

The beneatha's dreams



Hansberry's play "A Raisin in the Sun" is the story of the Youngers, a poor African-American family in the 1940s. All of the Youngers have important dreams that they wish to realize but due to their economic status and the abundant racism of the time, and they are forced to put aside these dreams. However, due to the insurance money from "Big Walter"'s death, they have a chance to overcome these obstacles and achieve their dreams. Beneatha is a good example of a character whose dreams have been deferred. Beneatha dreams of being a doctor and throughout the play, struggles to determine her identity as a well-educated black woman.

Beneatha is a college student and is obviously the best educated member of the Younger family. Her education is very important to her and she hopes to one day become a doctor. Beneatha believes in education as a means to understanding and self-fulfillment through knowledge and wisdom. It was rare at this time to find a poor well-educated black woman with such high ambitions.

Beneatha took pride in this fact and often flaunted her intelligence to her family. Mama, knowing how much her education meant to her, instructed Walter to save \$3000 for Beneatha's medical schooling. When it was discovered that Walter had invested the money in his liquor store scheme and Willy had run off with all the money, Beneatha was devastated. She had lost all hope and even though her spirits may have been lifted after her talk with Asagai in act III and the chance to move into a new house, it seems that Beneatha will never realize this dream.

Another major dream that Beneatha wants is to have her own identity. In the play she does this by trying to gain a better grasp on her cultural identity as an African-American. The rest of her family, after living in America for five generations, seem out of touch with their African heritage, so Beneatha turns to Asagai, a native Nigerian, to see if he can supply the lost part of herself. Beneatha dresses in Nigerian garb, dances to African music, and lets her hair grow naturally in an attempt to become more African. Beneatha does this in part because she sincerely wants to identify herself as an African-American but she also does it in protest of what she calls an "oppressive" white culture.

Beneatha also dreamed of overcoming not only the prejudice against blacks, but also the prejudice against women. In the 1940s, it was common belief that a woman's place was at home and it was very rare for any woman to become a doctor. Even Walter suggests that she become a nurse, a traditionally woman's job, instead. Beneatha was an early feminist and did not take the traditionally submissive role of a woman. Instead, she spoke up against anything she perceived as an injustice. She became particularly passionate about freeing the Africans from French and English colonizers after talking to Asagai.

In the play "A Raisin in the Sun," all of the main characters were guided by their dreams, and the same is true for Beneatha. In the play, Beneatha struggles to create her own identity while battling against the abundant prejudice of the day. While she partially succeeds at creating her own identity, her dreams of becoming a doctor fall short when Walter loses the

necessary money. However, Beneatha is a strong, intelligent woman and will most likely succeed later in life.