

Analysis of the play a raisin in the sun by laurence hansberry

[Literature](#), [Play](#)



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Being poor in a country sets an individual's life up to be filled with the longing for a better life. That desire can lead to the destruction of one's family or goals. It can cause strain on an individual's minds.

Throughout the play, *A Raisin in the Sun* published in 1959, Lorraine Hansberry, illustrates the mental and social issues that are placed on a society who has suffers from poverty and is still affected in today's contemporary culture. During the time period the play was written poverty was at an all-time high among the African American community. From racism, Jim Crow (Urofsky, 2018) laws and to the failing economy of the United States are all contributions to the daily struggles African American families had to endure and continue to endure. Hansberry took years of confusion and mistreatment and put it into her play.

The play is simply about an African American family who is a part of the lower class receiving a large amount of money. (Hansberry. p29) After the death of her husband the matriarch of the family Lena younger must make the decision of what she must do with the money. Her wish is to buy a home with a backyard for her family as she and her late husband had promised. Her son Walter Younger, obsessed with making fast money and wanting to be rich wished to invest the money into a liquor store.(Hansberry. p36) His sister, Beneatha the only one with an education wishes for the money to be used for her own wellbeing and to pay for her medical school. The family is to receive \$10, 000. Just the mention of it brings tension amongst the family because they all want a piece of it. Those affected by poverty could never dream about receiving that amount. The anxiety of waiting for the money to

come and what to do with it can really stress an individual out. Rising out of poverty usually takes time. But to this family this one check is the answer to all their individual prayers.

In the 1950's segregation was still very alive and present in the United States of America. African Americans were limited to the jobs they could have and dreamed that their children could have better lives, better education and better opportunities. Blacks had to work extremely hard to make ends meet. They worked multiple jobs with long hours just too still receive the short end of the stick. Working hard and still not being able to provide is enough to make a man depressed. Although he had his mother, Walter was supposed to be the patriarch of the family. There has always been unaddressed pressure put on black men in the black community. They are taught to provide and protect their family. No matter how, it should be him saving his family from poverty. These are thoughts that run through Walters head every day. To him, Walter is not fulfilling his life purpose. He does not feel fit to be a father and husband. Yet, he is still a prideful man. He puts on a show for his family, so they won't look down on him. When asked for fifty cents from his son, he gives the boy an entire dollar which he could not afford.(Hansberry, p34) He wants his son to look up to him and to be proud of him, but he must face reality. His family is poor, and he is a chauffeur barely making enough money.

The psychological impact on black men who haven't been able to overcome the reality of the labor market is a story that is seldom told. Many are suffering from broken dreams and delusions of grandeur that have not been

fulfilled. An argument can be made that many Black men have been suffering from a secret depression for years as a result of this financial crunch. A great deal of it probably has its roots in an economic struggle. The odds were always against them. By the end of the 1940's most policy decisions were used to enforce African Americans to stay in inner cities or the ghetto. Many were limited to factory, city work and chauffeur jobs. Although slavery was over, blacks were forced to work jobs that pretty much had them as servants to white people. Jobs like housekeeping, drivers and carpenters. In present time, African Americans make jokes about the popular film *Driving Miss Daisy*, but unlike the movie a beautiful friendship was not the end result for a lot of African Americans who had no choice but to drive their white employers around. This was the reality and they white person in the back seat was not always kind. Being forced to drive around someone apart of the race that doesn't even believe you deserve rights can take a toll on a person's mind. A black man already has a lot of pressure on him. The last thing he wants to do is drive around with upper class folks who couldn't care less about him. Walter was fighting depression and obsession. His need for a better lifestyle puts a wedge between his and his wife marriage. When his mother announced what she did with some of the money his depression increased. He stopped going to work and began to drink even more. One would think he would be happy that his family was moving into a nicer home for his son to grow up in. Walter could not find happiness in the decision because it was not a decision, he made nor contributed to. He felt useless as the man of the house. He was not the savior of his family.

Many men have not been told how to process and talk about their emotional experiences, furthering a sense of isolation, anger, and resentment. For these men, this creates an emotional volatility that can sometimes manifest in seeming shut down in relationships and friendships. At its worst, this budding resentment can manifest in outward expression of anger, aggression, and even violence. Many men struggle with the idea of being openly vulnerable and sharing their emotions. And for those who grew up as sensitive boys, they are often subject to ridicule and shaming for what are natural and healthy expressions of emotion. Black men face a unique challenge in that most of what is most prized about them may be their looks or bodies, but rarely ever their intellect and emotional intelligence. In present time these feelings can turn into an obsession of getting rich. To a lot of black men, getting rich will solve all their problems. Poverty and racism are why they are unhappy. They can't change racism overnight. Especially in the standing of the country today, so why not get rich. Trying to get rich overnight just added more stress to the black man. It takes time, or sometimes it does not. Walter wanted to invest into a liquor store.

The prohibition was over, but it still did not fit with his mother's Christian values. Black men in today's society are obsessed with getting out of the hood/ghetto turned to four things to achieve that. Those things are sports, music, crime, and education. Growing up black men are faced with an option of joining a sports team. The moment they show actual interest or talent an obsession begins. This is how he is supposed to make it in the world. Don't give up this is your ticket out the hood. Don't let your parents down. Move

your family out the hood when you make it. The sad reality is that young black boys are told these things and much more daily basis. Luckily in today's society there has been an increase in black men pursuing doctorate degrees and becoming extremely educated. While some ways black men achieved making it out the hood have been legal. Some chose the illegal route. Thirty eight percent of a state's population are black males who are incarcerated. The chargers vary from theft, arson, drugs and murder. For the men who don't receive life sentences and who serve their time always claim that they were young, dumb and trying to make a quick buck. These are the psychological issues that poverty has caused throughout black men.

For those who chose different routes for their lives it was nothing about happiness for their families. It is an unwritten rule in the black community that when a black man comes into a lot of money the first thing, he does is buys his mother a house or a car. Black men are groomed to one day provide and make their families proud. Living in poverty makes it extremely hard for a man to ever feel the sensation of fulfilling his purpose. In a black man's mind there is nothing worse than letting his family down. When Walter's mother saw he needed a chance to prove to the family and most importantly himself that he can provide she pitied him. She gave him the remaining money and told him to set some aside for his sister and do as he please with the rest(Hansberry, p73). Instead Walter invests all of the money into the liquor store. His need to be done with his obsession had him acting very impulsive. His wife warned him about the company he chooses to keep

around, but Walter did not care. All he saw was that giving his friend this money for the liquor store was his way out of poverty.

The world he lived in gave him no other option in the matter. He was finally happy. There were improvements in his marriage. Walter felt like he finally did something good for his family and in the future, they will be thanking him for the family's success. Unfortunately, Walter's friend ran off the money. Including the portion that was intended for his sister's education. In the beginning of the play, although poor the family felt for Walter. They understood his problems and understood he was doing his best. But at this moment his family was extremely disappointed in him. He was not their savior. He added to their problems. His sister cannot afford medical school. His mother is debating moving into the new home and his wife must make the decision of keeping their unborn child. In an old folk saying, Walter put all his eggs into one basket and they broke. Walter went from happy to an even deeper form of depression. Walter did not redeem himself in the play until he denied to sign papers that would prevent his family from moving to the new house in exchange of payment.(Lansberry, p145) This can be seen as being prideful and standing up to the white man. His family looked on proud of him and it is believed that he finally felt like the man of the family.

There are many Walters within the black community. They just want to provide for their families but because of their race they receive the short end of the stick. They are born into poor families always obsessing over wanting more. Since the end of slavery, the white man has tried to keep African Americans at the lower class of things. Now the white man has laws to back

them up because they are the government. There are specific laws and regulations that are made to keep poor black people poor. When welfare was first introduced black women were the ones receiving it, but this system was the continuation of dividing the families. In order for a black woman to receive any governmental assistance for her and her children there must be no father or man around. But as seen in the play having two parents does not mean you are automatically wealthy. Children were required to attend schools closest to where they lived. Where they received little funding and teachers with low education. Walter in *A Raisin in the Sun*, is so important because it highlights the struggles of black fathers and husbands just trying to provide. He was poor and no matter what he did or tried it was not changing. He was seen as the antagonist of the play, but the system is the real antagonist. He was a poor black man fighting depression and obsession because of the fact that he was poor, and he wanted more.

In conclusion, Hansberry's play addressed many social issues within the African American family. It shows how hard it is to achieve a better life especially when one has a white government. The play also shows the silent struggles black men deal with while still trying to stay strong for their families. That issue is even more present in today's society. Luckily for Walter he found his redemption but that is not the case for everyone. Black men fill the prison systems and the graveyards. This is the reality of the United States. Even a black president can't stop that. Reading this play in today's society can be beneficial to those fighting their silent battles. It lets them know they are not alone and that sometimes money is not the way to

make your family proud. Being like Walter and standing up for what is right is.

Whitney, Jake. Keeping the Poor Poor: How Government Automates Inequality. Progressive. org, 10 Jan. 2018, progressive. org/dispatches/how-government-automates-inequality-Virginia-Eubanks-180110/.