

# Essay summary of a raisin in the sun

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“ America has given the Negro people a bad check” , this is thoroughly shown, along with other themes, throughout both A Raisin in the Sun by Lorraine Hansberry and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. 's “ I Have A Dream” speech. Before the civil rights movement, and for some time after, blacks were given the short end of the stick, they had to fight for their dreams and they had to fight against racism. They were given next to nothing but they were still expected to ask the whites to “ forgive [them] for ever wanting to be anything at all! (p. 27).

The ideas between the two works blend together very well and very easily that one of the biggest differentiations is the attitudes of the white people towards the blacks. Dreams are an incredibly monumental part of every person, they are what shapes them and guides them, and Hansberry and King both experienced a time when it was unbelievably difficult for blacks to achieve those dreams because the means necessary to reach them just weren't available for black people.

A Raisin in the Sun is full of dreams, Ruth dreams for a nice house for her family to live in, Beneatha dreams to become a doctor and do one of the most concretely good things that a person can do for another, Walter dreams of owning a liquor store and the financial security and independence he would achieve through that, and Mama dreams that future generations will have a better life. However, people don't always think of how their dreams can influence them, the Youngers' dreams and their attainment, or lack thereof, is directly related to the happiness and depression of the family.

King's dream was very similar to Mama's, better things for the future, more opportunities, that blacks and whites would be able to sit "at the table of brotherhood" together. All of Dr. King's dreams have a common root, the abolition of racial discrimination. "The Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination", and while the chains are merely symbolic they may as well be literal. Fighting racial discrimination is the center of both pieces of literature, the people who support it, knowingly or unknowingly, are oppressing the blacks and making them feel like they didn't belong anywhere.

Around the Civil Rights Movement, black people didn't feel like they had a home, their families had been in North America for centuries and because of that they felt absolutely no connection to Africa, the place that they were being told was their home, and they were being told and shown that they weren't American either because of all the basic rights that were being taken away from them. They just wanted to "rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice".

And that was something that the Younger family was almost deprived of when they wanted to move to Clybourne Park, Mr. Lindner came and told them that "our Negro families are happier when they live in their own communities" (p. 165). White people weren't even being subtle with their racial discrimination; they had committees to make sure that black people knew that they weren't welcome. Dr. King's speech is all about trying to eradicate racism and so that people were not "judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character". In today's society we are always

told to do just that, do not judge a book by its cover, and it almost seems like fiction to think that an entire race was judged merely by how they look.

The black people just wanted to be able to enter the “oasis of freedom and justice”, and the people around them were the ones who were going to have to make all the changes. In *A Raisin in the Sun* the white people clearly want nothing to do with the black people unless the blacks are doing the menial jobs that very few white people were willing to do, such as be drivers for the rich whites or clean their houses for very little pay, and the white people would get offended if the black people asked for a raise, after all the blacks should be grateful that the whites even considered giving them a job.

However, when Dr. King made his speech there were white people in the crowd as well as black people. The white people knew that a change was coming and they were ready for the change because they thought that it would make things better, and Dr. King even acknowledges them while he is speaking, “many of our white brothers, as evidence by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny.”? Between the speech and the play there is only about a decade of time between them, but the attitudes of the white people couldn't be more different.

Dreams, racism, and attitude are all substantially influential components to a society, and are certainly shown in both *A Raisin in the Sun* and “I Have A Dream”. And while racial discrimination has not been completely abolished from society, when *A Raisin in the Sun* first came out it gave incredible insight into how similar blacks were to whites, and when Dr. King gave his

speech the Civil Rights Movement took off. Even though the blacks were given a “ bad check”? their refusal “ to believe that the bank of justice [was] bankrupt” made all the difference.