the freedom to move out.

Lena hopes the insurance check will lift them out of this ghetto. She reveals her dream saying, "Been thinking that we maybe could meet the notes on a little old two-story somewhere with a yard where Travis could play in the summertime, if we use part of the insurance for a down payment" (Hansberry 989). She knows the move will lead to a better life for all of them, especially her grandson. She further laments on her mediocre lifestyle saying that, "We hadn't planned on living here more than a year...You should know all the dreams I had 'bout buying that house and fixing it up and making me a little garden in the back – and didn't none of it happen" (Hansberry

990). Lena reflects on her dream that was never realized and is disappointed by this. Hansberry effectively establishes that the Youngers are unhappy living in their ghetto apartment, in a neighborhood whose boundaries are drawn along color lines, and that they have been unable to fulfill their dream of homeownership.

Hansberry illustrates that the Youngers' substandard living conditions are not just due to economic disparity, but are directly the result of Chicago's clearly defined racially restrictive housing covenants that originated from Jim Crow Laws. In the play, Walter indicates this segregation when he woefully tells Lena, "Mama – sometimes when I'm downtown and I pass them cool, quiet-looking restaurants where them white boys are sitting back and talking 'bout things…. Sitting there turning deals worth millions of dollars" (Hansberry 1007). His feelings of exclusion are not unfounded but are based on specific laws that bar his entry to white society. Tripp explains these laws in the biography, The Importance of Lorraine Hansberry.Since the days of slavery, the custom had been to keep the races separated. The Jim Crow laws written in the early 1900's legalized this separation and enforced an inferior status for blacks… In the early 1930's and 1940's state laws strengthened segregation. Fair housing legislation did not exist. Whites plotted to keep blacks segregated by refusing to sell or rent homes in certain neighborhoods to blacks.

Lena returns to announce her purchase of a house with the insurance money, and the family immediately challenges her choice of neighborhood. When Ruth asks Lena "Clybourne Park? Mama, they ain't no colored people living in Clybourne Park," she confirms she is aware of the laws that were created to specifically keep blacks and whites separated (Hansberry 1018). Unfortunately, white real estate owners took advantage of black families who wanted to purchase a home—the cost of living in the ghetto was much higher than renting or buying outside Chicago's

"Black Belt" (the term used for the city's South Side) (Gordon 124). Lena experienced this first hand as evidenced when she answers Ruth: "The houses they put up for colored in them areas way out all seem to cost twice as much as other houses. I did the best I could…I just tried to find the nicest place for the least amount of money for my family," knowing her money is better spent outside the ghetto (Hansberry 1018). Hansberry effectively illustrates how a history of prejudice led to racially restrictive housing covenants, which effectively precluded black families from living in designated whites-only neighborhoods in Chicago, and kept them in the ghetto.

Hansberry establishes that Lena's purchase of a home in this white neighborhood is a bold stance against prejudice. This mirrors Hansberry's father's quest for equality and justice as exemplified by his State and Supreme Court cases, which challenged Chicago's racially restrictive housing covenants. In the play, Lena tells Travis, "She [Lena] went out and she bought you a house… It's going to be yours when you get to be a man … It's just a plain little old house – but it's made good and solid—and it will be ours… it makes a difference in a man when he can walk on floors that belong to him" (Hansberry 1017-1018). Lena clearly puts her dreams for future generations above any fears she may have of moving to Clybourne Park. The "man" refers not only to her grandson Travis, but her son, Walter, because she knows that home ownership functions not only as an investment, but also as a source of much needed pride for her troubled son.

According to Hansberry in her autobiography, Young, Gifted & Black, like Lena, her father also took a stand against racism: "My father was typical of a generation of Negroes who believed that the 'American way' could successfully be made to work to democratize the United States. Thus…he spent a small personal fortune… and many years of his life fighting …Chicago's 'restrictive covenants' in one of this nation's ugliest ghettoes" (Nemiroff 51). Carl Hansberry felt his family had every right, no matter their color, to pursue the "American way" and utilized the

court system to fight for this dream. Tripp illuminates the link between the play and the case: "When Lorraine was eight years old her father decided he would test the Jim Crow laws and the concept of restrictive covenants by buying a home in an area restricted to whites by law…Carl lost the case in state court…but appealed the ruling to the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington D.C.

Finally, in 1940, the Supreme Court reversed the state's decision in the case known as Hansberry vs. Lee. It became one of the central ideas of her first play" (Tripp 20-21). Hansberry infuses Lena with these qualities of courage and fortitude. Lenah also challenges her family to follow her lead. When Ruth states that there are no black people in Clybourne Park, Lena answers without any hesitation, "Well, I guess there's going to be some now," making it clear she has no intention of backing down (Hansberry 1023). Hansberry effectively establishes the connection between Lena's challenge of her housing situation and Carl Hansberry's quest for justice and that both are courageous and unprecedented acts.

Hansberry reveals that Lindner represents the type of racism that originates not just from these government laws, but also on behalf of average individuals who camouflage their bigotry in seemingly calm and eloquent language. Lindner's prejudice is revealed when he coolly tells the family.A man, right or wrong, has the right to want to have the neighborhood he lives in a certain kind of way. And, at the moment, the overwhelming majority of our people out there feel that people get along better, take more of a common interest in the life of the community, when they share a common background. I want you to believe me when I tell you that race prejudice simply doesn't even enter into it our Negro families are happier when they live in their own communities.

Here, Linder clearly defines his right to live wherever and however he wants, but contrary to what he states, he uses prejudice to deny the Younger family this same right because of their race. The term "common background" is merely a euphemism for skin color. He then completely shifts the blame away from the whites to the "Negro families" for wanting to live on their own where they are "happier," but it is obvious that it is the whites that are happier with this arrangement. Hansberry, clarifying Lindner's persona explains, "I have treated Mr. Lindner as a human being merely because he is one; that does not make the meaning of his call less malignant, less sick. I could no more imagine myself allowing the Youngers to accept his obscene offer of money than I could imagine myself allowing them to accept a cash payment for their own murder" (Nemiroff 131-132). Lindner's offer is disparaging and patronizing to the Youngers, despite his own belief that it is equitable. These acts on behalf of individuals can be just as harmful if not more than the acts of government, because they are more personal and calculated and therefore more offensive.

Linder is completely blind to this bigotry. When he tells Walter, who refuses the buyout of the house, "You just can't force people to change their hearts, son," he misses the remark's double meaning (Hansberry 1035). While speaking to Walter's stubbornness, Lindner is also showing his own narrow-mindedness. Gordon argues that Hansberry employs Mr. Lindner "to demonstrate the seemingly benign ways that northern whites deny racial discrimination, romanticize their own paternalism, and repudiate black self-determination" (Gordon 129). Lindner clearly disavows his own intolerance, elevates himself to a position above the Youngers merely because he is white, and refuses to accept the Younger's equality. Hansberry illustrates how racism, sanctioned by state laws, leads to increased racism on behalf of the individual.

Hansberry establishes that the Youngers' decision to move to Clybourne Park does not mean they have overcome this racism, but the threats will follow them, similar to the violence that

followed the Hansberry family when they moved into a white neighborhood. In the play, Mrs. Johnson updates the Youngers on current events: "You mean you ain't read 'bout them colored people that was bombed out their place out there? Ain't it something how bad these here white folks is getting here in Chicago! Lord, getting so you think you are right down in Mississippi!" and points to the paper, reading aloud: "Negroes Invade Clybourne Park –Bombed!" (Hansberry 1022-1023). Most Blacks left the South to escape its brutal realities, only to move to northern states and encounter the same type of treatment. Lena counters the ne The aggression the Youngers will face has roots in Hansberry's own life. In an interview in the New Yorker, Hansberry remembers her childhood in a white neighborhood and tells the reporter, "[My mother] sat in that house for eight months with us – while Daddy spent most of his time in Washington fighting his case – in what was a very hostile neighborhood…a mob gathered. We went inside, and while we were in our living room, a brick came crashing through the window with such force it embedded itself in the opposite wall. I was the one the brick almost hit" (White 34). This experience although horrific, did not sway the Hansberrys to move and became a theme in the play.

It becomes very clear that the Youngers also have every intention to stand their ground and move to the white neighborhood. Upon hearing this, Lindner not so subtly threatens: "What do you think you are going to gain by moving into a neighborhood where you just aren't wanted and where some elements – well – people can get awful worked up when they feel that their whole way of life and everything they've worked for is threatened?" (Hansberry 1033). Lindner, although previously relying on more soft-spoken tactics, reverts to using more threatening speech. He is incredulous that the Youngers do not see eye-to-eye with him, and his last words, "I sure hope you people know what you're getting into," forebodes the neighborhood's plans for retaliation (Hansberry 1051). Hansberry effectively establishes that the Youngers' fight for

equality and peace of mind will continue on in their new place of residence despite the expressions of happiness they show at the prospect of leaving the ghetto.

Hansberry utilized her play, A Raisin in the Sun, as a vehicle to expose the unfairness of racially restrictive housing covenants in Post WWII Chicago. These laws were created by the government and condoned by individual Americans. Through the actions and experiences of the Younger family, Hansberry expressed her own pain of moving to an unwelcoming white neighborhood. She personified the Youngers with the same purpose exhibited by her father—to pursue a dream of homeownership, and to live and thrive despite the hostile environment. Both the Younger family and the Hansberry family made a commitment to overcome racial prejudice in order to secure freedoms for future generations. Unfortunately, resistance from the white community was very slow to change.

Chapter-III

Conclusion

A Raisin in the Sun by Lorraine Hansberry interprets a meaningful story that describes and recreates the struggles of African Americans in the 1950s. African Americans have been treated unfairly for the past several decades and their history and struggles are yet unknown to many people living today. This play indicates a sad truth on how dreams are torn apart and ridiculed due to the hardships African American's had to face in the 1900s. The Youngers, who are showcased as the main family in the play demonstrate the hardships through the roughness of their environment, their low economic standards, and racial discrimination. The Youngers are an indigent African-American family who has very few choices in their white supreming society. The Youngers struggle to attain their own individual dreams throughout the play which symbolizes both their happiness and depression throughout the play. In the play, Lorraine Hansberry play uses the environment, socio-economic status, and racial tensions to symbolize a family's struggle to deal with racism and oppression in their everyday lives, as well as to exemplify their dreams.

Living in poverty is not a problem that many people face especially in first-world countries. The Younger family has many obstacles that they have faced to move forward towards their dreams. Money is a huge problem that is facing the Younger family. The members in the house all work like laborers to get enough money to sustain their families. Walter works hard as a chauffeur to provide the main source of income for his family. Even though Walter doesn't earn that much he still wants his son to feel like they are fortunate.

Throughout Raisin, Hansberry expresses her own desire to see blacks in entrepreneurial ventures. So few blacks were in business in 1959 that sociologists of that day addressed this concern in

academic publications. Mama says, in response to Ruth's echoing Walter's dream of owning his own business, "We ain't no business people, Ruth. We just plain working folks," and Ruth answers with: "Ain't nobody business people till they go into business. Walter Lee says colored people ain't never going to start getting ahead till they start gambling on some different kinds of things in the world — investments and things." Because the percentage of black people who own their own businesses has increased dramatically since 1959, one might conclude that, here once again, Hansberry had an accurate view of the future.

Certain characters in the play, such as George Murchison, address persistent racial discrimination by directing their efforts toward assimilation, whereby one integrates into the mainstream of society. Beneatha, declaring that she “hate[s] assimilationist Negroes,” condemns George as “ashamed of his heritage” when he initially scoffs at her close-cut, “natural” hair. George retorts that the “heritage” in which Beneatha takes such pride is “nothing but a bunch of raggedy-assed spirituals and some grass huts!” With this argument, Hansberry gives voice to the varied opinions of African-American thinkers, such as Booker T. Washington (who argued in favor of gradual assimilation of African Americans) and Marcus Garvey (who championed pride in African heritage and called for African Americans to return to Africa).

In the same vein as Garvey, Hansberry explores the idea of Africa as a home for African Americans, a view most clearly articulated by Joseph Asagai, a Nigerian student. Following the loss of Walter’s investment Asagai suggests that a disheartened Beneatha “come home with me to Africa.” Asagai’s suggestion that Beneatha move to Nigeria with him to explore her African roots reflected the surge in African studies that gained momentum in the late 1950s. While Beneatha shows genuine interest in her African heritage, she does not answer Asagai’s proposal within the context of the play, hinting that she may not go so far as to think of Africa as her “home.”

In 1959 much of the United States, including Chicago, remained de facto segregated, meaning that racial segregation persisted in education, employment, and housing even though the Supreme Court had overturned segregation that was established by law as unconstitutional. Set in de facto segregated Chicago, Hansberry's play draws on stories from the author's own life, such as her family's experience with housing discrimination in 1930s Chicago. After moving to a house in an all-white neighborhood, Hansberry's family endured legal battles and physical threats not unlike the "bombs" that Walter, Ruth, and Mrs. Johnson reference in the play. Despite the suggestion by Karl Lindner that "race prejudice simply doesn't enter into" Clybourne Park's offer to buy back the Youngers' home, he hints at the very real dangers that accompany the family's decision to relocate to a white neighborhood.

A Raisin in the Sun is not just about race; class tensions are a prominent issue throughout the play. George Murchison is Beneatha's well-to-do boyfriend. Although he is educated and wealthy, Beneatha is still trying to sort out her feelings about him. Her sister-in-law, Ruth, does not understand Beneatha's ambivalence: he is good-looking, and able to provide well for Beneatha. However, Beneatha is planning to be a doctor, and is not dependent on "marrying well" for her financial security. Hansberry also hints that marriage into the Murchison family is not very probable. Beneatha says, "Oh, Mama- The Murchisons are honest-to-God-real-live-rich colored people, and the only people in the world who are more snobbish than rich white people are rich colored people.

I thought everybody knew that I've met Mrs. Murchison. She's a scene!" Beneatha is sensitive to the reality that even though the two families are black, they are deeply divided. Beneatha suggests that class distinctions are more pronounced amongst African-Americans than between African-Americans and whites. Despite their degree of wealth or education, blacks in

America were discriminated against. Wealthy African-Americans had limitations on schools, housing, and occupations just like their poor counterparts. Mrs. Murchison's 'snobbishness' is emblematic of a desperate yet futile attempt to be seen as different from poor blacks and thus gain acceptance by whites. However, radical legislative and social change proves to be the only substantive solution to America's problem.

Fitting in with the dominant culture, for People of Color, often means giving up the right to have natural hair. A USA Today story adapted by Newsela, reports New York City's move to ban policies that penalize black hair. The story describes some of the recent cases where Black individuals were discriminated against because their hair was not acceptable to those in power. They cite a high school wrestler who was forced by a referee to cut his dreadlocks before he was allowed to proceed with his wrestling match. The article mentions the U.S. Department of Defense's ban on Afros, braids, and twists, all of which are traditionally hairstyles worn by black people. Black hair has been deeply symbolic in the U.S. since the 1800s and this symbolism is employed in the play. Because Beneatha Younger straightens her hair, her Nigerian friend Joseph Asagai, who doesn't believe in assimilation, calls her hair "mutilated.

African-Americans, especially males, have another reason not to wear traditionally black hairstyles. Racial profiling by police is a growing problem. When professional basketball player Allen Iverson wore his hair styled in cornrows, he received death threats. He had the power and money to handle the reactions but many who are still chasing their dreams can't afford to take that chance.While A Raisin in the Sun depicts ordinary Americans who happen to be Sad, today many of these barriers remain in place. The dominant culture continues to pressure those who are different to assimilate in order to achieve their dreams.

African American Lorraine Hansberry wrote “A Raisin in the Sun” much before the black liberation movement resulted in the passing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 that revolutionized the life of blacks in the country, giving them freedom and recognition as equal contributors to American society as their white counterparts. Unfortunately, she did not get much time to savor the great victory because the landmark Act was passed just one year before her untimely death at the age of thirty-four.

Throughout the whole play, you can see that each character is fighting for their own vision of the American Dream. This shows great hope which factors into the ability to achieve. All of them are all working hard towards all struggles to help them achieve their own dreams. They face problems such as racial discrimination, socio-economic issues, and environmental conditions. This play indicates a sad truth on how dreams are torn apart and the extreme hardships of African-American people. They did not receive enough money to sustain themselves and they were viewed as minors by the whites. Imagine we were living in a world where we didn't have enough money and we were outcasts of society.