National Players

America's Longest-Running Touring Company

TEACHER TOOLKIT

Table of CONTENTS

How to use this Guide

This Toolkit includes:

- Historical context, with insight into the political, social, and cultural atmosphere of the world of the play. This section prepares students to thematically engage with the play and make connections between the world of the play and their own.
- Selected excerpts from the play that relate to its primary sources and historical context.
- An in-depth character study, integrating theatre-making, text analysis, and historical context to help students actively engage with the play.
- Additional resources referencing production of the show and the creation of this guide.
- Photos, illustrations, and other images providing nuanced, visual insight into different interpretations of the play.

Engage with the Players

National Players has a 72-year legacy of making the classics relevant and exciting for new audiences; we are always looking for the latest ways to engage with students and audiences. We make our educational and artistic work as accessible and relevant as possible, from the thematic underpinnings of our texts to the creation of each year's national tour. We invite you to engage with us in any way.

Your students are welcome to contact the Players before or after their visits: **track** the Players' travels, **share** classroom materials, **post** questions and comments. Also, chat with the Players about their performances and life on the road! To engage with the Players via Facebook, Twitter, video and more, contact Community Engagement and Touring Coordinator Rebecca Dzida at info@nationalplayers.org.

www.NationalPlayers.org

Who are the National Players?

HISTORY

Celebrating its 72nd season, National Players is a unique ensemble that brings innovative theatre to communities large and small across the United States. Founded in 1949, National Players stimulates youthful imagination and critical thinking by presenting classic plays in contemporary and accessible ways.

National Players is the hallmark outreach program of Olney Theatre Center in Olney, Maryland. A model for artistic collaboration and national education outreach, National Players embodies the Olney Theatre Center educational pedagogy: to unleash the creative potential in our audiences and artists, and to stimulate individual empowerment. National Players exemplifies these goals by presenting self-sustained productions of Shakespeare and other classics to learners of all age in all environments. Through performances and integrated educational programs, National Players empowers these learners to build stronger communities through artistic collaboration.

National Players has performed in 43 states; in the White House; and for American military in Europe, Asia, and the Arctic Circle. Committed to artistic excellence and community engagement, National Players has utilized theatre and education to build community for more than 3 million people.

National Players offers an exemplary lesson in **collaboration** and **teamwork-in-action**: the actors not only play multiple roles onstage, they also serve as teaching artists and technicians. This year, the Players consist of nine actors and one stage manager/audio technician, traveling across the country and visiting schools and art centers.

A self-contained company, National Players carries its own sets, lights, costumes, and sound, meaning that the actors rebuild the set and hang lights for more than 100 performances a year.

They also memorize lines for multiple plays—this year, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *A Raisin in the Sun*—often performing more than one each day. It is a lot of work, but the Players are dedicated to celebrating and teaching literature and performance to as many audiences as possible.

MISSION

National Players performs extraordinary theatre for diverse populations across the United States and builds stronger communities via outreach and education.

VISION

We strive everyday to live out Olney Theatre Center's vision by unleashing the creative potential of individuals across the United States and to provide performance and educational opportunities to communities without access.

VALUES

- We tell **great stories** and celebrate the great stories of the folks we connect with across the country.
- Through a highly skilled and trained **ensemble**, we exemplify a style of collaborative work that is unprecedented in American theater. The Ensemble is at the center of everything we do.
- Through theatre we enliven people's **empathic awareness**. Through education we inspire a deeper understanding of the work on stage and how it intersects with today's world.
- We are generous with each other on stage and off, and we are generous with the communities we serve. We celebrate the **generosity** of others.
- As individuals and as a company, we insist on continuing to grow into the best versions of ourselves. We celebrate intellectual, creative, geographic, and institutional **growth**.

Offstage Roles

Company Manager/Set Crew

Schedules regular company meetings, handles emergencies on the road, serves as the point of contact for venues, relays information to National Players Headquarters, helps build the set for each performance.

Tour 72: Ariya Hawkins

Finance Manager/Set Crew

Manages the company's expenses on the road and keeps the company on budget, helps build the set for each performance.

Tour 72: Sabrina Sawyer

Stage Manager/Audio Technician

Runs rehearsals, maintains the script and blocking notes, and mixes the actors' body microphones during performances to make sure they can be heard.

Tour 72: Phillip Snyder

Technical Director/Vehicles Coordinator

Supervises load-in of scenery at each venue and performs upkeep of the set while on the road, responsible for vehicle maintenance and coordination on tour.

Tour 72: Walter C.A. Riddle

Costumes Manager/ Public Relations Coordinator

Builds and maintains the costume inventory, creates a laundry and maintenance schedule, oversees repair, anages National Players social media accounts, coordinates opportunities to share National Players' stories with communities across the country.

Tour 72: Savannah Gomez

Master Electrician

Installs and maintains all lighting equipment, determines position for lighting equipment and cables, executes focusing.

Tour 72: Taylor Ryan Rivers

Sound Team Member (A2)

Ensures proper placement, upkeep, and maintenance of sound and video equipment, Helps company members get into their body mics, sets and checks sound levels.

Tour 72: Jordan Essex

Education Coordinator/Props Master

Organizes education efforts, including assigning workshops to Players and altering lesson plans for specific venues and workshops, maintains the prop inventory, oversees repairs.

Tour 72: Melanie A. Lawrence

Accommodations Coordinator/Lighting Crew

Secures hotel rooms in advance of players' arrival, helps install lighting and electrics for performances.

Tour 72: Lorenzo Miguel

COVID-19 Safety Coordinator/Lighting Crew

Administers weekly Covid-19 tests to the ensemble and maintains health and safety procedures while on the road, helps install lighting and electrics for performances.

Tour 72: Max Johnson

Life on the Road

Walter C.A. Riddle. Photo: Maguire Studio

Walter C.A. Riddle *(Demetrius, Walter Younger) is a DMV native and excited to be joining the National Players on the 72nd tour. Having spent time in Richmond, VA, Walter had the opportunity to train with Carol Piersol in the Miesner technique to further sharpen his skills. With multiple years of experience in martial arts and tumbling, Walter worked at the experimental escape room Warehouse 29; a blend of virtual reality, live theatre, and escape room experiences. Walter has been in shows such as* The Tempest, Tuck Everlasting: TYA*, and most recently* Ada and the Engine*. He looks forward to continued development as an artist and to new experiences. Pronouns: he/him/his*

AUDITIONS

Auditions for National Players were held January through March. More than 1,000 young actors vied for a place in the company, auditioning in Maryland, Washington DC, Los Angeles, Boston, Georgia, Chicago, Memphis, and New York City. How did you hear about National Players? Can you describe your audition experience?

I am from the Virginia, so I was trying to look for auditions for theater's in the area and Olney Theatre's national tour popped up in my search. It was really appealing to me because not only did I get to tour, which was something that I wanted to do, but I also got to teach. Teaching was one thing that I really wanted to get training in because I don't have a formal training in acting per say. So when I did hear about the opportunity with the National Players, I knew it was something I wanted to focus on. That audition process was during quarantine, and I did a self tape for the audition; a self tape is when you film your audition at home. You have either a fancy camera or your cell phone (which I used), and you have a tripod with a ring light so you're illuminated well and then you do your audition! Prepping for that self tape is kind of weird because you're usually in your house and you have to find a plain background. So, maybe you have to take some paintings down and what not, and I had to take down some of the things in my room to get things just right.

MEETING THE GROUP

For the first half of their contract, all ten players live in residency at Olney Theatre Center, where they rehearse, learn about each other, and prepare for life on the road. Can you describe your experience?

It's honestly been really cool! I haven't done anything like this since college and I'm the oldest player so it's been a little while but not too unfamiliar. But it's just getting back into the flow of living in a communal space with a lot of different people interacting and doing things at one time. While you might be making cereal in the kitchen someone else is meal prepping for the week. With that in mind, I was really excited because you get to meet and experience different people. Acting and playing with the National Players is one thing, but also just learning how people do their day-to-day things.

REHEARSALS

Players spend approximately three to four weeks with each director, analyzing the text, staging scenes, and incorporating design elements on the Olney stage. Can you describe the rehearsal process?

For *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, it was very group oriented. Our director Danielle Drakes gave us this background of the world that she envisioned. It was a loose background and we got to develop the finer points, which helped us come together as an ensemble. Whereas *A Raisin in the Sun*, directed by Christopher Michael Richardson, it was very individual. It was a story that we all knew and understood from the first time we read it. Those processes were basically polar opposites as far as the rehearsals were concerned, but also similar at the same time because we needed to find ways to encompass these characters as an ensemble.

OFFSTAGE ROLES

In addition to acting roles, each Player takes on at least one offstage job in support of the company, based on his or her skill sets and interests. Can you describe this experience?

My responsibilities are the Technical Director and Vehicle Coordinator. I am in charge of the set, whenever it needs to go up and whenever it needs to come down! The transportation and safekeeping of it, that all falls on me. And then as the Vehicle Coordinator whenever we need oil changes, brakes, tires, if anything happens to one of the cars, that falls on me. With those jobs while they are varied they are also still overview positions. For instance, when setting up in a venue, I am overseeing to make sure we're using the correct tools and keeping people safe. Same thing with the vehicles, I can't drive every vehicle at one time so I have to trust my castmates in the ensemble that they will drive appropriately, and if something does go wrong they'll be able to come to me so that I will get it fixed.

BACK TO LIVE THEATRE

The National Player's process has shifted and changed this year in response to the pandemic in order to ensure the safety of the Players and those working alongside them. Can you talk a little bit about how the rehearsal process was adjusted to keep everyone safe? And how was that first live performance in front of an audience?

So during the rehearsal process, we were wearing masks at certain points and we got the okay from Olney Theatre Center's Aristic Director, Jason Loewith, that in certain circumstances we were able to unmask. We were constantly making adjustments, but we made sure to have hand sanitizer, to have our masks on hand. Going from that to our first live show was exhilarating! Having a crowd again, being able to see and respond back to us, the only person we had in the room during rehearsals was our director. And it was so nice to have fresh eyes one the work that we had done.

TRAVELING

The Players take turns driving the company's three vehicles: a truck for their stage equipment, a van, and a car. Last year, they visited 23 states and 64 cities. Once, they performed five shows in four days in three different states. Can you describe the experience of traveling?

Honestly, it's a little more tiring than I anticipated. Going in, I was thinking: oh man, we're going to Flordia, to Georgia, to Tennessee! I get to see all these things! But after awhile you realize, we have to put up the set, perform, take it down, and then move on to the next state. A lot of times people might think we're just acting, but it's an all-encompassing endeavor. We put up the set, which is a lot of manual labor. We act, which is a lot of movement with our body. We take it down again. And maybe in the morning we have to be in another state. There are a lot of things we may not be able to see or do that we may want to experience. But that's part of the job!

BEING A TEAM

Working together for an entire year means that, despite the long hours and challenging load-ins, all ten Players need to work as a cohesive team. Can you describe the experience of having to work as a team with the rest of the National Players?

It's been great so far. We realize that there is work to be done, we may gripe or complain about things, and that's natural. Sometimes you wake up in the morning and think: I don't wanna move anything or get out of bed! But we try to boost morale as best we can and that's one thing I hope we hold onto. While one person might not be feeling great, another person might be feeling amazing, and it's our job collectively to uplift one another.

KEEPING IT FRESH

After presenting two plays dozens of times for dozens of audiences, the Players work hard to keep their performances exciting and authentic. Can you describe how you keep performances fresh after so much time, performances, and travel?

One thing that both our directors spoke about is to continue to do the work. Just because rehearsals have ended doesn't mean the story doesn't have anywhere else to go. We find little things in the plays. When you start, you have the broad strokes. But if there's a night sky that you want to paint, you may have made your canvas black and added some individual stars. Maybe the North Star because it's the brightest and some other stars, but are there clouds in this painting? What does the landscape look like? And I think that's a nice way to describe it. Oftentimes you finish a play and you think that you're done, but there are always things to discover and find. That's one thing that we try our best to continue to delve into as we perform over and over and over again. It's not just *one* choice, it is *a* choice.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Lorraine Hansberry

Production History

Pictured (left to right): Melanie A. Lawrence (Ruth Younger), Savannah Gomez (Lena Younger), Taylor Ryan Rivers (Travis Younger). Photo: DJ Corey Photgraphy

LORRAINE HANSBERRY

Lorraine Hansberry was born May 19, 1930, in Chicago, Illinois. She was the youngest of Carl Augustus and Nannie Perry Hansberry's four children. Her father, a successful real estate broker, founded Lake Street Bank, one of the first banks for African Americans in Chicago. Carl also became a significant activist in South Side Chicago. He funded legal aid for African Americans, founded civic organizations, and served as the secretary of the local NAACP chapter.

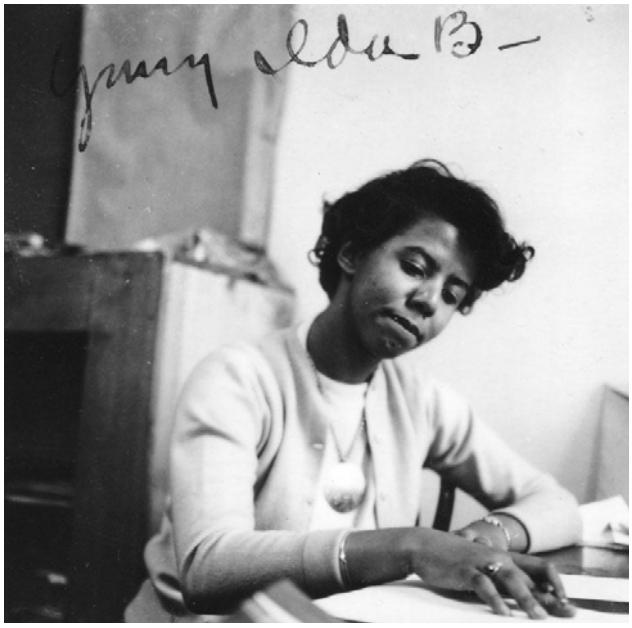
Despite the Hansberry's wealth, the family typically lived in the middle and lower-income buildings they owned. Racially restricitive covenants on property deeds meant that Black families could not buy homes in white neighborhoods. In 1937 when Lorraine was eight years old, Carl Hansberry bought a house in Woodlawn, a neighborhood right along the border between Black communities and white communities. Knowing the purchase would lead to a legal battle, he bought the home backed by prominent activists and political figures of Chicago's South Side. In the spring, he moved his family into the home. Reflecting on her family's time in the house, Lorraine said, "My mother is a remarkable woman, with great courage. She sat in that house for eight months with us—while Daddy spent most of his time in Washington fighting his case—in what was, to put it mildly, a very hostile neighborhood. I was on the porch one day with my sister, swinging my legs, when 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."

After a few months, a court hearing forced the family to leave their new home. Hansberry appealed the decision all the way to the Supreme Court and three years later, the Supreme Court gave Hansberry a partial victory. While the restrictive covenants remained in place in Chicago's South Side, the decision opened up 500 new properties to Black residents.

Lorraine's father believed there was a "correct way" to fight segregation in America. In addition to his housing battle, Hansberry took on cases about travel and the military. By 1945, little had changed in Chicago as a result of Hansberry's action, and his other legal battles gained few victories. Toward the end of his life, Carl began to lose faith in America's legal system to guarantee quality of life to African American citizens. So, in 1945, he bought a home in Mexico City and moved there, leaving Lorraine behind temporarily so she could finish her sophomore year of high school. Lorraine commented later that, "My father wanted to leave this country because, although he had tried to do everything in his power to make it otherwise, he felt he still didn't have his freedom...Daddy felt that this country was hopeless in its treatment of Negroes. So he became a refugee from America."

As Lorraine prepared to join her family, she received news that her father had died of a cerebral hemorrhage and the rest of the Hansberry's returned to Chicago. Lorraine said, "He died in 1945, at the age of fifty-one—of a cerebral hemorrhage, supposedly, but American racism helped kill him."

Hansberry spent two years at the University of Wisconsin. Although she eventually dropped out of college to move to New York, her time at the University of Wisconsin opened her up to the theatre. "In college, I saw plays by Strindberg and Ibsen for the first time, and they were important to me," Hansberry remarked, "I was intrigued by the theatre. Mine was the same old story—sort of hanging around little acting groups, and developing the feeling that the theatre embraces everything I like all at one time. I've always assumed I had something to tell people."



Lorraine Hansberry working for Freedom *circa 1952*

In the summer of 1950, Hansberry left the University of Wisconsin and moved to New York City to begin her career as a writer. She found a home in Harlem and began working for a radical new publication called *Freedom.* The publication, founded by Paul Robesen and Louis Burnham, advocated for civil rights, labor rights, and world peace. Hansberry began doing administrative work there but later joined the writing staff. Other notable contributors included W.E.B Du Bois and Alice Childress. Surrounded by a community of radical, Black writers, Hansberry began to grow as a writer and an activist.

Hansberry married Robert Nimeroff in 1953. Also a writer, Nimeroff was excited to help Hansberry achieve her goals. Around the time they married, Hansberry left *Freedom* to focus on her novel and plays. For a while, she did freelance work to support her family. However, Nimeroff, working for a record company, wrote "Cindy, Oh Cindy," which became an unexpected hit. The revenue Nimeroff gained from this song allowed Hansberry to stop her freelance work and spend her time working on her own projects.

In 1956, Hansberry began writing a play focused on a working-class family facing segregation, drawing on her experience in the South Side of Chicago for inspiration. Between her 26th and 27th birthday, Hansberry wrote *A Raisin in the Sun*, borrowing the title from Langston Hughes' poem "Harlem." She sent an early version of the script to Philip Rose. He was a theatre novice, but he immediately became interested in producing *A Raisin in the Sun*. When he told Hansberry he wanted to produce it, she asked him, "What does that mean?" and Rose responded, "I haven't a clue, but we'll find out together." He gave her $500 for the producing rights and encouraged her to continue improving the script.

The play opened in Philadelphia, New Haven, and Chicago before transferring to Broadway on March 11, 1959, at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre. Sidney Poitier starred as Walter, Claudi McNeil as Lena, and Ruby Dee as Ruth.

Directed by Lloyd Richards, the play gathered a lot of popular and critical attention. The show began to sell out after its first week and won the New York Drama Critics Pick. Before *Raisin*, a total of 10 dramas written by Black writers had been produced on Broadway, and all of them by men. The play initially ran for 530 performances. After it closed on Broadway, it began a national tour and was translated into 30 languages. Columbia Pictures bought the film rights and paid Hansberry to adapt the script.

Part of the Original Broadway Cast of A Raisin in the Sun

Hansberry and Nimeroff divorced in 1962, but they had been separated even before *Raisin* came to the stage. They remained close friends and Nimeroff continued to support Hansberry's work. Hansberry privately identified as lesbian, and in these years before her divorce, she wrote several anonymous essays to *The Ladder*, the first nationally distributed lesbian publication in the United States. In one of these letters, she wrote, "I wanted to leap into the questions raised on heterosexually married lesbians. I am one of those. How could we ever begin to guess the numbers of women who are not prepared to risk a life alien to what they have been taught all their lives to believe was their natural destiny–AND–their only expectation for ECONOMIC security?" She also wrote four lesbian-themed short stories under the pseudonym "Emily Jones." Although Hansberry never publicly voiced her sexuality, she did grow a lesbian social circle around her, later dating writer Eve Ward. In this circle, Hansberry was the only Black woman, and in her journals, she expressed a sense of loneliness and isolation from other lesbian artists of color.

After the success of *A Raisin in the Sun*, Hansberry became a prominent activist. In an interview with the *New York Times*, she said that she was receiving "twenty to thirty pieces of mail a day… I feel I have to answer them... there are so many organizations that want you to come to their meetings. You don't feel silly or bothered, because, my God, they're all doing such important work, and you're just delighted to go. But you're awfully busy, because there are an awful lot of organizations." In 1963, Hansberry was one of several influential African American artists and leaders invited to a meeting with Robert F. Kennedy, the US Attorney General, to talk about the Civil Right Movement and the violence and brutality unfolding in Birmingham, Alabama. In her book, *Looking for Lorraine: The Radiant and Radical Life of Lorraine Hansberry*, Imani Perry writes that Hansberry was blunt and direct when she spoke at this meeting. At the end of a tense discussion, Hansberry declared "I am very worried… about the state of the civilization which produced that photograph of a white cop standing on that Negro woman's neck in Birmingham." Perry writes that Hansberry then "smiled a cutting smile at the attorney general, turned, and walked out. Most of the others followed."

Hansberry's activist work was cut short because of her health. In 1963, Hansberry started going in and out of the hospital because she began to experience extreme pain. Her work on her second play, *The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window*, halted as she considered giving up writing for good. Instead, she focused her efforts on writing the text for a photography book called *The Movement.* In her journals, she wrote about her hope to move to the South once she recovered to join the Civil Rights Movement in a more significant way. In 1964 she finished her second play but was also diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

Hansberry died on January 12, 1965, when she was 35 years old. After her death, Nimeroff adapted a collection of her writings and interviews in *To Be Young, Gifted and Black.*

PRODUCTION History

Lorraine Hansberry wrote *A Raisin in the Sun* over several months starting in 1957. When Philip Rose agreed to produce the play he was a theatre novice and had no real idea how to bring a play to the Broadway stage. He was a former singer and a record company executive. For 18 months, Rose searched for a co-producer, eventually finding one in David Cogan, an accountant.

Rose sent the script to Sidney Poitier. In 1958, Poitier was already a well established film actor. The year he joined the cast of *Raisin,* he became the first African American actor to be nominated for an Academy Award. Poitier then sent the script to his friend, Lloyd Richards, who signed on to direct the play. The original cast also included Claudia McNeil as Lena and Ruby Dee as Ruth.

A Raisin in the Sun initially opened in New Haven, CT in 1958. The play had initially no interest from Broadway theatres. With an almost entirely Black cast, a Black director, and a Black writer, the play was seen as a financial risk. However, when the Connecticut production met with incredible critical and popular response, it finally sparked interest in New York. Less than a year later, on March 11, 1959 *Raisin* opened at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre.

The Broadway opening was a success and the play marked a lot of firsts for American Theatre. *Raisin* is the first play written by an African American woman to be produced on Broadway. Lloyd Richards became the first African American to direct a show on Broadway. When the show won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award, Hansberry became the youngest American playwright to do so, the fifth woman, and the first African American to win the award. The play ran for 538 performances, transferring to the Belasco Theatre part way through its run.

Critical reception of the play was overwhelmingly positive. Brooks Atkinson wrote in his 1959 review that Hansberry had "told the inner as well as the outer truth about a Negro family in the South-Side of Chicago at the present time...*A Raisin in the Sun* has vigor as well as veracity and is likely to destroy the complacency of any one who sees it." James Baldwin, in his 1969 essay "Sweet Lorraine," wrote that when *Raisin* was on Broadway, "I had never in my life seen so many Black people in the theatre. And the reason was that never in the history of the American theatre had so much of the truth of Black people's lives been seen on the stage. Black people ignored the theatre because the theatre had always ignored them... the Black people crowding around Lorraine, whether or not they considered her an artist, assuredly considered her a witness.

Reviews from white audience members tended to mischaracterize *Raisin* by calling it "universal" and applauding

it for not being a "protest play." White theatre-goers erased the race issues inherent in the play and overlooked the fact that *Raisin* is about a distinctly Black American experience. Ossie Davis, who succeeded Sidney Poitier as Walter Lee wrote in his article, "The Significance of Lorraine Hansberry" that "One of the biggest selling points about *Raisin*—filling the grapevine, riding the word-of-mouth, laying the foundation for its wide, wide acceptance—was how much the Younger family was just like any other American family. Some people were ecstatic to find that 'it didn't really have to be about Negroes at all!' It was, rather, a walking, talking, living demonstration of our mythic conviction that, underneath all of us Americans, color-ain't-got-nothing-to-do-with-it, are pretty much alike. People are just people, whoever they are; and all they want is a chance to be like other people." Davis goes on the article to criticize this response to *Raisin*, calling it an "uncritical assumption, sentimentally held by the audience" and a way to avoid social and political issues embedded in the play that are unique to the African American experience.

In 1959, an interviewer asked Lorraine Hansberry:
"Someone comes up to you and says, 'This is not really a Negro play, *A Raisin in the Sun*.' I'm sure you've been told this many times—what's your reaction? They say, 'This is a play about anybody.' Now what do you say?

To which Hansberry responds:
"What they're trying to say is something very good. They're trying to say that they believe that the characters in our play transcend category. However, it's an unfortunate way to try and do it because I believe that one of the most sound ideas in dramatic variety is that in order to create the universal you must pay very great attention to the specific."

In 1960, Columbia Pictures paid $300,000 for the rights to produce a *Raisin* movie and paid Hansberry to adapt the script. Columbia rejected Hansberry's first two drafts of the adaptation as too controversial. Hansberry's first drafts for the film included additional scenes such as opening the film with shots of Southside Chicago set over Langston Hughes's poem "Harlem." Columbia Production Executives cut most of Hansberry's additions. They wrote in a memo to Hansberry that "the addition of race issue material… should be avoided," because "the introduction of further race issues may lessen the sympathy of the audience, give the effect of propagandistic writing, and so weaken the story, not only as dramatic entertainment, but as propaganda too." They accepted her third draft, which more closely resembled the stage play. Poitier, Dee, and McNeil reprised their roles for the film.

The play continues to live on, finding a firm place in the American theatre cannon. In 1973, after Hansberry's death, her ex-husband Robert Nemiroff wrote a musical adaptation of *Raisin* with Charlotte Zaltzberg, Judd Woldin, and Robert Brittan. The musical won two Tony Awards, including Best Musical. Clive Barnes' review in the *New York Times* called the musical "a strange one but a good one." 1989 marked *Raisin's* 30th anniversary and PBS aired an uncut, three-hour adaptation starring Danny Glover and Ester Rolle. In 2004, the play opened on Broadway for the second time starting Phylicia Rashad, Audra McDonald, and Sean "P. Diddy" Combs. Rashad won the 2004 Tony award for Best Actress in a Play, becoming the first African American woman to do so. In 2008, ABC released a TV film adaptation of the 2004 production.

Playwright Amiri Baraka, who was initially critical of *Raisin* for being too conservative, wrote in 1984 that "*Raisin* typifies American society in a way that reflects more accurately the real lives of the Black U.S. majority than any work that ever received commercial exposure before it, and few if any since. It has the life that only classics can maintain… Though it seems 'conservative' in form and content… is the accurate telling and stunning vision of the real struggle. The Younger family is part of the Black majority, and the concerns I once dismissed as 'middle class'—buying a house and moving into 'white folks' neighborhoods'—are actually reflective of the essence of Black people's striving and the will to defeat segregation, discrimination, and national oppression. There is no such thing as a 'white folks' neighborhood' except to racists and to those submitting to racism."

WORLD OF THE PLAY

Housing Segregation

Housing and Systemic Racism

Pictured (left to right): Ariya Hawkins (Benethea Younger), Walter C.A. Riddle (Walter Younger). Photo: DJ Corey Photgraphy

Housing SEGREGATION

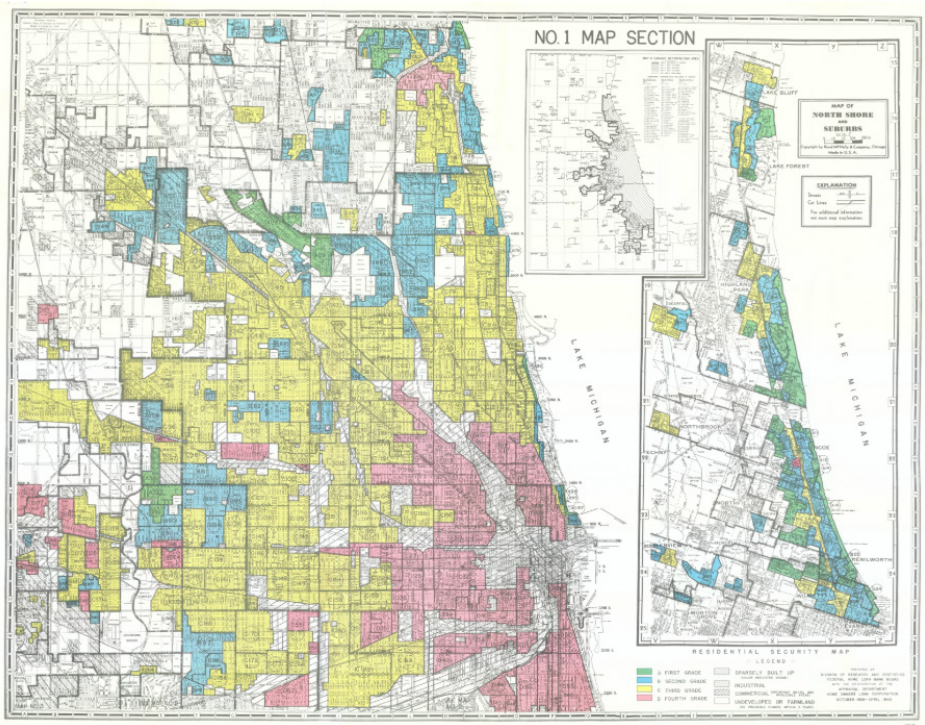
Lorraine Hansberry interweaves many social issues into *A Raisin in the Sun* but none so much as the systemic discriminatory practices of the housing industry. In the play, Charles Lindner personifies the Younger's experience with housing discrimination, but individual racisim is by no means the extent of America's problem with housing. In his book, *The Color of Law*, Richard Rothstein writes,

> "[R]acial segregation in housing was not merely a project of southerners in the former slaveholding Confederacy. It was a nation-wide project of the federal government in the twentieth century, designed and implemented by its most liberal leaders. Our system of official segregation was not the result of a single law that consigned African Americans to designated neighborhoods. Rather, scores of racially explicit laws, regulations, and government practices combined to create a nationwide system of urban ghettos, surrounded by White suburbs. Private discrimination also played a role, but it would have been considerably less effective had it not been embraced and reinforced by government." [1]

The complex realities of residential segregation and countless barriers to homeownership underline Hansberry's play. The rest of this section will focus on several policies that created residential segregation and how the consequences of these policies continue to maintain a system that disadvantages African Americans.

Redlining

In the 1930s and 40s, the United States faced a major housing shortage caused by The Great Depression and exacerbated by World War II. Part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal created the Federal Housing Administration to make it easier for families to afford a home. The FHA did this mostly by insuring home mortgages and transferring the risk of lending away from private banks and onto the federal government. If a borrower defaulted on their loan, the government would pay back the bank, which made banks much more willing to issue loans. By lowering the barriers to homeownership, the FHA aimed to alleviate the housing shortage and stimulate the housing market. However, the FHA took on a large amount of risk through this program.



An example of the original 1938 HOLC Residential Security Maps created by the HOLC. This map of Chicago shows the color-coded gradation of neighborhoods by risk level.

1 Richard Rothstien, *The Color of Law,* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2018), xii

Image Robert K. Nelson, LaDale Winling, Richard Marciano, Nathan Connolly, et al., "Mapping Inequality," American Panorama, ed. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers.

In an attempt to minimize their risk, the FHA adopted Residential Security Maps created by the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC). The maps broke down cities into four colored categories—green, blue, yellow, and red—indicating the level of risk for real-estate investments by neighborhood; this is where the term "redlining" comes from. The HOLC outlined the highest risk areas in red and labeled them "hazardous" for investment. High-risk areas were, for the most part, not granted FHA loans because of the perceived notion that borrowers in that neighborhood would be unable to pay back the lender.

But the HOLC maps did not accurately represent risk; instead, the redlined areas indicated the FHA's inherent prejudice and racial bias against African Americans and immigrants by specifically targeting neighborhoods whose inhabitants were "foreign-born" and "negro." Gene Demby, co-host of the *Code Switch* podcast explains: "Again and again on these HOLC maps, one of the most consistent criteria for redlined neighborhoods is the presence black and brown people. Let's be clear. Studies show that people who lived in redlined areas were not necessarily more likely to default on their mortgages, but redlining made it difficult—if not impossible—to buy or refinance." [2] Loans in redlined neighborhoods were either non-existent or very expensive, forcing most African American families to either continue renting or to buy a home "on contract." Unlike traditional mortgages, contract sales meant that ownership of a property would not transfer for fifteen or twenty years, so if a single monthly payment was late, the would-be owners could be evicted.

The FHA's programs had a reverse effect for African Americans by making homeownership less accessible and trapping them in poorer, older neighborhoods. Between 1934-1968, only two percent of FHA loans went to non-white borrowers.[3] Redlining spread beyond the FHA into the entire mortgage industry, so for about 30 years, Black Americans were nearly cut out of the home-buying market.

The Fair Housing Act of 1968 banned racially-targeted redlining, but the consequences of these policies are deeply ingrained into the structure of American life. A recent study by the National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC) lined up the HOLC's maps with current city demographics: "Most of the neighborhoods (74%) that the HOLC graded as high-risk or 'Hazardous' eight decades ago are low-to-moderate income (LMI) today. Additionally, most of the HOLC graded 'Hazardous' areas (nearly 64%) are minority neighborhoods now."[4]

Pictured: Savannah Gomez (Lena Younger). Photo: DJ Corey Photography.

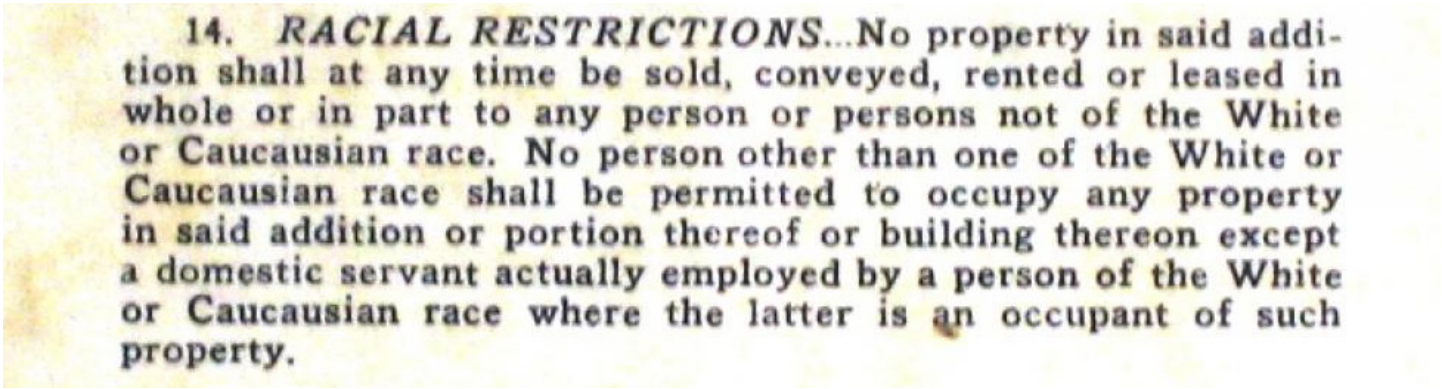
2 Gene Dempy, Kara Frame, Maria Paz Gutierrez, "Housing Segregation and Redlining in America: A Short History" (NPR, 2018)

3 George Lipsitz, "The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: Racialized Social Democracy and the 'White' Problem in American Studies," (The John Hopkins UP: *American Quarterly,* Vol. 47, No. 3, 1995) 369-387.

4 Bruce Mitchell and Juan Franco, "HOLC 'Redlining Maps: The Persistent Structure of Segregation and Economic Inequality," (NCRC, 2018).

Image "Segregated Seattle," (U of Washington: *The Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project*)

Restrictive Covenants and White Flight



14. *RACIAL RESTRICTIONS*...No property in said addition shall at any time be sold, conveyed, rented or leased in whole or in part to any person or persons not of the White or Caucausian race. No person other than one of the White or Caucausian race shall be permitted to occupy any property in said addition or portion thereof or building thereon except a domestic servant actually employed by a person of the White or Caucausian race where the latter is an occupant of such property.

A racially restrictive clause in a deed for a property in Shoreline, Washington, north of Seattle

Racially restrictive covenants were legally enforceable contracts written on the deed of a home or made between neighbors that prohibited the purchase of a piece of property by a group of people, usually African Americans. Lorraine Hansberry's family fought against restrictive covenants in order to own a home in a predominantly white neighborhood of Chicago. Those who wrote these contracts usually believed that the presence of African Americans in a white neighborhood would cause their property values to decline.

Redlining fed into this problem because the FHA would devalue a property if even a small percentage of minorities moved into the neighborhood. Additionally, the FHA fully endorsed the covenants by lowering their risk estimates for properties with these covenants in place. The FHA's 1936 underwriting manual recommended restrictions that included the "prohibition of the occupancy of properties except by the race for which they are intended" and that "deed restrictions should be used as security against decline in desirability for residential purposes due to the encroachment of inharmonious elements."[5]

Integration does not and did not decrease property values; however, the FHA and other lenders created a feedback loop that perpetuated this practice. The process, known as "white flight," occurred when white homeowners would leave neighborhoods as soon as an African American family moved in. Rothstein writes,

> "The full cycle went like this: when a neighborhood first integrated, property values increased because African Americans' needed to pay higher prices for homes than whites. But then property values fell once speculators had panicked enough white homeowners into selling at deep discounts...Falling sale prices in neighborhoods where blockbusters created white panic was deemed as proof by the FHA that property values would decline if African Americans moved in."[6]

When African Americans moved in, white homeowners left the neighborhood and sold their homes at a discount. However, predatory real estate agents—known as "blockbusters"[7]—would purchase these homes at the discounted price and sell them to Black home buyers at an inflated price with harsh lending terms.

For African Americans, limited housing opportunities meant they were forced to pay higher prices for their homes and would frequently become "cost-burdened" by spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing. Additionally, they were often forced to buy a home on-contract, meaning they could be evicted if they missed even one payment. Beryl Satter describes the conditions created when homeowners were cost-burdened and forced to buy through the contract sale system:

> "Because Black contract buyers knew how easily they could lose their homes, they struggled to make their inflated monthly payments. Husbands and wives both worked double shifts. They neglected basic maintenance. They subdivided their apartments, crammed in extra tenants and, when possible, charged their

5 Underwriting Manual, (Washington, D.C.: Federal Housing Administration, 1938), 980,1379
6 Rothstein, *Color of Law*, 96
7 Erin Eberlin, "What is Blockbusting in Real Estate," (The Balance Small Business, 2020)

tenants hefty rents...Overcrowded neighborhoods meant over crowded schools."[8]

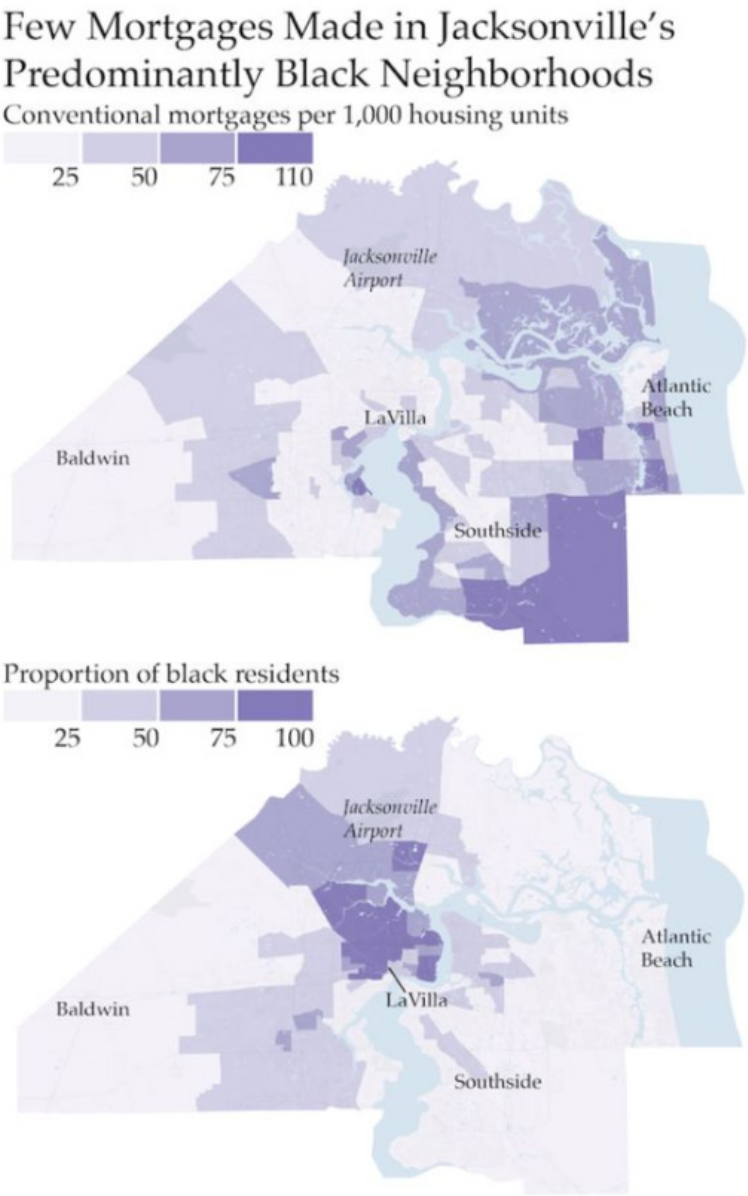
Restrictive covenants were used throughout the first half of the 20th century and increasingly took the form of a contract between neighbors to sue any African American who made a purchase in the neighborhood. For decades, the courts enforced the covenants. In 1926, the Supreme Court upheld the private use of racially restrictive covenants. While the defendants argued that these covenants violated the Fifth, Thirteenth, and Fourteenth Amendments, the court determined that "the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments limited only the action of the government, not private parties, and that the Thirteenth Amendment, which prohibited slavery and involuntary servitude, had no application to the sale of real estate."[9] As a result of this ruling, restrictive covenants spread throughout the United States. The Supreme Court overturned this decision in 1948 but only acknowledged that the covenants could not be legally enforced. The language of the covenants remained on property deeds until the passing of the Fair Housing Act in 1968.

The Fair Housing Act of 1968

The week after Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination, Congress finally passed the Fair Housing Act of 1968, which had been on the floor for over two years. This act prohibited discrimination based on race, religion, national origin, or gender within the housing industry and gave Black home buyers and renters the power to find justice in the courts. However, a less well-known provision of the Fair Housing Act included a promise to "affirmatively" further fair housing.[10] According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the 2015 "Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing" rule, this provision of the Fair Housing Act requires the federal government take "meaningful actions to overcome historic patterns of segregation, promote fair housing choice, and foster inclusive communities that are free from discrimination."[11]

While the act made individual instances of housing discrimination illegal, it did little to enforce the law or reverse the effects already caused by decades of segregation. According to Michelle Adam's article "The Unfulfilled Promise of the Fair Housing Act:"

> "In 1968 residential segregation was stratospherically high. Whites were deeply committed to it. They used all legal and illegal means, including cross burnings, arson, and physical attacks, to keep Blacks out of their neighborhoods. They formed thousands of homeowner organizations,



This map, created in 2018, shows how predominantly Black neighborhoods are still granted fewer mortgages. This result both out of a lack of ability to apply for a mortgage and rejected applications.

8 Rothstein, *Color of Law,* 97
9 Corrigan v. Buckley, 271 U.S. 323 (U.S. Supreme Court, 1926)
10 Fair Housing Act (42 U.S.C. §§ 3601-19)
11 "Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing" (*HUD Exchange*,2020)
Image Kriston Capps "How the Fair Housing Act Failed Black Homeowners" (*Citylab*, 2018)

complete with block captains, with the express purpose of keeping Blacks out of white neighborhoods. And when these methods failed, they simply moved to suburbs.

"It would have taken a remarkably strong federal statute, loaded with every enforcement measure in the book, to combat a social problem of that magnitude. And those measures are exactly what the Fair Housing Act didn't have. The final bill included significant compromises that limited the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) enforcement capabilities. It also put the burden of enforcement on the victims, requiring them to either file a formal complaint with HUD or sue in federal court to vindicate their rights.

"Had its goal of promoting integration been implemented, the Fair Housing Act would have had the potential to be an extraordinary anti-segregation weapon. Instead, it was obstructed from the very beginning."[12]

While it has declined since 1968, residential segregation, especially between Black and white Americans remains very high, especially in large cities. From 1950 to 1980, the Black population in urban centers increased from 6.1 million to 15.3 million.[13] The US Census uses a dissimilarity index to measure segregation between Black and non-Hispanic whites. According to the data, 52.6% of Black or white Americans would need to move to achieve 100% integration.[14] Additionally, the percentage of Black homeowners has not increased. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, "In 1968, 65.9% of white families owned their homes, a rate that was 25% higher than the 41.1% of Black families that owned their homes. Today, the Black homeownership rate has not changed, while the rate of White homeownership has increased five percentage points to 71.1%."[15]

Unequal opportunity in housing goes far beyond housing itself. One area of inequality always bleeds into another; housing affects many areas of life including schools, wealth, policing, and health. For example, since home-ownership is the main way Americans build wealth, housing segregation set the stage for the significant wealth gap in the US. According to Rothstien, "African-American wealth is about 5 percent of White wealth. Most middle-class families in this country gain their wealth from the equity they have in their homes. So this enormous difference between a 60 percent income ratio and a 5 percent wealth ratio is almost entirely attributable to federal housing policy implemented through the 20th century."[16] In the "Housing and Systemic Racism" section of this Toolkit, there will be more discussion of how housing segregation affects wealth and other systemic racist issues.

12 Michelle Adams, "The Unfulfilled Promise of the Fair Housing Act," (*The New Yorker,* 2018).
13 "Fair Housing Act," (*History.com*, 2018)
14 Kimberly Quick and Ricahrd D. Kahlenberg, "Attacking the Black-White Opportunity Gap That Comes from Residential Segregation," (*The Century Foundation*, 2019).
15 "Fair Housing Act Overview and Challenges," (*National Low Income Housing Coalition*, 2018).
16 Richard Rothstein "A 'Forgotten History' of How the U.S. Government Segregated America," Interviewed by Terry Gross, (NPR, 2017)

HOUSING
and Systemic Racism

Housing is everything. There's a reason why, when you want to buy a house and you go to a real estate agent, they don't say home, home, home. They say location, location, location. Because there is an understanding that where you live affects every aspect of the quality of life that you will have. When you take the group of people upon which our racial caste system was built and you separate them and you ghettoize them, then you can just deny them all of the normal services that anyone else would receive without worrying that it would harm you at all.

-Nikole Hannah-Jones, American Journalist[1]

Unlike individual racism, which refers to one person's racist beliefs or behaviors, systemic racism refers to policies and practices entrenched in an institution or country which strategically disadvantage a group of people. Racially explicit policies like redlining are now illegal, which can result in a facade of "equality" for the people who continue to be privileged by the system, but the consequences of past and continued segregation create an infrastructure that is anything but equal. When neighborhoods are segregated, so too are jobs, schools, public services, and opportunities.

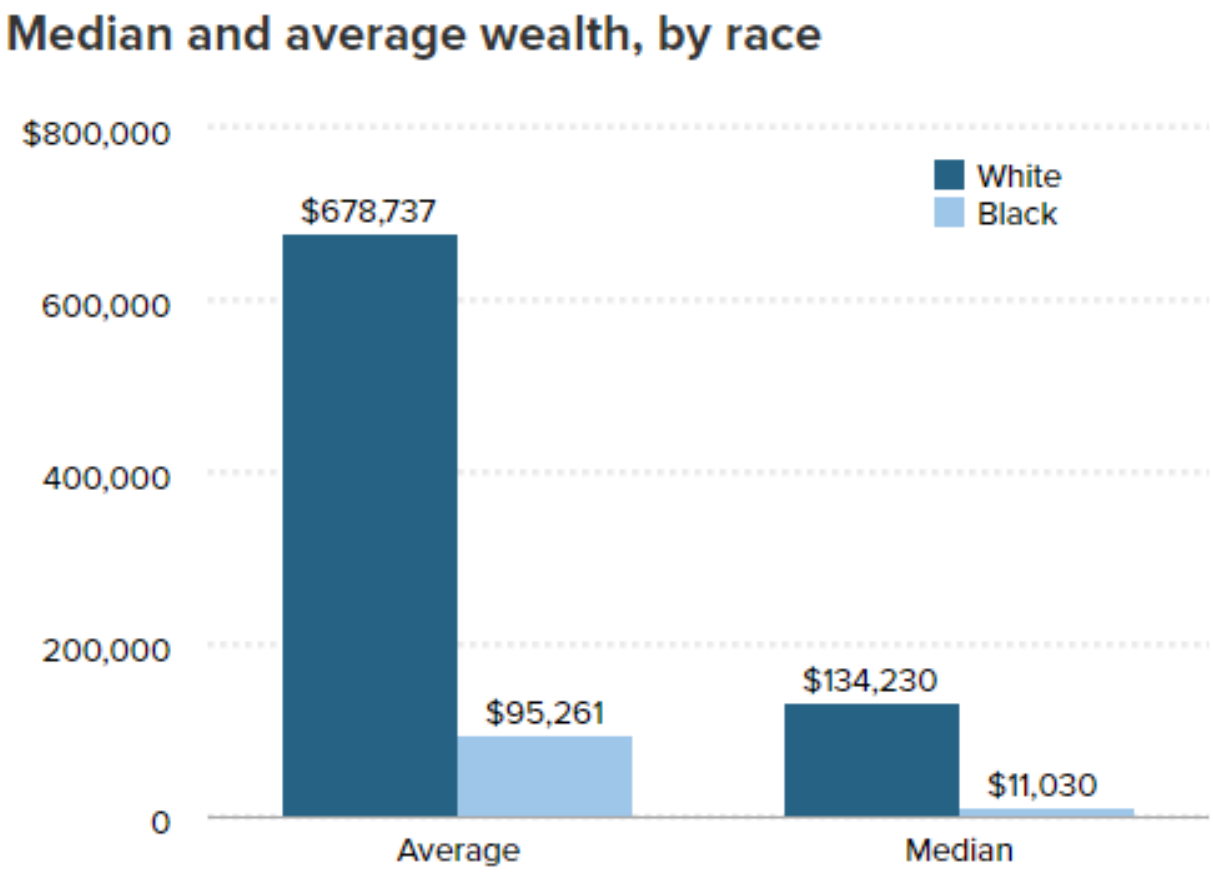
One of the biggest issues resulting from racial residential segregation is the problem of concentrated poverty, which are neighborhoods where a high percentage of people live in poverty. Because of the policies that disadvantage Black homebuyers and renters, racial segregation is deeply intertwined with concentrated poverty, especially in cities. One-third of Black low-income working families live in high-poverty neighborhoods, compared with only three percent non-Hispanic whites.[2] These neighborhoods frequently have underperforming schools, poor health care access, minimal job access, and high crime rates, so it is difficult for residents to create a better life for themselves and get out of poverty. While residential segregation also exists outside of low-income neighborhoods, they will be the primary focus of this section because a disproportionate amount of African Americans live in low-income, racially segregated neighborhoods.

Housing segregation on its own is a form of systemic racism against Black Americans, but it is not an isolated issue. The previous section of this guide examined how racist policies established and perpetuated housing segregation in America, and this section will show how segregation continues to fundamentally shape the lives of Black Americans.

1 Nikole Hannah-Jones, "Location! Location! Location!" (*Code Switch*, 2018), interviewed by Gene Demby and Shreen Marisol Meraji.

2 Margery Austin Turner and Karina Fortuny, *Residential Segregation and Low-Income Working Families,* (The Urban Institute, 2009) 1.

Wealth



Average wealth for White families is about seven times higher than average wealth for Black families. The gap persists, even after taking age, household structure, education level, income, and occupation into account.

The most traditional way Americans build wealth is through homeownership. More than just a place to live, a home is an investment that can become profitable in the long term. This profit is often passed on through generations and can continue to build the longer a family possesses it. In the 1950s and 60s, an economic boom led to more white families buying homes, but Black families were denied the same access. The type of wealth that comes from homeownership takes decades to build, so the wealth ramifications of denying Black families homeownership in the mid 20th century is still starkly apparent today. Black families have a difficult time catching up to the accrued wealth of white families. That doesn't mean there are no poor white people. It means that overall the data shows there is a significant wealth gap in America currently between whites and Blacks that is directly tied to the policies which made it difficult for Black families to obtain the same resources and opportunities as white families.

Intergenerational wealth is one of the main ways poorer and middle-class Americans move into higher wealth status, but Black Americans receive far less wealth from their parents and grandparents than white Americans. The most recent data for intergenerational wealth found that "6 percent of Black households inherited wealth from the previous generation. Of those who inherited wealth, the average inheritance was $42,000. Four times as many white households—24%—inherited wealth, and the average inheritance was $145,000."[3] This lack of intergenerational wealth makes it more difficult for Black Americans to move out of poverty. Of those born into the lowest wealth category, twice as many white adults as African American adults made it into the middle class. [4]

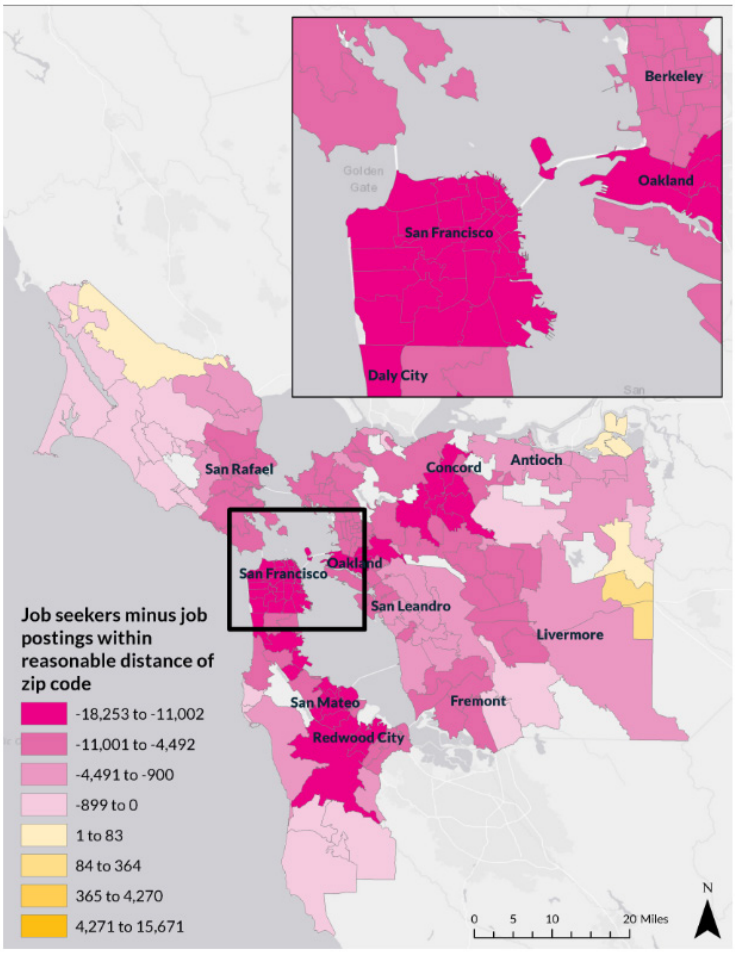
3 Rothstein, *Color of Law*, 186
4 Ibid.
Image Janelle Jones, "The Racial Wealth Gap" (Economic Policy Institute, 2017)

Unemployment

In cities with high levels of segregation, minority residents have more difficulty finding and keeping a job: "Even when controlling for the poverty rates of a neighborhood, the percentage of Black people who are unemployed increases as the level of residential segregation increases."[5] One of the primary factors that influences this trend is "spatial mismatch"—a mismatch between where jobs are located and where job seekers live. Black workers are overrepresented in central cities, but the most promising job opportunities are more widely dispersed throughout the suburbs.[6]

Discrimination in housing and the cycle of poverty it creates mean some African American workers are unable to move out of the center of cities to the suburbs and are geographically isolated from jobs. Those who can commute, either by car or public transportation, spend more time and money simply getting to their job. In areas without sufficient public transportation, those without access to a car also have less access to employment opportunities. Thus, residential segregation continues to perpetuate the cycle of poverty by limiting access to jobs.

Spatial Mismatch in the San Francisco Bay Area, 2017



Note: "Reasonable distance" is 6.3 miles from the population-weighted centroid of each zip code, the average distance between job seekers and jobs for each application in our dataset.

This map of San Francisco shows an example of spatial mismatch. The researches took the number of people seeking employment and subtracted it from the number of jobs available. In the innermost parts of the city, there are too many job seekers and not enough jobs, resulting in a negative number. In the outer portions of the city, there are more jobs available than workers to fill them.

Education

Housing and education are inextricably linked. Due to America's practice of sending students to their local schools, segregated neighborhoods lead directly to segregated schools. Although the intentional practice of racially segregating schools has been illegal for 65 years, American public schools are still largely separated by race, in some cases, more so now than just after the Civil Rights Movement.

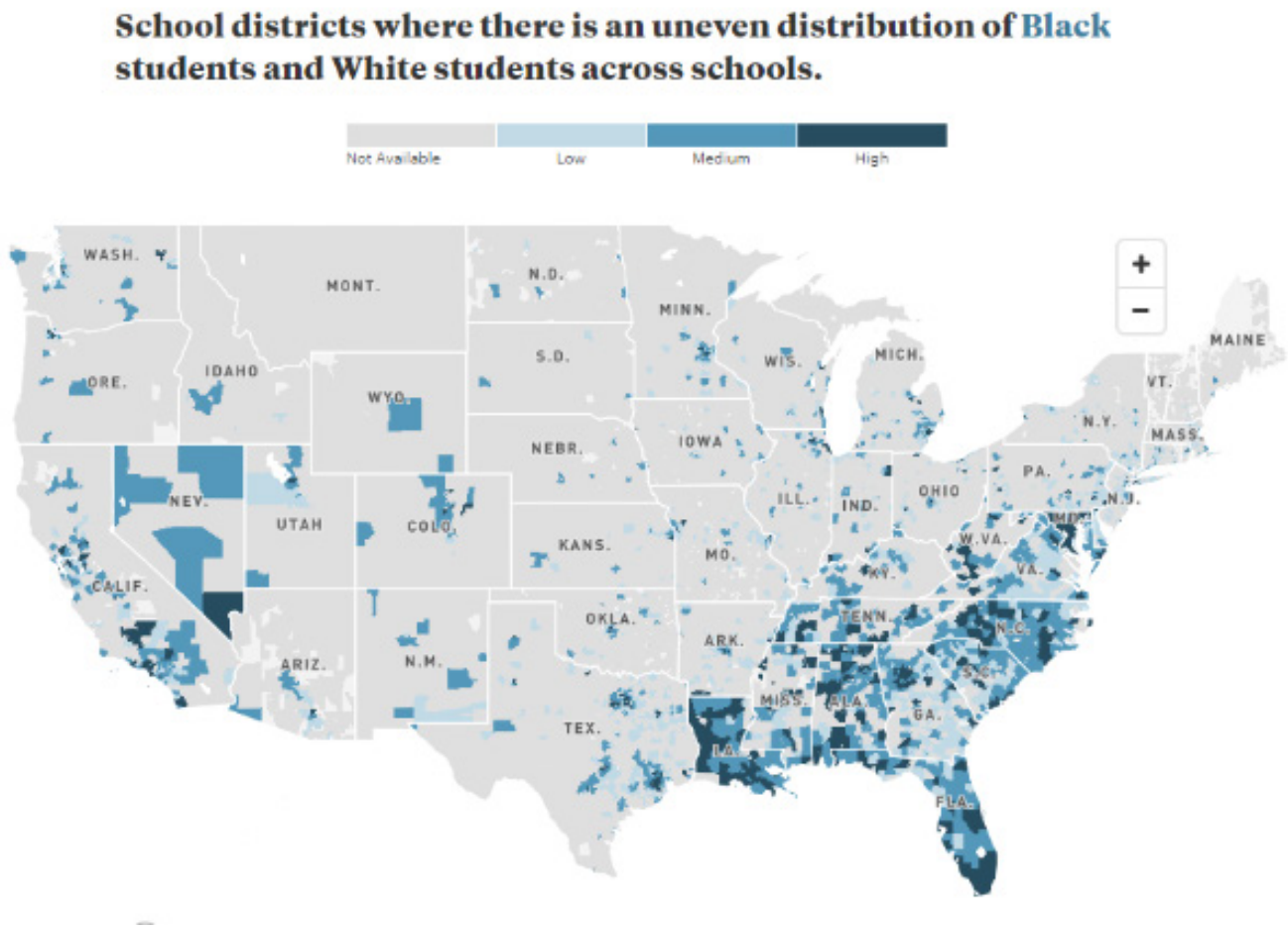
After the Supreme court ruling in Brown v. Board of Education, many schools were placed under court orders to desegregate, which resulted for some time in more desegregated schools throughout the U.S. However, since that time, resources and legal support for desegregation have declined and American schools have resegregated. According to a 2019 *New York Times* article, "more than half of the nation's schoolchildren are in racially concentrated districts, where over 75 percent of students are either white or nonwhite."[7]

5 Tom Housman, "How Segregation Creates Chronic Unemployment, Poverty Traps, and Crime" (The Oak Park Regional Housing Center, 2016).

6 Turner and Fortuny, *Residential Segregation and Low-Income Working Families*, 5.

Image "Too Far from Jobs: Spatial Mismatch and Hourly Workers" (Urban Institute, 2019).

7 Sarah Mervosh, "How Much Wealthier Are White School Districts Than Nonwhite Ones?" (New York Times, 2019)



This map from ProPublica shows the extent of school segregation in the U.S. ProPublica has additional maps showing racial disparities in educational opportunities, discipline, and achievement levels.

Housing segregation also has a direct impact on school funding inequality. Since most schools receive funding from property taxes, people in wealthier neighborhoods have better-funded local schools with more resources. Schools in areas of concentrated poverty are less funded and have fewer resources. This disproportionately disadvantages non-white students. According to the same *NYTimes* article, "On average, nonwhite districts received about $2,200 less per student than districts that were predominantly white."[8]

Studies show that attending poorer schools can harm students' academic achievement. Underfunded schools have older textbooks, less access to computers (which is important when you don't have reliable inertnet at home), over-crowded classrooms, and a higher rate of teacher-turnover. According to a recent report " the socio-economic status of a student's school was even more important in predicting achievement than a student's own status. Numerous studies have shown the detriments of attending segregated, high-poverty schools on math and reading scores as well as on drop-out rates, while others have shown that Black and Hispanic students exhibit improved achievement in integrated settings, while white students are not harmed."[9]

Health

8 Ibid.

9 Nancy McArdle and Dolores Acevedo-Garcia, *Consequences of Segregation for Children's Opportunity and Wellbeing* (Harvard University, 2017).

There is a stark and persistent racial health disparity in the US. In chronic health conditions, mental health, and mortality, African Americans are at more risk than whites. As a few examples of these disparities, the Center for American Progress reports:[10]

- 13.8% of African Americans reported having fair or poor health compared with 8.3% of non-Hispanic whites.
- 12.6% of African American children had asthma compared with 7.7% of non-Hispanic white children.
- In 2018, 8.7% of African American adults received mental health services compared with 18.6% of non-Hispanic white adults
- African Americans have the highest mortality rate for all cancers combined compared with any other racial and ethnic group.
- There are 11 infant deaths per 1,000 live births among Black Americans. This is almost twice the national average of 5.8 infant deaths per 1,000 live births.

These disparities result from decades of systemic inequality, and housing can have an important influence on health outcomes. In her article "Housing in Health: An Overview of the Literature," Lauren Talyor describes four pathways by which housing affects health: stability, quality and safety, affordability, and neighborhood.[11] All of these pathways disproportionately affect African Americans.

Broadly defined, housing instability encompasses a number of challenges such as moving frequently, falling behind on rent, staying with relatives, or experiencing periods of homelessness. Those who face housing instability are more likely to have mental health issues or practice negative health behaviors. Because African Americans have less access to affordable housing options and have lower rates of homeownership, they are more likely to experience periods of housing instability. For example, "despite comprising just 13.4 percent of the total U.S. population, African Americans make up 40 percent of the homeless population, and are an overrepresented part of this group in every state."[12]

Substandard housing conditions, such as water leaks, poor ventilation, pest infestation, exposure to high or low temperature, and residential crowding are also associated with poor health outcomes. For example, environmental conditions can increase asthma risk, especially in children. Children who are exposed to allergens in a home are more likely to experience asthma attacks or develop chronic asthma. African American children are almost twice as likely as white children to develop asthma.[13]

Families who are "cost-burdened" spend more than 30% of their income on housing. Taylor writes that the affordability pathway means that these families have less ability to invest in "health-generating goods" such as sufficient food, home-quality improvements, home utilities, prescribed medications, medical treatment, and health insurance. Black and Hispanic households are almost twice as likely as White households to be cost-burdened.[14]

The final pathway that Taylor describes is the neighborhood pathway: "In the modern era, researchers have found that the availability of resources such as public transportation to one's job, grocery stores with nutritious foods, and safe spaces to exercise are all correlated with improved health outcomes." Because of decades of racial housing segregation, African Americans are more likely to live in neighborhoods without these resources. According to a 2013 study, even at equal poverty levels, Black neighborhoods have the fewest supermarkets.[15]

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10 Sofia Carratala and Connor Maxwell, "Health Disparities by Race and Ethnicity," (Center for American Progress, 2020).

11 Lauren Taylor, "Housing and Health: An Overview of the Literature," (Health Affairs, 2018).

12 Jamila Taylor, "Racism, Inequality, and Health Care for African Americans," (The Century Foundation, 2019).

13 "Ethnic Disparities in Asthma," (Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America).

14 "Housing Instability," (Healthy People, 2020)

15 Kelly M Bower, Roland J. Thorpe, Jr., Charles Rohde, and Darrel J. Gaskin, "The Intersection of Neighborhood Racial Segregation, Poverty, and Urbanicity and Its Impact on Food Store Availabilty in the United States," (National Insi-

Policing

Residential segregation leads to vastly different experiences with crime and policing. Gene Demby points out that "Because our neighborhoods are so segregated, sometimes racial profiling can be camoflaged as spacial profiling. Living in certain areas can make you more likely to be stopped by the police, which leads to a lot of unnecessary contact with the criminal justice system."[16] As of this year, Black people are three times more likely to be killed by police than white people. This problem is caused by a layer of issues, but recent studies have confirmed that residential segregation is one of the primary structures perpetuating a culture of police brutality.

In 2018, a study led by the School of Public Health found that "even controlling for rates of arrest, the researchers found a strong association between the racial disparity in unarmed fatal police shootings and a range of structural racism indicators, with residential segregation showing the most pronounced association."[17] This study measured Black and white residential segregation, employment status, educational attainment, and incarceration rates against data on fatal police shootings against unarmed victims from 2013 to 2017. They found that for areas with higher rates of racial segregation, police shooting of unarmed Black Americans also increased.

This suggests that residential segregation has a large impact on implicit bias, which is the way people subconsciously internalize ideas about the danger of certain racial groups. Demby summarizes the finding of this study by stating, "The more segregated a place, the more intense the personal bias of its police officers; the more pronounced that bias, the more it creeps into their interactions with Black residents, with sometimes deadly results."[18]

This connection between racial residential segregation and police brutality shows that efforts to reduce the problem must move beyond a focus on individual officers and consider the cultural framework that sustains police brutality. Senior author of the study, Michael Siegle says, "This research should change the conversation about the problem of police shootings. Part of the resistance to openly discussing this issue is that many people feel offended by criticism of people who are risking their lives to protect all of us. Our study suggests that this problem is not simply about the actions of individuals, but about the actions of all of society. Hopefully, reframing this from an individual to a societal problem will pave the way for a meaningful discussion about institutional racism."[19]

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titutes of Health, 2015).

16 Gene Dempy, Kara Frame, Maria Paz Gutierrez, "Housing Segregation and Redlining in America: A Short History" (NPR, 2018)

17 Michelle Samuels, "Police Shootings Reflect Structural Racism," (Boston University School of Public Health, 2018)

18 Gene Demby, "How Segregation Shapes Fatal Police Violence," (NPR, 2018)

19 Samuels, "Police Shootings Reflect Structural Racism"

Looking Forward

Wealth, income, education, health, and policing are some major areas where housing discrimination has a direct influence, but there are many others. As Nikole Hannah-Jones said in an interview on the *Code Switch* podcast, "Housing is everything." So much about where a person lives affects the quality of their life. Coming to a full understanding of how these systems of oppression are interconnected is the first step in breaking down the structures that disadvantage Black Americans. These issues do not exist in isolation and cannot be resolved in isolation.

Systemic racism infects nearly every area of American society. More than 200 years of institutionalized racism created a system that oppresses African Americans, but it's maintained through ignorance. James Baldwin is quoted as saying "Americans suffer from an ignorance that is not only colossal, but sacred."[20] He is referring to the myths and preconceptions White Americans, in particular, use to shield themselves from the extent of racism in the country. There is a desire for people who benefit from the system to turn away from the complex and deeply rooted realities of systemic racism.

As a result, the first step in solving these issues is to investigate and understand how the system works. At the end of their "Location! Location! Location!" episode, the *Code Switch* host suggests this "homework" to better understand how housing plays into other issues:

> "When you're scrolling through your news feed, pick a national news story that has ostensibly nothing to do with race or residential segregation, right? Then think about the ways that housing is actually shaping that story, the way place is used as a shorthand for politics or class, who the voices in that story are and what those voices sound like."[21]

Learning to identify how race and residential segregation play into other areas is key to understanding the depth of the issue. Please refer to the "Additional Resources" section of this guide for even more information on housing segregation and systemic racism as a whole.

Pictured: Walter C.A. Riddle (Walter Younger). Photo: DJ Corey Photography.

20 James Baldwin, "Introduction," *A Raisin in the Sun*, (New York: First Vintage Books Edition, 1994), interviewed by Robert Nimeroff, 8

21 Gene Demby and Shreen Marisol Meraji, "Location! Location! Location!" (*Code Switch*, 2018).

ABOUT THE SHOW

Synopsis

Character Descriptions

An Actor's Perspective

A Designer's Perspective

Classroom Activities

Pictured: Melanie A. Lawrence (Ruth Younger). Photo: DJ Corey Photography.

A Brief SYNOPSIS

The members of the Younger family dream bigger than the small apartment where they live on the south side of Chicago in the 1950s. Their home is as rundown as they feel. It's got roaches, not enough bedrooms, one small window, and a bathroom down the hall they share with the neighbors. In the apartment live Mama Lena, who has recently lost her husband, as well as her daughter Beneatha and son Walter Lee. His wife Ruth and their son Travis live together with them, as well. Each member of the Youngers feels discontent with their lives.

Walter Lee works as a driver for a fancy white businessman and can't seem to get over the hump of earning enough money to live a comfortable life. Beneatha is courting George Murchison, a wealthy young Black man, but his ambitions to move up in the world leave behind other people in the Black community. On top of that, Beneatha meets Joseph Asagai, a handsome young Nigerian man who embraces his African heritage and encourages her to visit Nigeria with him. Walter Lee's wife Ruth is pregnant, and their financial and emotional constraints make her unsure whether it's even possible for them to provide for another child let alone the other members of the family. In fact, Ruth thinks seriously of getting an abortion.

The play begins with the Youngers anticipating the arrival of a $10,000 check in the mail, insurance money from the death of Lena's husband, the deceased patriarch of the Younger family. With this money comes new possibility. Walter Lee wants to open a liquor store and be his own boss. For once, Ruth agrees with her husband, believing owning this business would allow Walter to find happiness, something she feels has been missing from their marriage for many years. Lena thinks the liquor store is a pyramid scheme, not trusting Walter buddies to be reliable investors in this business. She wants them to move to a new house with a lawn and a real bedroom for Travis to live in (as he currently sleeps in the living room). It's been her lifelong dream to own a home. Walter Lee's sister Beneatha dreams of attending medical school.

Before anyone notices, Lena takes the check once it arrives and puts a downpayment on a house in Clybourne Park, saying it's the only way to keep the family together. The new home is beautiful, bigger, and exactly what they need, but it just so happens to be located in a white neighborhood in Chicago. Understandably, the family is worried about what it would mean being the only Black family in Clybourne Park. Even with the downpayment, there's still some money left, and Lena wishes to use the remainder for Beneatha's medical school deposit, the rest going to Walter Lee and Ruth. After hearing this news, Ruth decides not to get an abortion, as the money means there's the prospect of a better life for their unborn child. Walter Lee feels upset, believing his mother's action an attack on his manhood and his dream. In secret, he takes Beneatha's share of the money as well as his own and gives it to his buddy Willy Harris to invest in the liquor store.

As the Youngers pack up their belongings and prepare to move, a representative from the Clybourne Park neighborhood association named Karl Lindner comes to visit them. He politely offers them a reasonable sum of money not to move to Clybourne Park. When the Youngers question him about this, he reveals the association is worried about the negative stereotypes associated with Black people. Walter Lee firmly declares they will not accept the offer, telling Lindner to get out of their house. As everyone celebrates, Walter Lee learns Willy Harris stole the money he gave him, which means no liquor store, no medical school, and no savings for the new baby. The Youngers are upset with Walter Lee for the foolish scheme, and even reconsider Lindner's offer. In the end, Walter Lee affirms his decision to decline the offer, and the family moves to Clybourne Park.

THE CHARACTERS

Walter Lee Younger
The protagonist of the play and Lena's son. He's married to Ruth, and together they have a son named Travis. Walter Lee dreams of opening up his own liquor store.

Lena Younger ("Mama Lena," "Mama")
Mother to Walter Lee's and Beneatha's mother. Her husband died recently, and she wants to invest the money he worked so hard for throughout his life into a new home for the family.

Ruth Younger
Walter Lee's wife, and Travis's mother. She has worked to make the best of their current home and is worried about her marriage. She is pregnant at the start of the play.

Beneatha Younger ("Bennie")
Walter Lee's sister, currently in school. She dreams of becoming a doctor and connecting with her African heritage.

Travis Younger
Ruth's and Walter Lee's son. He has no bedroom and sleeps on the couch in the living room. Travis enjoys playing outside with the other neighborhood kids.

Joseph Asagai
A Nigerian student in love with Beneatha. He is very in touch with his African heritage and encourages Beneatha to visit Nigeria with him.

George Murchison
A wealthy young African American man dating Beneatha. He looks down on Walter Lee and many poor Black people, believing he is intellectually superior.

Karl Lindner
The representative from the Clybourne Park neighborhood association. The only white character in the play.

Bobo
Walter Lee's buddy and one of his partners in the liquor store plan.

Willy Harris
Walter Lee's buddy who steals the money for the liquor store. He never appears on stage.

An Actor's Perspective

Ariya Hawkins *(Beneatha Younger, Helena) is a Chicago-based actor and singer. She began her training as a Musical Theatre student at ChiArts, along with three different programs in the Goodman Theatre's Education & Engagement Department. She recently graduated from Millikin University with a BFA in Musical Theatre, and has been a company member at the Canterbury Summer Theatre. Her favorite credits include Sheila Franklin in* Hair *at Millikin University;* Remixing the March, Heartscape*, and* The Water is Rising *(Goodman Theatre);* The Bikinis and Vanities: The Musical *(Canterbury Summer Theatre);* Oklahoma, Ragtime, Working, *and* Sweet Charity *(ChiArts). Pronouns: she/her/hers*

Ariya Hawkins. Photo: Justin Taylor.

When did you first read or see *A Raisin in the Sun*? What were your impressions of the play and of the character Beneatha?

Well, I had seen a few different bits and pieces of people's scenes in different classwork and things like that when I was in high school. I went to a performing arts high school so a lot of what I saw was the acting majors putting on their smaller productions. Plus, I'm a Chicagoan and this story takes place in Chicago. So, a lot of my encounters with this play just happened by the sheer nature of being a young Chicago actor. That was my initial exposure to it, but I didn't get a chance to read the full play until my senior year of college -- last year! It was surreal for me to be able to go through and actually read the full piece for myself and really get a sense of what this story is. I have a very interesting personal connection to *A Raisin in the Sun* actually because my grandmother played Beneatha when she was in high school. It was the first play she ever did. Also, another part of it that is so beautiful and weird is that woman is basically Beneatha. When she was younger she wanted to be a doctor; she was born in 1950 and she had too many people telling her that a Black woman could never be a doctor. She still went into nursing and became a nurse and she married a Nigerian man, a Yaruba man. Just like Beneatha did in the play! So there are so many different parallels between her life and this story. So when I finally got a chance to read it for myself I experienced this self recognition that I didn't realize I could ever have when I was reading a play.

Did you do any specific research before jumping into the role?

Yes and no. I think that again because this story relates so much to my personal experience as a Chicagoan, somebody who is the granddaughter of an immigrant, and the daughter of someone who grew up in Nigeria. There were a lot of things I was thankful to already be familiar with in terms of just general context of the show. But I did still dig in and just do a lot of my own research on Lorraine Hansberry as a playwright and how she went about devising and creating this piece and the cultural impact that *A Raisin in the Sun* has had over the past decades that it's been around. I think it was really exciting to get a chance to dig in during the table read and table work while we were here, to really unpack some of those different themes like a woman's place in the home and the responsibilities placed on us, and just picking out those themes was helpful as a group.

What have you discovered about this character that you found most surprising?

Something I discovered, and I don't think I realized it until maybe a few weeks before we opened, Beneatha is smart but she does not know everything. And I think that's something that as a young intellectual person myself it's always important to check myself and be reminded of the fact that there are some lessons that only come with age and with experience and I think that regardless of the intellectual power that we possess there is so much more to knowing than just what the brain can provide. I think there is a lot that Beneatha has yet to learn, has yet to encounter, has yet to explore, that she is not even fully aware of. And so it was just kind of eye opening and humbling to get that discovery.

What is your favorite part about playing Beneatha?

She's extra! And I love it. One of my favorite scenes in the play is the "ocomogosiay" scene where she and Walter and Ruth are all in the living room and dancing and singing and rejoicing together. I think also too getting to wear the traditional Nigerian clothing, it's just really beautiful and really fun. I think even more than that it just speaks to the fact that even though Beneatha is a bit of an egghead, she's also very vibrant and very joyous and likes to have fun and engage with things. And I think that scene in particular speaks to how wild and how fun she can be. I think that, especially when you're just reading things on the page, you can forget.

If Beneatha was alive today, what do you think she would be doing?

I think she would be exactly who my grandmother is today! I think she would be either living here in the US or living back in Nigeria with Asagai, probably either four or five kids...or not a single kid and very focused on her work! I think also probably making lots of art and writing lots of books and novels and doing all kinds of different things. Living her best life.

Pictured (left to right): Ariya Hawkins (Beneatha Younger), Tamir Cousins-Ali (Joseph Asagai). Photo: DJ Corey Photography.

What about *A Raisin in the Sun* still resonates with performers and audiences today?

Lorraine Hansberry so beautifully and accurately captures Black family life and Black family dynamics and those things don't just end after 1950, or '56 when this play was written. I think these are things that we have carried through us generationally, and there are issues that we are still dealing with and struggling with and working through as families and as a community. Whether it's through gentrification, whether it's through all of these pains and struggles that are placed on Black men and Black fathers on Black women and Black mothers. I think that the themes are still prevalent today and I don't know that we'll ever be in a place where *Raisin* is irrelevant to the Black experience. The longevity comes from the fact that it's so honest and it's so us.

What do you hope students get from our production of *A Raisin in the Sun*? What message do you hope they receive?

I think that especially for younger students who encounter this play, having an understanding that your role within your family, your role within your community, your role within yourself is going to change so much as you grow. In that, there are new obstacles that you face as you grow. And I think I want those audiences to take away from Raisin that togetherness and bonds are part of what gets you through that. I think that your ancestral connections are what help to bring you through those obstacles. There are people who come before you for generation and generations who have experienced these same things and these same growing pains and you're not alone in that. It takes community and connection to bring us out and through those issues. In one of the final scenes of the play, Mama has this monologue where she says "Do you think you're supposed to stop loving someone when they are struggling the most?" That is when you need to give them the most love the most support the most understanding and forgiveness and grace. Even when there are difficult experiences or people in our lives that are unpleasant or rough, we need to figure out what is causing that and what is the root of that issue. And rather than dealing with the symptoms dealing with the root so that it can be healed, so that it can be solved, so that it can serve that person. Really, I just want audiences to know: love conquers all!

A Designer's Perspective:

Jen Gillette Costume Designer

Jen Gillette's *(she/her) costume design credits include Olney National Players Tour 71;* Digging Up Dessa and Bud, Not Buddy *at the Kennedy Center;* Menagerie at the Washington Ballet; Trojan Women, Don Juan, *and* Antigonick *at Taffety Punk;* Gypsy *and* Into the Woods *at McLeod Summer Playhouse;* Puccini Plus *at the Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music;* Cymbeline *and* A Midsummer Night's Dream *at New Orleans Shakespeare Festival;* Crimes of the Heart *at Triad Stage;* Or, Intimate Apparel*, and* Anything Goes *at University of Memphis; costume and throw design for Krewe du Resistance of the Mardi Gras Krewe Chewbacchus. Credits as an installation artist include* Night Garden *for Columbus Museum of Art;* We'll Meet You There *for The Front Gallery, New Orleans;* Town + Country Kitchen Document for Domestic Integrities *at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Jen holds an MFA from University of North Carolina School of the Arts and is Assistant Professor of Costume Design at University of Memphis.*

What are a costume designer's main responsibilities?

A costume designer is responsible for working with the director, the other designers, and the performers to create clothing that supports the story. The costume designer begins by reading the play and doing visual research into the play's setting, including the location, time period, and social status of its characters. Once the research is complete, a costume designer will create sketches to show what each of the characters looks like in their costume, including their hair, makeup, shoes, and accessories. The costume designer helps to purchase the fabric and clothing pieces necessary for the production, fit all of the pieces on the performers, and look at the production in technical rehearsals to make final adjustments to the design.

How would you describe the National Players' aesthetic?

There are a lot of special conditions for National Players' costumes that aren't true in every theatrical production. National Players need durable clothes that will survive for one year of performances with minimal maintenance. Thin, delicate pieces that could be crushed during travel or torn during use won't survive! The Players' costumes can be a little minimalistic; often the Players are playing multiple roles and don't have a lot of time to change, so we need to say a lot with as few pieces as possible. I also think of the National Players aesthetic as being very authentic to the performers. Because we know our performers can't use elaborate wigs or makeup on the road, the clothes have to tell even more of the story. The costumes should look a little lived-in, like they are a part of the performer who wears them.

How is the collaborative nature of National Players unique?

In many productions, the performers have a staff to help maintain the clothes, help with quick changes, and apply makeup and hairstyles. National Players all have their jobs to do as actors, but they also have backstage jobs. This unique circumstance creates new opportunities for collaboration, as the performers usually have a lot of questions about wearing and maintaining their clothes. Because the Players are so involved in the work usually handled by a wardrobe team, they often have valuable insights and ideas for how to make their costumes work better for them. I love working with performers to make the costumes both manageable for them and a strong part of the visual storytelling on stage.

Can you walk us through a brief timeline of your design process?

The timeline for this tour was a little unusual because of COVID-19. We started work on these shows back in the winter of 2020. Usually, we start with design meetings, wherein the director and the designers all share ideas for what the production could look like. I bring in successively more detailed research, sketches, and color renderings until we've all agreed on a vision for the piece. Usually, we move from the finished design on paper to purchasing, sourcing, and fitting a show, but this time we went on a year-long hiatus due to safety. We were delayed through the late spring of 2021, when we all started getting vaccinated in preparation to return to fittings and rehearsals. In May, I started purchasing items (with the help of the Olney Theatre Center's amazing costume shop staff) and doing some of the build myself. I traveled to Maryland for fittings, then returned to see the shows through their respective technical rehearsals in July and August. Usually, the entire process lasts from about February to August for a National Players Tour, but this time it took us from February 2020 - August 2021!

What is the research process like for costume design?

My research process is always a mix of visual and textual research. For instance, on *Raisin*, I decided to look for very specific photos: I wanted candid photos of Black families in Chicago in the 1950s. Candid photos are special because they're not posed, and they're not usually of people looking their most pristine; I wanted to see the most honest, unvarnished view of our period. I wanted to make sure to capture not only the period, but the Younger's specific social experience and regional flavor. I found some great photos, and found out there were photographers known for documenting The Great Migration. That led me to doing some reading about The Great Migration, which really helped me to see deeper into the family's legacy, especially for Mama. This also got me thinking about the legacy of those photographers, and of all Black artists documenting their own experiences in different time periods. I found my way to contemporary African-American artists working specifically in the midwest, and I found a lot of inspiration in the work of painter Kerry James Marshall (Chicago) and multimedia artist Aminah Robinson (Columbus). The contemporary lens of these artists helped us find the warm palette, diverse textures, and special finishings for the work. It led us to the idea of visible mending, which became the key connective thread (no pun intended!) for the clothes worn by the Younger family. Inspired by the language of hand-craft in the work of these midwestern artists, we decided to hand-embroider mending and motifs in the clothes worn by the family. I love visible mending for the Youngers because it celebrates the ways in which things that are trying to fall apart can be held together by love and attention. I love poring over research and thinking about all of the different ways the ideas might manifest in the costumes.

If I want to be a costume designer, what skills should I work to cultivate?

Costume design requires a lot of diverse technical skills, like drawing, organization, historical research, sewing, and dramatic analysis. These are skills that you can learn at any time in your life, either by doing your own research or by working with a mentor. The most important skills for a costume designer are a little more nebulous: curiosity, collaboration, communication. Having open communication, being excited to work with a team, and being genuinely interested in all kinds of stories are the most important qualities for a costume designer.

What is one of your favorite aspects of the *Raisin* costumes this year?

Raisin is such a beautiful story, and I wanted to respect and honor the Younger family throughout the entire costume design. My favorite thing we did was to add embroidered visible mending to all of the Younger Family's clothing pieces. The Youngers struggle with money, but they show so much pride and care for one another and in their home, and I wanted the costumes to reflect this. Visible mending takes the idea that clothes can be repaired instead of thrown away and visually highlights it. Rather than mending the clothes to make them look new, they're mended to highlight the holes and imperfections, showing the care taken to lengthen the lives of beloved clothing items. We performed hand-stitched visible mending all over the Youngers' costumes, creating a sense of history, care, and pride. The closer you get to the *Raisin* costumes, the more details and special touches you'll see: Beneatha's hand-stitched monograms on her shirts, the heavily repaired knees on Travis' green pants, the bright red repairs to Walter Lee's final shirt that look almost like blood seeping from the seams of his clothes.

Pictured (left to right): Taylor Ryan Rivers (Travis Younger), Savannah Gomez (Lena Younger). Photo: DJ Corey Photography.

ACTIVITY: Examining Language Through Tableau

OBJECTIVE: Students will gain a better understanding of *A Raisin in the Sun* by examining the poem, "Harlem" by Langston Hughes, where the play got its title.

SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL: 7 - 12

SUPPLIES NEEDED: Printed poem for each group.

Harlem
By Langston Hughes

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

DISCOVERY AND PREPARATION:

1. Read the poem together as a class.
2. What does Hughes mean in the poem by "a dream deferred?"
3. Read the poem out loud to the class. Ask students to write down words or draw pictures that come to mind while the poem is being read.
4. Discuss what tableau is and review its fundamentals. Tableau is a theatrical image where actors freeze in a pose to capture a picture of one important moment. (Imagine you are a living painting.)

Activity

1. Split students into groups of 3-4.
2. Students will create a tableau for each line of the poem.
    a. How can you physically captures each of the lines?
    b. What does "a raisin in the sun"or "fester like a sore" or "syrupy sweet" physically look like?
    c. How can your group embody each of those images?
3. Check in with students to see how much longer they need to complete all tableaus for the poem.
4. For a presentation to their peers, students will do their tableau piece while the teacher/facillitator is reading the poem.

Reflection

1. What did you notice, see, hear, feel while you were presenting?
2. What did you notice, see, hear, feel, while others were presenting?
3. Did physicalizing the text help you better understand the poem? If so, how?
4. How does studying this poem inform your understanding of the play *A Raisin in the Sun*?

Pictured (left to right): Walter C.A. Riddle (Walter Younger), Tamir Cousins-Ali (Travis Younger), Melanie A. Lawrence (Ruth Younger), Savannah Gomez (Lena Younger), Ariya Hawkins (Beneatha Younger). Photo: DJ Corey Photography.

ACTIVITY: A Mid-Twentieth Century to Now Writing Activity

OBJECTIVE: For students to explore the idea of The American Dream within the context of *A Raisin in the Sun* in order to gain a further understanding of it in relation to time.

WARM UP: Discuss the following open questions as a class.

1. If you and/or your family suddenly came into a large amount of money, what would be the first thing you would do with it? Why?
2. If there is one aspect of society that you could change suddenly, what would you change and why?

***The teacher can notice the differences in answers and ask their students to examine why this may be.

Set the Scene

First, the teacher should provide a definition of The American Dream to their class. Based on the definition below, have your class answer the following questions:

The American Dream is the belief that anyone, regardless of where they were born or what class they were born into, can attain their own version of success in a society in which upward mobility is possible for everyone."

Answer the following questions as a class:

1. Do you believe that The American Dream can look differently for different people? Why or why not?
2. Do you believe the concept of The American Dream has remained the same or changed over time?
3. If you believe in The American Dream, what are some ways to achieve it?
4. What today in our society do you believe exemplifies The American Dream?
5. How does *A Raisin in the Sun* provide a look/perspective into the cultural climate in the U.S. in the mid 20th century?

Classroom Connection

Bridge between the opening and the activity by contextualizing it to the material your classroom is discussing during this part of the year. This may look differently for an English vs. History class.

For example...

1. English: Explore *A Raisin in the Sun* and its focus as a work of literature. The teacher can also bring in elements from other writings that focus on the idea of The American Dream: ex:"I have a Dream" (MLK), "What Happens to a Dream Deferred" (Langston Hughes
2. Social Studies/History classes: Explore the historical narrative of the play and The American Dream within this (opportunities for people of color, housing segregation, unequal $ pay for employment, etc.)

ACTIVITY

Pick one scene prompt from the play below and rewrite it to where it is set in the present. Consider centering your revisions around the idea of The American Dream and what it may look like to some characters if it were set in modern day Chicago, Illinois. Text for each prompt (in context) is located at the bottom of the activity.

Prompt #1

Act I, Scene II: The insurance check arrives and Walter begins planning his future, before his mother, Lena reveals that she will not be helping him financially with his dream.

ex: Rewrite the situation into how it would affect each family member in the present day, etc.

WALTER. Mailman come! *(to* **RUTH,** *as he crosses downstage center to her at right front of sofa)* Did it come?

*(***RUTH** *unfolds the check and lays it quietly before him; watching him intently with thoughts of her own.* **MAMA** *crosses left to sink.* **WALTER** *sits down and grasps the check close and counts off the zeros. He turns suddenly, frantically to his mother and draws some papers out of his breast pocket.)*

Mama – look, old Willy Harris put everything on paper –

(He crosses to kitchen table and lays out the legal papers.)

MAMA. Son – I think you ought to talk to your wife – I'll go on out and leave you alone – *(crosses up to left bedroom door)*

WALTER. *(brings her the legal papers above table)* I can talk to her later. Mama, look – Please!

MAMA. Son –

WALTER. WILL SOMEBODY PLEASE LISTEN TO ME TODAY!

MAMA. *(quietly)* I don't 'low no yellin' in this house, Walter Lee, and you know *it* –

*(***WALTER** *stares at them in frustration and starts to speak several times.)*

And there ain't going to be no investing in no liquor stores.

WALTER. But, Mama, you ain't even looked at it.

MAMA. I don't aim to have to speak on that again.

(long pause)

WALTER. You ain't looked at it and you don't aim to have to speak on that again? You ain't even looked at it and *you* decided – *(crumpling his papers)* Well, *you* tell that to my boy tonight when you put him to sleep on the living room couch!

(He picks up his coat from the sofa, crosses upstage center and starts out.)

RUTH. Where are you going?

WALTER. Out!

Prompt #2

Act II, Scene II: Mr. Lindner attempts to bribe the Youngers to not move into the all white neighborhood. However, Walter refuses to accept his"dirty money."

ex: Rewrite the event. What if instead Walter did accept the money? How do you believe the "financial bribing" and "housing segregation" would look today in modern day Chicago? Would there even be this issue in 2021?

LINDNER. *(putting on his glasses and drawing out a form from the brief case)* Our association is prepared through the collective effort of our people to buy the house from you at a financial gain to your family.

RUTH. *(rises, crosses left front of table)* Lord have mercy, ain't this the living gall!

WALTER. Alright, you through? *(rises)*

LINDNER. Well, I want to give you the exact terms of the arrangement –

WALTER. We don't want to hear no exact terms of no arrangements. I want to know if you got any more to tell 'bout getting together.

LINDNER. *(taking off his glasses)* Well – I don't suppose that you feel –

WALTER. Never mind how I feel – you got any more to say 'bout how people ought to sit down and talk to each other?

(He strides to the door and opens it wide.)

Get out of my house, man.

*(***LINDNER,** *looking around at the hostile faces and reaching and assembling his hat and brief case; crosses left to upstage center.)*

Prompt #3

Act III: Beneatha confides in her mother, Lena, that she does not wish to continue her relationship with George.

You can rewrite the scene to show what would happen if Lena did not agree with her decision. Or what if Benetha decided to settle with George for financial security instead?

MAMA. Didn't you have a nice time?

(She puts on light downstage left.)

BENEATHA. No.

*(**MAMA** crosses downstage left above table to kitchen with string bag of groceries.)*

MAMA. No? What's the matter?

BENEATHA. Mama, George is a fool – honest.

MAMA. *(Hustling around unloading her packages, she stops.)* I he, baby?

BENEATHA. Yes. *(crosses right for coat)*

MAMA. You sure?

BENEATHA. *(crosses upstage center)* Yes.

MAMA. Well – I guess you better not waste your time wit no fools.

*(**BENEATHA** looks up at her mother, watching her put groceries in the icebox. Finally she gathers up her things and starts to go into the left bedroom. At the door she stops and looks back at her mother.)*

BENEATHA. Mama –

MAMA. Yes, baby –

BENEATHA. Thank you.

MAMA. For what?

BENEATHA. For understanding me this time.

REMINDER: These are just a few examples, so please feel free to rewrite the scene with whatever creative concept comes to mind!

Please also consider asking yourself while writing:

1. How would this scene look today?
   ex: How would the characters speak? Would the check be a direct deposit instead of a check? Would Lena be more willing to support Walter's or Benetha's dreams? Would the main characters still have the same dreams or different ones?
2. Tie into the notion of The American Dream in this writing.
   ex: Do you believe that Walter's or Beneatha's "dream" is a concept under the ideal of The American Dream? Would Walter or Beneatha's dream look the same today as it was set in that time period? Would Lena's reaction look the same today towards her two children?

Debrief *Discuss the Following as a Class.*

1. What was the experience of rewriting this scene in a modern day setting like?
2. Have your views of The American Dream can change over time been shifted? Why or why not?
3. What was the easiest part of rewriting this concept in a modern day era?
4. How do you believe this play would look differently or change, if it was written in 2021?
5. Do you believe that any of the conflicts and issues presented in the play are still relevant in our time today?

Theatre Connection

After debriefing as a class, discuss how this activity connects to the National Players and their production of *A Raisin in the Sun*.

ACTIVITY: Organize a Debate

OBJECTIVE: For students to explore the idea of the "American Dream" within the context of *A Raisin in the Sun* in order to gain a further understanding of it as a concept and debate whether they believe it is a reality or a deception in our society.

WARM UP: Answer the following questions as a class:

1. Is The American Dream achievable? Why or why not?
2. If you believe in The American Dream, what are some ways to achieve it?
3. If you do not believe in The American Dream, describe why you believe people will never be able to attain it.
4. Do you believe there has to be a struggle to attain the American dream?
5. How has the National myth of The American Dream shaped our history for better or for worse?

Classroom Connection

Bridge between the opening and the activity by contextualizing it to whatever your specific classroom is discussing at this time of the year.

For example...

1. English: Explore *A Raisin in the Sun* and its focus as a work of literature. The teacher can also bring in elements from other writings that focus on the idea of The American Dream: ex: "I have a Dream" (MLK), "Harlem" (Langston Hughes)
2. Social Studies/History classes: Explore the historical narrative of the play and The American Dream within this (opportunities for people of color, housing segregation, unequal $ pay for employment, etc.) At the end of this part of the activity, the teacher should allow their students time to research for the upcoming activity below.

ACTIVITY: Organize a Debate

The teacher should organize cooperative groups of 3-4 people (individuals who believe in the idea of The American Dream vs. those who believe it is a deceptive concept).

Create a debate between the **two opposing** student groups. Have the debate include the following:

- A strong opening
- Thesis Statement
- Argument/Key Points of debate with evidence/research defending your topic with support from themes, characters, text, and symbols from *A Raisin in the Sun*. The main key points should originate from at least 1 primary source and at least 1 secondary source. Make sure to use examples from *A Raisin in the Sun* as as a starting point for research, but the main bulk of the argument should be based on outside sources (can also include real world anecdotes, experiences, and opinions to further support your argument).

Primary source: "A primary source is an original document or object, something that was created or written during the time that is being researched."
A secondary source interprets a primary source.
Make sure in this section that a brief explanation of creative choices is included.

- Rebuttal (can include links)
  Allow each group to discuss with one another for 90 seconds
  They will have 2 minutes MAX to rebuttal against their opponent
- Strong Conclusion/Closing

Once the debate is organized...
Randomly pair and assign one group against another and have them debate in front of the classroom. The teacher / T.A. may serve as the moderator. The class and/or teacher should take notes while watching the debate and can vote at the end of who they would choose as the "winner" of the debate.

The "winner" of the debate should be judged on:
1. Content support from *A Raisin in the Sun* and research from outside sources (were requirements met for sources, etc.)?
2. Participation from each member/ how well the group worked with one another
3. Overall presentation (did the students seem prepared, did they work well with one another, etc?)

Debrief
1. What was one idea that your opponent brought up that you agreed and/or disagreed with from the debate?
2. Did any of the thoughts from your opponents create a fresh outlook on what The American Dream is? Why or why not?
3. Name one character from *A Raisin in the Sun* whom you believe would defend your argument and why?
4. How do you believe the idea of The American Dream is supported or rejected in A Raisin in the Sun?
5. How does the idea of income inequality in *A Raisin in the Sun* play a role in the idea of The American Dream?

Theatre Connection
After debriefing as a class, discuss how this activity connects to the National Players and their production of *A Raisin in the Sun*.

1. How can this activity be useful as a theater-maker?
2. How do you feel creative differences and ideas can be beneficial to an actor/a theatre program?

Additional RESOURCES

PRINT

***Looking for Lorraine: The Radiant and Radical Life of Lorraine Hansberry* by Imani Perry**
A revealing portrait of one of the most gifted and charismatic, yet least understood, Black artists and intellectuals of the twentieth century.

***The Color of Law* by Richard Rothstein**
Richard Rothstein argues with exacting precision and fascinating insight how segregation in America—the incessant kind that continues to dog our major cities and has contributed to so much recent social strife—is the byproduct of explicit government policies at the local, state, and federal levels.

***The South Side: A Portrait of Chicago and American Segregation* by Natalie Y. Moore**
Chicago-native Natalie Moore shines a light on contemporary segregation in the city's South Side; with a memoirist's eye, she showcases the lives of these communities through the stories of people who reside there. The South Side shows the impact of Chicago's historic segregation—and the ongoing policies that keep the system intact.

WEB

The Evolution of *A Raisin in the Sun*, From Dream Deferred to Broadway Masterpiece
A timeline of both the real events that inspired the story of *Raisin* and the plays' journey to the Broadway stage and beyond.

Mapping Inequality
A newly revamped interactive site from "Mapping Inequality" takes scores of HOLC maps — previously accessible only in person at the Archives or in scanned images posted piecemeal online — and embeds them on a single map of the USA. Selecting a city reveals the old map images; zooming in shows a color overlay over a modern map with street names and building outlines.

"Location! Location! Location!" *Code Switch* Podcast
"When we're talking about racial disparities and family wealth, when we're talking about health outcomes, when we're talking about schools closing, when we're talking about policing, we're really talking about where we live. And in America, we live apart, and none of that is accidental."

Systemic Inequality: Displacement, Exclusion, and Segregation
Homeownership and high-quality affordable rental housing are critical tools for wealth building and financial well-being in the United States.1 Knowing this, American lawmakers have long sought to secure land for, reduce barriers to, and expand the wealth-building capacity of property ownership and affordable rental housing. But these efforts have almost exclusively benefited white households

"Structural Racism in America" Collection from the Urban Institute
A collection of articles, periodically updated by the Urban Institute about how structural racism continues to disproportionately segregate communities of color from access to opportunity and upward mobility by making it more difficult for people of color to secure quality education, jobs, housing, healthcare, and equal treatment in the criminal justice system.

Anti-Racism Resource List from NPR
"To help people be better allies, lists of antiracist books, films and podcasts are being published in droves. There's never a bad time to learn, but such a list can become erroneously prescriptive, a balm to centuries-old lacerations that cut deeper than the individual reader... So, with that in mind, we've compiled a list of books, films and podcasts about systemic racism, acknowledging that they are just books, films and podcasts. You'll find research on how racism permeates everything from the criminal justice system to health care. We hope you spend some time with these resources...Information is power — you decide what you do with it."

VIDEO

Lorraine Hansberry: Sighted Eyes / Feeling Heart

Lorraine Hansberry: Sighted Eyes/Feeling Heart is the first in-depth presentation of Hansberry's complex life, using her personal papers and archives, including home movies and rare photos, as source material. The film explores the influences that shaped Hansberry's childhood, future art and activism.

Segregated by Design

"Segregated by Design" is an animated documentary on the history of how federal, state, and local governments unconstitutionally segregated major metropolitan areas in the United States through law and policy. The 18-minute film is based on the book *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How our Government Segregated America* by Richard Rothstein who also narrates.

Housing Segregation in Everything

Housing segregation is in everything. But to understand the root of this issue, you have to look at the government-backed policies that created the housing disparities we see today.Gene Demby explains how these policies came to be, and what effect they've had on schools, health, family wealth and policing.

Beyond Redlining: Black Lives Matter and Community Development

A recent study by the National Community Reinvestment Coalition indicates that the overwhelming majority of neighborhoods marked "hazardous" in red ink on maps drawn by the federal Home Owners' Loan Corp. from 1935 to 1939 are much more likely than other areas today to consist of lower-income, minority residents. This panel of expert legal professionals addressed the long term impacts of redlining on community development, housing, education, and economic justice.