

Patricia Gatlin

May 29, 2014

Raisin in the Sun: African American Dream Deferred

What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?¹ These were the questions Lorraine Hansberry acknowledged when she took them out of Langston Hughes poem, “Harlem” and created the Broadway play, *Raisin in the Sun*, in 1959. Hansberry was dedicated to the political and social reforms of American. She used her writing skills and personal experience with oppression to heighten awareness of the injustice suffered by African Americans. *Raisin in the Sun*’s screenplay metaphorically addresses the social issues of a marginalized family, the Youngers, who lived in Chicago’s South Side slums during the 1950s. During this time racial attitudes of Anglo Americans clashed with the suppressed dreams of Negro society who began seeking equal rights to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” With the application of literary methodologies such as post colonialism, feminist criticism, and the use of related academic sources; this paper argues that the city acted a vice for which Anglo American asserted their racial dominance over the marginalized group, African Americans, to help defer their dreams of obtaining civil rights. Also, arguing that African American women suffered dual oppression of racism and sexism. The preceding literature review attempts to establish and support my argument by outlining key ideologies and concepts.

An Internet article by Layson and Warren (2013), addresses three specific questions that were used for guiding their study of Chicago and the Great Migration 1915-1950. First, why did so many African American leave the South and move to Chicago between 1915 and 1950?

¹ Hughes, Langston. "Harlem." Poetry Foundation. Poetry Foundation, 1990. Web. 5 May 2014. <<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/175884>>.

Secondly, what social conditions did they encounter in Chicago. Lastly, how were the migrants changed by the city and how did they, in turn, change it? The article has given a historical analysis of the Great Migration, Jim Crow Laws, World War I and an interpretation of how immigration rate decreased for Europeans causing more of a demand for workers in the north due to manufacturing. Due to this demand for workers there was an increase in African American population in Chicago during the twentieth century. Authors discussed the Chicago Riots of 1919 and how Jim Crow laws affected residential segregation in Chicago from the 1930s to the 1960s. Layson and Warren use writings from Carl Sandburg, a famous poet, and Isabel Wilkerson, a historian and journalist, to depict the crisis of white supremacy in the city.

The topic of social conditions and residential segregation in relation to oppression is addressed by Hatcher (1970) article on blacks living within the city. Hatcher examines the urban crisis of poverty and the affects it has on black Americans who have had their dreams of peace, democracy, and equality overlooked. He uses Langston Hughes poems to depict the dreams of a discarded group who believed there were two Americas, one white that has free access to the dream and one that is black, who has limited access and poor living conditions.² The author's main points about ghetto living conditions contribute to how blacks used rebellion against racism to seek an acquisition of the American dream. The article depicted the allocation of government social programs helped blacks get out of poverty but he barely addressed how blacks who are looking for a free ride misuse these programs. Instead, he argues that, even if people wanted jobs there would not be enough available to them leaving them stuck in poverty. This article sought reform in regards to government political structures and the author tired to raise awareness about

² Hatcher, Richard G. "The Black City Crisis." *The Black Scholar* Black Cities 1.6 (1970): 54-5. *JSTOR*. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41163451>>. Web. 14 Apr. 2014.

dissolving issues within the black ghettos. The greatest asset of this article to my research is that it addressed the living conditions what characterized black ghettos in America.

The following article by Angela and Fania Davis (1986) focused primarily on the black family and its collective struggle for freedom and how the capitalistic system deprived blacks of that freedom. The authors assert that Black families tried to escaped their inherited past of slavery and colonialism. Davis' addressed issues regarding the welfare of black families including social policies, economy, and the black community itself. The authors asserted that Black children were the future barriers of a dream deferred due to the social injustices inherited. This deferred dream is established due to the capitalistic ideals within society that promote change through economic means. Those economic means of acquiring the right job were not available to the Black family. In this article the authors promoted a socialist reformation of the government to meet the needs of deprived Black families in America. It is significant in understanding the importance money and the upward mobility of the families in American culture.

Narrowing blacks to a singular place of residency in the next article by Matthews (2008) goes from outside the home into the ghettos into the residents itself to explore even more in depth the oppression of black families in Chicago's Southside. Matthews analyzed the issues with home ownership in post World War II and how neighborhood integration was met with discrimination and violence. The author states, "Chicago area suggest that housing was still a primary front on which the war of civil rights was to be waged in the later 1950s/60s," (Matthews, 557). Matthew uses the home in *Raisin in the Sun* as metaphor for which the home represented a place security and self-expression. Each of the main characters of the play's dreams were analyzed based on what they were willing to do to obtain the American dream, how

they solved conflicts, and the struggles that awaited them once they obtained their dreams.

Matthews argues that the characters are more focused on their individual dreams than trying to succeed as an entire family. This article utilizes concepts of pragmatic realism, life versus death, and the metaphor of home as “America” in reference to the place provides shelter, ownership, and citizenship.

The following articles utilized the methodology of post colonialism to examine the ideologies and concepts of the resistance of Blacks during the 1950s and there after. The next article by Gordon (2008) asserted that Chicago was a symbol of black oppression and resistance against exploitation. Blacks were against segregation, ghettoization, and capitalist exploitation. The aesthetics of segregation in Chicago projected violence over the battle for housing. Gordon analyzes how whites and blacks, both critiqued the play, failed to see the racialized and gendered class politics (Gordon, 124). Gordon has given a social analysis of the racial geography behind Chicago’s segregation and used concepts of realism based on color lines and social inequalities to depict the dangers of living in the ghettos.

The Zangrandos article (1970) analyzes the quest for black liberation from the colonization of Anglo Americans. The analysis stresses the importance of black identity established by black activists form within the community and the promotion of Black Nationalism as form of liberation. Zangrandos outline how the oppression of blacks brought about protest and how African Americans sought to move away from white societies universalism of the “American Dream” because according to the authors, “there in lies the threat,” (Zangrando, 142). The American Dream is defined in its entirety and targeted as a

burden of conformity and a promotion of individualized rewards.³ The significance of this article lies in the authors' ability to outline the American Dream as an issue for African Americans and addressed the post colonialism concepts of the reformation of laws.

The proceeding articles address the concepts and ideologies of feminist criticism of how gender affected the characters within the play. The first article by Washington (1988) utilizes the concept of character interaction between men and women to establish his thesis about *Raisin in the Sun*'s screenplay. Washington viewed the play as work of art that asserted universal concepts of American themes that included, people's hopes, fears, and dreams. The looks at the rules of society, "generally these standards differ according to the sex of the individual," (Matthew, 111). The author contrast the character of Lena "Mama" to that of her son Walter Lee Younger and uses racial conditioning to demonstrate the struggles of both the male and female character in regards to patriarchal ideologies.

Carter's (1985) article analyzes the image of men within Lorraine Hansberry's writing and follows the patriarchal ideologies from Washington (1988). The difference is that Carter seeks out the ideals of the playwright and outlines her social and political efforts in regard to gender and how it relates to the liberation of an entire society. Carter describes Hansberry writing as, "a result of her belief that ideologies and systems were the true enemies, she was able, to create many convincing sympathetic male characters with whom a male could easily indentify," (160). The analysis and critique of male characters especially Walter iterates how the patriarch ideology works against men through the promotion of chauvinism. It also places Walter as a character to be sympathized with as an African American man who is being oppressed by

³ Zangrando, Joanna Schneider and Robert Zangrando. "Black Protest: A Rejection of the American Dream." *Journal of Black Studies* 1.2 (1970): 142. *JSTOR*. Web. 5 May 2014. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2783799>>.

whites but in return Walter oppresses the women in his life to assert his own manhood and patriarchal duties. Therefore, women become subject to sexism as another form of oppression.

Lastly, Lois Tyson's (2006) book *Critical Theory Today a User-Friendly Guide* is one of the most commonly used critical literary theory text used today. Tyson uses F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* to examine how theories are used in literary text. Tyson offers a variety of criticisms yet the extent of my research applies only postcolonialism and feminist criticism to examine the complexity of racism and social oppression of the colonized group, African Americans, by the colonizers of Anglo-American society. Post colonialism uses the ideology of cultural colonization Tyson states as being, "formulated through European educated institutions that strip away the colonized's identity and established a new one," (Tyson, 419). Concepts that support this ideology are *othering*, *Eurocentrism*, *mimicry* or assimilation, and *double consciousness*. Feminist criticism is based on the ideology of gender roles and patriarchal subjugation. Gender roles, according to Tyson, are sexiest virtues placed upon females so that males can assert their own superiority.⁴ Tyson states, "traditional gender roles cast men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive; they cast women as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive," (84). Concepts within this ideology include biological essentialism, Cinderella complex, and the good girl versus bad girl. Using these methodologies' ideologies and concepts this paper analyzes and deconstructs characters dialogues within *Raisin in the Sun* and depicts the use of the city of Chicago within the screen play as a vice for which Anglo American asserted their racial dominance over the marginalized group deferring their American Dream.

⁴ Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today a User-Friendly Guide, Second Edition*. Hoboken: Routledge, 2006. Pg 85.

Raisin in the Sun is presentation of how a literary text uses methodologies to explore or allegorically present various aspects of colonial oppression and feminist sexism. With the application of postcolonial, feminist criticism and the application of related sources this paper argues that the city acted as a vice for which Anglo Americans asserted their racial dominance over the marginalized group of African American therefore deferring their dreams of obtain civil rights. To further argue that African American women suffered dual oppression from racism and also sexism within and outside of their own community.

The opening scene of the play outlines an overview of the living conditions of Southside Chicago's ghetto during the 1950s. In this segregated community African Americans have few choices and according to Hansberry very big dreams. Before the first scene Hansberry includes Langston Hughes poem "Harlem" providing a metaphorical insight into how postcolonial ideologies have cause the African American dream to be deferred. Hughes questions what will happen to a dream when it is continuously put on hiatus and implicates the radical force that may be needed to obtain a certain dream. Hansberry includes the poem because it outlines the essence of how the Younger family deals with having their dreams of upward mobility in American society deferred for two generations.

The Younger family, resided in a two bedrooms apartment, consisting of Lena "Mama", Beneath her daughter, Walter Lee her son, and his wife Ruth and their son Travis. Lena, the matriarch, of the family is expecting a ten thousand dollar insurance check due to her husband's demise. Conflict arises when Walter Lee insist that the money be used to purchase a liquor store. Lena, Ruth, and Beneatha are all opposed to Walter's dream of opening business. Tensions within the family increase upon the arrival of the check. Everyone in the family has their own dreams but the three women agree that the money belongs to Lena and she should be able to do

what she wants with it. Lena struggles with how the money should be used to help benefit family. Beneatha, needs money for her medical school, Ruth is pregnant again and needs more space for her children, Walter would like to establish his manhood through owning a business, and Lena would just like to own a home with a garden out back.

Ideologies and concepts of post colonialism and feminism are formulated within the characterization of the plays main actors. Through their interactions and dialogues about their dreams that the battle for social and civil justice establishes the significance of Chicago being use a city of vice. Chicago is depicted as a battleground where colonizers and the colonized waged war over social and civil rights steaming from Jim Crow laws that segregated blacks. As previously stated by Hatcher's article on the living conditions of the blacks residing in poverty, the atmosphere of ghettos contribute to the oppression of the marginalized race, and in Chicago caused an all out war between the races.

Hatcher states the reality of millions of blacks living in the ghetto and depicts the reality of the Younger family in the play by stating, "Black human beings compressed into the nations ghettos, isolated from American society lacking cohesiveness of family, denied not merely equal opportunity but the barest stake in the future. The reality of black human beings tantalized by recent civil rights legislation that remains largely, unenforced," (p 55). Hatcher statement pertains directly to the oppression felt by the Younger family because Lena and Big Walter, her husband, migrated during the Great Migration from the south to secure a better future for themselves and their offspring in the north. The legislation from Hatcher cites is from the American Civil War, emancipation proclamation, which should of freed the slaves and give them the same equal opportunity of the persons who colonized them but it never happened. Hansberry

uses the promise of the emancipation proclamation as a dream shared by African American families living in poverty.

Black migrants from the south made their way to Chicago where they were met with opposition. The black ghetto was characterized by Hatcher as, “dirty and crime ridden, a swampland of human waste,” (p 55). There is no cause to wonder why Lena Younger insisted on getting her family out of this environment. The south side of Chicago can be viewed as a vice created to suppress blacks and limit their upward mobility in American society. Hatcher’s text notes two example of how Chicago geography and residents created a horrible living condition for black migrants. First, Hansberry outlines that there is small kitchen with the only window in the house. The kitchen also serves as a living room. Within that living area Travis Younger makes his bed out of the couch. Lena and Beneatha share a room and Walter and his wife share also share a bedroom. To make matters even worse Hansberry states there is a, “shared bathroom with other families within the same floor,” (Raisin, 13). The zoning of blacks into these ghettos attests to the postcolonial concept of *othering* which, “divides the world between ‘us’ (the civilized) and ‘them’ (the savages),” (Tyson, 420). It kept the blacks socially and economically confined but also kept the whites in a superior place.

The second example of the living conditions of blacks appeals to the maintenance of the buildings within the ghetto. Hatcher states, “the walls are peeling, windows don’t work, hallways never see light, stairwell railings go unrepaired, and plumbing is unreliable at best,” (p 55-6). Sanitation of these buildings became the responsibility of the dwellers and therefore places became infested with roaches and rats. Lena discusses with Ruth how she ended up living in Southside and she describes the apartment as nothing more than a “rat trap.”⁵ Lena discusses

⁵ Hansberry, Lorraine. *A Raisin in the Sun*. New York: Random House, 1959. Pg 32.

with Ruth the loss of her baby boy Claude. Although, Lena never comes out and states it but the death of Claude research suggest this dialogue may have been alluding to the infestation of rats. Michelle Gordon's article outlines how rats caused infant mortality, "When a black Southside infant died of a rat bite, for instance, the landlord denied culpability, saying 'well, they don't pick up their garbage. Anyway it was a nigger baby and they have new one every year, so what does it matter, (Carawan and Carawan 283)," (127). It was this type of mentality of the Chicago's Anglo Americans toward blacks whom they felt invaded their land. Lena tells Ruth that Big Walter felt this type of oppression and he was, "fighting his own war with this world 'that took his baby from him," (Raisin, 33). Big Walter understands that because of his blackness he was treated with disregard and that whites were non sympathetic because they placed blacks in these living situations. This type area infestation is also witnessed through Beneatha's dialogue in scene two where she tries to help her mother clean the apartment. Beneatha attempts to kill roaches with insecticide but her attempts fail. Living conditions speak more to the political establishments of the city that removed themselves from the wellbeing of the black community. It also supports these of "othering" from the Eurocentric whites that kept blacks oppressed so that could live a life that promised their own superiority.

Before deconstructing the dreams and character interactions in the setting of the city it is important to acknowledge what the American Dream meant to the black community after being emancipated. Kristen Matthew uses postcolonial ideology of cultural colonization of blacks and asserts that black were lead to believe in the "American Dream" and that is nothing more than institutional con created by colonizers to kept the colonized oppressed. She states that blacks were being conned, "into believing that either big efforts or big ideas could improve their lot in a nation whose livelihood depended upon their ongoing economic and social subservience,"

(Matthew, 560). Matthew also states that the American Dream is nothing more than just myth of upward mobility. It is this myth that brings reference to Walter Lee's dream and also his family's dream. It is a myth realized by the black community who decided to break down segregation and face terrorism in hopes of being able to one day obtain their own version of the American Dream. In the play the myth of a dream is either rejected or accepted. Walter Lee and his mother, Lena, whom view the dream as way to obtain freedom from the ghetto but not from racism, mostly accept the dream.

Lena began to see the tension growing amongst her family over the use of the check and therefore she decided to take matters into her own hands and purchase a home in a white neighborhood. During a time when Chicago's residential segregation caused the Chicago Riots of 1919 the violence of these riots continued fuel issues regarding the housing battle causing blacks to stay segregated from white. Lena purchases a home in Clybourne Park, an all white neighborhood; this neighborhood met the Youngers with opposition through the character of Mr. Lender. The play speaks to the violence experienced during the Chicago Riots by the constant statement of "bombings." Walter outlines this violence while reading a local paper and telling Ruth, "set off another bomb yesterday," (p 14). Both Layson and Warren discuss how the boom in population due to the Great Migration caused a shortage of housing. In the Lyson article Isabel Wilkerson states, "Riots were often carried out by disaffected whites against groups of perceived as threats to their survival. Thus riots became to the north what lynching's were to the South."⁶ Lena uses a portion of the money as a means of upward mobility because her family will be able to live without the unsafe environment of Southside. She also believes that her American Dream

⁶ Layson, Hana and Kenneth Warren. "Chicago and the Great Migration, 1915–1950." *Chicago and the Great Migration, 1915-1950*. The Newberry Digital Collections for the Classroom, 15 Mar. 2013. <<http://dcc.newberry.org/collections/chicago-and-the-great-migration>>. Web. 5 May 2014.

will end the turmoil within here family. The myth of the dream is met with the reality of violence from their new neighborhood. It is foreshadowed that they will have to fight off bombings to overcome the oppression of Eurocentrism.

In regards to post colonialism criticism and the use of the concept of colonialist ideology is character by Mr. Linder and defined as, “colonizer’s assumption of their own superiority to inferiority of natives,” (Tyson, 419). Due to Lena’s purchase of a home in Clybourne Park’s white neighborhood its dwellers have sent Mr. Linder as representative of their Anglo-American ideals about segregation and their dreams of separation. Mr. Linder’s visits the Younger family’s small apartment to bribe them into not moving to Clybourne Park. The main literary emphasis of Linder’s dialogue addresses how the family is apart of the entire community. Linder constantly says, “You people” as if he does not see them as individuals but indigenous groups who are threatening Clybourne Park’s “American Dream” of segregation. Linder speaks to the family and discusses the bombings that have occurred by stating, “I am sure you people must be aware of some of the incidents which have happened in various parts of the city when colored people have moved into certain areas,” (p 96). Linder vaguely discussed the riots involving blacks moving into white neighborhoods as away to scare or deter the family from their dream.

Mr. Linder character is viewed more as a patriarchal figure. He asserts his dominance over others through his choice of words. In the movie Linder appears to be a middle aged man who is shy and uncomfortable around colored people. His disconnect causes him to choose his words wisely but not enough to convince the Younger family that his motives are sincere. When Mr. Linder discusses his community, Anglo Americans, he refers to them as “our” and uses this word to separate what belongs to whites and does not belong to blacks and this a type of othering. Two dialogues depict ownership over the possession of Clybourne Park when he states,

“Our community is made up of people who have worked hard as the dickens for years to build up that little community,” (p 97). Linder is using “othering” to divide and put whites dreams against those of blacks and he also uses, “European culture as the standard to which all other cultures are negatively contrasted,” (Tyson, 420). Linder’s claim of this difference and his projection of Eurocentrism is found in this statement, “Clybourne Park residents believe rightly or wrongly that for the happiness of all concerned that our Negro families are happier when they live in their own communities.” (p 97-8). It is Mr. Linder’s paternalistic language that promotes the Anglo American ideology of other and Eurocentrism. It defines the use of segregation within Chicago and proclaims ownership of blacks and asserts Anglo American’s ability to keep blacks confined to horrible conditions.

The community of blacks in Chicago can be viewed according to Tyson as colonial subjects, “colonized person who did not resist colonial subjugation because they were taught to believe in their own inferiority,” (p 421). No two characters challenge this colonial subjugation more than Walter Lee and his sister Beneatha. It is through their dialogue Hansberry depicts the black community’s resistance in Chicago and the establishment of black identity through black nationalism and Pan-Africanism. Hansberry’s play is quest for black liberation in regards to the American dream as an analysis by the Zangrandos who define what the American Dream is according to Anglo American standards and correlate why this dream was eventually met with resistance by black militants or protestors.

Zangrandos depict the American dream as, “a package of benefits that include the individual choice in life styles, equal access to economic advantages, and the pursuit, of advantages to the individual and society,” (p 142). It is Walter Lee’s dream that is most Americanized in the way Zangrandos depict it because his dream is conformed to the colonial

subjugation of that dream. Walter Lee believes that if he obtains enough economic wealth that he will be able to obtain that dream. Yet, he realizes that his job consisting of being a chauffeur to a white man, Mr. Anderson, will not allow him the economic funds in which he seeks to reestablish himself in society but also within his family as the paternal bread winner. He resist the oppression of his job and seeks black nationalism but he fails to see the benefit in hard labor because he loses himself to the real oppression of the myth behind the American dream. Walter Lee fails to understand that the dream itself is form oppression.

Walter's dream of owning a liquor sore was met with resistance from all the women in his household because they realized what Walter could not and that was that he did not have the education to maintain a business. Not only did he not have the education but he also had a drinking problem, which he shared with his other alleged business partners. It was obvious that Walter's dream was no only deferred by the system but also by his own individual issues. Walter failed to join in on the collective dream of the family because he was compelled to obtain his own dream. He romanticized the American dream and his wanted to obtain it through easy money and not hard labor because he felt that hard labor was a waste of life. Walter witnessed this through the life and death of his father. Walter refused to see that the system was not built for black men to obtain upward economic mobility with ease. Instead, it the American dream's system is another form of subjugation that has to be reformed in order for men like Walter to obtain some form their own dream. According to Zangrandos this type of reformation began with the riots and would extend through the civil rights movements.

Beneatha's character is contrasted to her brother Walter because she seeks to obtain her own identity through Black Nationalism and Pan-Africanism. Beneatha's dreamed of becoming a doctor and attended college in order to find her identity. She is a form of resistance to

subjugation but also suffers from double consciousness. The concept of double consciousness pertains to Beneatha's identity being split between her Americanized education and her African heritage from her family. She tries to balance both identities through her courtship with two young men, George Murchison and Joseph Asagai. Murchison is from a wealthy black family in Chicago, his father is a business owner, and therefore George is viewed as an assimilationist or a form of mimicry. Beneatha calls George and his family snobs and compares them to rich white people with a mimicry attitude in regards to their separation from ghetto black people. Beneatha shuns this type of assimilation mentality because she feels it only adds to the oppression of the black community. Yet, she continues to date Murchison because he is rich and offer her a chance at upward mobility or the American dream.

In contrast to the ideals of mimicry Joseph Asagai's character shuns assimilation through his dialogue with Beneatha. Asagai can be described as a Nigerian student who is well traveled, high educated, speaks two languages, and takes pride in his African heritage. He brings Beneatha Nigerian garbs and music to teach her of her ancestry. He points out how assimilated she is to American ideals and appreciates the effort she places on reestablishing herself as an African American woman. Asagai's characterization forms a Pan-African view of what colonization has done to the black community in America. Beneatha is a symbol of how black rejected the mimicry of Anglo American society and began to look toward Pan-African ideals to reestablish their new identities. She is a key element used by Hansberry to outline the difference between the colonized, Walter, the non-colonized, Asagai, and how colonization is undone through Beneatha's education not in school but through African contact.

Hansberry merges historical facts from the Great Migration, Chicago Riots of 1919, emancipation proclamation, Jim Crow laws, and black liberation movement of the 1960s with

postcolonial ideals to outline concepts and issues within the city of Chicago regard blacks. The city is depicted as a vice due to the oppression of blacks that found themselves politically outcaste. *Raisin in the Sun* promotes black liberation from the colonized mentality that promoted the myth of the American dream to a marginalized group of black citizens.

Raisin in the Sun uniquely depicts the oppression of African American women through the patriarchal ideology which asserts male dominance over women but also values misogynistic ideals that also oppress males. Hansberry used female characters as a way to change the world's view on women inside the home but also to promote gender equality. The literary text reveals how patriarchy was employed to reinforce sexism and also undermine women and African American men. Other concepts of feminist criticism include Cinderella complex, good girl versus bad girl, and misogynistic oppression of men. All these concepts are prevalent to the outlining of the feminist reformation Hansberry was trying to promote to the American audience.

Lena, Ruth, and Beneatha were women of the twenty century living in America dealing with both racism and sexism. The way the city reinforced this type of oppression was through the job market. Both Lena and Ruth are domestic workers because before the civil rights era that was the only job available to women of color. Black women became domestic workers for white women helping to continue to raise their children and take care of their home. No much had appeared to change in the employment of black women from the South to the North. For women there was no economic upward mobility. Even with blacks establishing their own communities women were unable to find their place outside the confines of the home. Beneatha is the only woman in the play that opposes the domestic career field by having the ability to attend college. Yet, the only way Beneatha is able to go to college is due to the domestic labor of Ruth, her mother, and Walter who all work for white families.

The majority of the patriarchic oppression within the play is asserted through Walter's character and he asserts his maleness over Lena, Ruth, and Beneatha. Tyson expresses Walter's sexist attitudes toward these women as, "the victims of both colonist ideology, which devalues them because of their race and cultural ancestry, and patriarchal ideology which devalues them because of their sex," (p 423). It is Walter who devalues these women's struggle to support their family and also to help him obtain leadership.

Walter constantly treats his wife Ruth badly by telling her that black women are worth because he feels they do not support the dreams of black men. Walter tires to talk to Ruth about his dreams of owning a liquor store but she does not want to hear about it. Walter becomes upset with her and tells her, "That is just what is wrong with you colored women in this world. Don't understand about building their men up and making 'em feel like they somebody. Like they can do something," (Raisin, 22). Although, Ruth has cooked his meals, ironed his clothes, cared for their son, and live in a small apartment without complain Walter does not see how she supports him and the family on a daily basis. Instead, he insists that she is the cause of this inability to obtain the American dream.

Walter's sexist ideals do not stop there when he grapples with his sister he make sure to bring up the that Beneath's dream of becoming a doctor is a burden and that women do no become doctors. Walter yells at Beneatha in a rage, "Who the hell told you, you had to be a doctor? – go be a nurse and be quiet..." (p 26). It is from this statement Walter's sexist view about career choices for women are established. During this time it is common for women to become nurses or secretaries because those jobs were viewed more as feminine and not needing much intelligence. Walter supports women in these types of careers because it allows men to maintain power over them because they are not taking on leadership position. Instead, women

are positions are followers and they take orders from men. He insists that Beneatha just do what Ruth had done which was to get married and keep her opinions to herself. Walter's mentality towards women was the same mentality of men during this time. Men believed that women had little to contribute to the economic, social, or political world of men and they should be confined to a role of wife and mother allowing for men to obtain or keep his dominance over them.

Lena being the matriarch of the family appears to be a threat to Walter's patriarchy because she is the one who is receiving the ten thousand dollar check and she is the one with the real right to do what she pleases with the money. There is sisterhood amongst the women in the play who feel as though Lena should be able to use the check to obtain her dream of purchasing a home. Ruth even suggests that Lena travel abroad which is a luxury afforded to white women and therefore Lena reminds Ruth that she is not a white woman and that luxury is not afforded to her. Lena instead decides to take the money and buy a home instead of helping Walter open a liquor store. Walter states, "What you need me to say you don't right for? You the head of this family. You run our lives like you want to. It was your money and you did what you wanted with it," (p 8). Walter perceives his mother's action as an attempt to destroy his dream and castrate him by asking herself the head of the household. All of Walter's reasons for use of women and their placement within society are based on Tyson definition of biological essentialism, "the benefit in the inborn inferiority of women," (p 85). To Walter and many men women's liberation was considered a threat to male masculinity and power.

Walter characterizes Ruth as a tool or material, which can be used to help him establish himself as a man. He has the same view about his mother and this led to her giving him the remaining money from the check. He viewed Beneatha's courtship as a chance at upward mobility through her marrying George. If Beneatha married George it was not just an economical move for

her but also for her family because they would be associated with the success of the Murchinsons. Walter believes that marriage will silence her and stop her from taking another man's job as doctor. These women can be viewed through Walter's perspective as nothing more than a tool to assert male's manhood.

Two other concepts of feminist criticism that can be applied to the literary analysis of women within the play is the Cinderella complex and also the bad girl versus good girl image. The Cinderella complex is defined by Tyson as a sexist oppression of women who are viewed by men as weak and having a need of being saved by a dominant male or prince charming.⁷ The women portrayed in these situations are always depicted as submissive and the men tend to be wealthy and responsible for the women's happiness. The good girl versus bad girl complex is based on behavior characteristics of what is acceptable in regards to a woman's behavior based on the patriarchal system of misogyny. A woman of this complex is always viewed as submissive and voiceless so that men can have dominance over her.

Beneatha's character is a prime example of how both the Cinderella complex and the good girl versus bad girl concept is applied within the literature. Beneatha is a young girl trapped in a working class family who are living in the ghetto. She has two suitors whom both can be depicted in the prince charming manner. George reflects the chauvinist man with material wealth and education. George is the kind of man that can not only take Beneatha out of the ghetto of Chicago but also confine her to role wife. Beneatha's description of George is similar to what Tyson characterizes as Prince Charming, "George looks good – he's got a beautiful car and he takes me to nice places and as my sister-in-law says, he is probably the richest boy I will ever get to know," (p 37). These characteristics were supposed to make George a masculine figure for

⁷ Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today a User-Friendly Guide, Second Edition*. Hoboken: Routledge, 2006. Pg 88.

which women wanted to marry. Yet, even with all those characteristics Beneatha still does not want to marry George because he has no interest in her dreams of becoming a doctor and would mean she would be independent. If Beneatha becomes independent from the financial security of a man like George then he could not play the role of prince charming and assert his male dominance over her.

Beneatha is constantly subjected to George's ego and he insists that she does not express her thoughts to him. He tells her, in scene two, that he would prefer a beautiful girl who hardly talks. George tells Beneatha, "I want a nice – simple – sophisticated girl...not a poet – o.k.? I don't want to go out with you to...hear all about your thoughts," (p 82-3). This exact kind of mentality was what women had to overcome within society. The presence of oppression by men, based on patriarchal ideologies, gave men control over women and leaving them without a voice. George emotionally alienates himself from Beneatha and excludes her from any form of leadership or decision making. To him she nothing more than her looks, she is a show piece, to be consumed by him. Beneatha is aware of this and does not adhere to the good girl image associated with the Cinderella complex and she speaks out about social injustices pledging the African American community. She also insists on being a doctor because she believes that women can perform the same jobs as men. Tyson describes the good girl image as, "she's modest, unassuming, self-sacrificing, and nurturing. She has no needs of her own, for she is completely satisfied by serving her family," (p 90). Beneatha appears to have never been satisfied with her lifestyle because she constantly looks for a new identity.

Beneatha's bad girl complex challenges the ideals of men she encounters in the play because she insists on working in career that does conform to sexist ideals. She is not self-sacrificing because her education is paid for by the labor of her family who suffer from barley

having enough food or clothes on their backs. Yet, Beneatha is well clothed to mimic her classmates and she has been involved in numerous extra curricular activities that she fails to continue after becoming bored. When she finds out Ruth is pregnant she becomes upset and questions if it was planned and insist that having the baby would only cause the family more burden. Although, she is quick to realize she is being offensive to Ruth and realizes that Ruth is suffering form the same oppression as she. All of Beneatha actions are oppose to what Tyson considers a good girl and therefore Beneatha is viewed as less than virtuous and more self absorbed. She is viewed this way by society because she is not nurturing and this type of behavior is what would qualify her as the non marrying type. Even by today's standard in American society women still are forced to confirm to a good girl image and are taught to be submissive to their male counterparts. Even though, women are now able to become doctors and lawyers they are still paid less than what a man would make.

Lastly, Washington and Cater both analyze the role of Hansberry's male characters with the context of the play and how universal themes of masculinity are used by Hansberry to create a sympathetic depiction of the oppression of black males based on the patriarchal ideologies. Carter asserts that Hansberry outlines social and political efforts to reflect on gender liberation for all members of society. Washington supports this concept by looking at the roles of patriarchal, white society, that determine the gender roles of a man and how racism for a black man conditioned him as "other" or a social outcast.

Tyson discusses gender roles for males as a man's biological need to be viewed as the provider.⁸ Walter entire dream of owning a liquor store is based on his need to assert his masculinity and show his family he can provide for them. His job as a chauffer taking care of

⁸ (Tyson, 87).

Mr. Arnold can be viewed as a feminine role to which Walter is submissive to his white male employer. Walter tells his mother of his frustration with his job, "I open and close doors all day long. I drive a man around in his limousine and say, 'Yes sir, no sir; Very good, sir; shall I take the drive, sir?'" (p 60). Here in this dialogue Walter describes what a man is within society and that a man owns luxury materials, he can afford a servant, and he does not have to answer to anyone. The language used between Walter and Mr. Arnold is not one of an equal man but instead of a submissive servant. Walter, like many other black men during the twentieth century had to be careful what they said to whites because they could be lynched or have their homes bombed. Men of color were stripped of their masculine by white males who treated them like they were females in the sense that they were voiceless. Due to his inability to provide for his family and voice his wants he felt humiliated and considered himself a failure as man in regards to patriarchal standards.

Walter is a representation of the crippling affects of interiority placed on the black community that helped destroy many black men and women dreams of social equality. Walter's hostility toward women in the play are due to his belief that they only add to his interiority by not support his dream but also because he can not support them. He insists on his mother giving him the insurance check and even when his mother steps down as head of the household, entrusting him with the remaining portion of the check, Walter ends up loosing the money to his con artist business partner. Walter never admits to his mistake but he does cling to his mother in regret. Even after loosing the money his need to fulfill his manhood is so strong that he calls Mr. Linder up and tells him he would like reconsider taking the money instead of moving the family into his all white neighborhood.

In regards to the city of Chicago's perception as a vice in which the American dream is deferred black men like Walter, it is was the atmosphere of Chicago's black section that propels Walter to insist that he can obtain the dream. The black belt or black metropolis was a chain of neighborhoods that consisted of the African American population within Southside Chicago. There was housing for rich blacks and also designated housing for poor blacks. In this real black business thrived on the population increase that steamed from the Great Migration. Economic resources consisted of night clubs that housed jazz musicians, stock yards from factories, brothels for prostitution, and writers of the Harlem Renaissance were accompanied by working class blacks. The community around the black belt had even established churches, business, and community organizations to discuss urban issues.

Although, the establishment of the community may have appeared to be a virtue for blacks looking for ways of upward mobility it can be realized as nothing more than a contained sense of hope. The area is still segregated and keeps blacks always from the luxuries that whites experienced freely throughout American. Walter did not understand that the images of marginal success from within the black community would remain that way without reformation of colonized laws that sought to keep his civil rights. Walter failed to obtain his individual dream and came to understand that as a community more progress would be needed and that little progress was progress. The move from Southside to Clybourne Park was a rebellion that could lead to the radical movement of blacks out of the ghetto and into better living conditions. Hansberry uses the city as geographical way to separate those who have and those who have not. The depilating ghetto created an experience of group isolation and limited the prospects of eliminating racism and segregation with in the city.

Raisin in the Sun as a literary text metaphorically addressed the social and political issues of the black community inhabiting Southside Chicago during the 1950s. Postcolonial and feminist criticism's ideologies and concepts can be applied and used to analyze the city of Chicago as a place for which Anglo American asserted their patriarchic and ethnic dominance over the black marginalized group. The play also depicts the feminist struggles of black women who suffered twice the oppression based on race and gender. According to my research the geographical nature of segregation in Chicago's Southside district and the creation of the ghetto was used by Hansberry to outline the struggles of blacks. In conclusion, further research can be done with the application of other literary methodologies to better understand why and how this type of geographical segregation and oppression still exist today. A stylistic analysis of Hughes' poem could also be incorporated to further depict the issues African Americans had with the myth of the American dream. Yet, Martin Luther King's believed so much in the American dream that he stated, "Racism is a work in progress but it is progressing. I have a dream that some day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We all hold truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal."⁹ Although, the dream may have been deferred for many blacks in American, striving for liberties and civil justice for all people no matter what ethnic they are has become more than just a dream but a reality.

⁹ King, Martin Luther, Jr. *I Have a Dream* Speech. August 28, 1963.

Works Cited

- Carter, Steven R. "Images of Men in Lorraine Hansberry's Writing." *Black American Literature Forum* 19.4 (1985): 160-62. *JSTOR*. Web. 5 May 2014.
<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2904279>>.
- Davis, Angela, and Fania Davis. "The Black Family and the Crisis of Capitalism." *The Black Scholar* 17.5 (1986): 33-40. *JSTOR*. Web. 14 Apr. 2014.
<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41068155>>.
- Gordon, Michelle. "'Somewhat like War': The Aesthetics of Segregation, Black Liberation, and 'A Raisin in the Sun'" *African American Review* 42.1, Representing Segregation (2008): 121-33. *JSTOR*. Web. 11 Apr. 2014. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40301308>>.
- Hansberry, Lorraine. *A Raisin in the Sun*. New York: Random House, 1959. Print.
- Hatcher, Richard G. "The Black City Crisis." *The Black Scholar* Black Cities 1.6 (1970): 54-62. *JSTOR*. Web. 14 Apr. 2014. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41163451>>.
- Hughes, Langston. "Harlem." Poetry Foundation. Poetry Foundation, 1990. Web. 5 May 2014.
<<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/175884>>.
- Layson, Hana and Kenneth Warren. "Chicago and the Great Migration, 1915–1950." *Chicago and the Great Migration, 1915-1950*. The Newberry Digital Collections for the Classroom, 15 Mar. 2013. Web. 5 May 2014.
<<http://dcc.newberry.org/collections/chicago-and-the-great-migration>>.
- Matthews, Kristen L. "The Politics of "Home" in Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*." *Modern Drama* 51.4 (2008): 556-78. *Project MUSE*. Web. 28 Apr. 2014.
<<http://muse.jhu.edu>>.
- Mchugh, Kevin E. "Review: Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great

Migration." *Geographical Review* 81.1 (1991): 108-09. *JSTOR*. Web. 5 May 2014.

<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/215180>>.

Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today a User-Friendly Guide, Second Edition*. Hoboken:

Routledge, 2006. Print.

Washington, J. Charles. "A Raisin in the Sun Revisited." *Black American Literature Forum* 22.1,

Black Women Writers Issue (1988): 109-24. *JSTOR*. Web. 11 Apr. 2014.

<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2904153>>.

Zangrando, Joanna Schneider and Robert Zangrando. "Black Protest: A Rejection of the

American Dream." *Journal of Black Studies* 1.2 (1970): 141-59. *JSTOR*. Web. 5 May

2014. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2783799>>.