

## **Breaking Confinement : Black Women's Voices in Lorraine Hansberry 's play *A Raisin in the Sun***

**Manal Mohammed Ali**

**Asst. Prof. May Mohammed Baqer (PhD)**

**University of Baghdad/College of Education- Ibn Rushd- for Human  
Sciences/ English Language Department**

**manal.ali2307m@ircoedu.uobaghdad.edu.iq**

**may.mohammed@ircoedu.uobaghdad.edu.iq**

### **Abstract**

This study provides critical examination of *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry. She reveals how the oppression forces including race, class, and gender expectation that shape Black existence in mid-twentieth-century America. Hansberry transforms the family dilemma into a universal statement of an equal opportunity. This study consisted from six sections followed by a conclusion. Section one provides an overview to the play, section two shows a close look to the play. Section three shows how some visions of Black liberation are too limited.

The three following sections each tackled one of the female characters, Lena Younger, the mother, acts as moral anchor of the family, her love and resilience considered as a quiet forms of persistence against the systematic historical oppression, her nurturing to the plants becomes political, cultural, social act. Ruth Younger character detects the emotional and physical exhaustion of Black women. Her endurance embodies the invisible labor, her work as a maid shows the black women pain, and their search for self-realization. The last section presents Beneatha Younger, who pursuits for redefining herself through rejection assimilation and demanding better life. The conclusion that sums up the findings of the study.

**Key words:** (oppression, racism, sexism, gender expectations).

"كسر القيود: أصوات النساء السود في مسرحية لورين هانزبيري "زبيب في الشمس"

منال محمد علي أ.م.د. مي محمد باقر

جامعة بغداد/ كلية التربية ابن شد للعلوم الإنسانية/ قسم اللغة الإنكليزية

manal.ali2307m@ircoedu.uobaghdad.edu.iq

may.mohammed@ircoedu.uobaghdad.edu.iq

## الملخص

تُعرض هذه الدراسة نقدا تحليليا لمسرحية "زبببة في الشمس" للكاتبة لورين هانزبيري. تكشف كيف تُشكل قوى القمع، بما في ذلك العرق والطبقة والتوقعات الجندرية، الوجود الأسود في أمريكا منتصف القرن العشرين. تُحوّل هانزبيري معضلة الأسرة إلى بيانٍ عالميٍّ لتكافؤ الفرص. تتألف هذه الدراسة من ستة أقسام ، تليها خاتمة. يُقدم القسم الأول لمحةً عامة عن المسرحية، بينما يُقدم القسم الثاني صورة اقرب للشخصيات وحياتهم. ويعرض القسم الثالث محدودية رؤية التحرر الأسود، ويتعمق كل قسم من الاقسام الثلاثة الاخيرة في احدى الشخصيات النسائية. لينا يونغر، الام، حيث تُمثل ركيزة العائلة الأخلاقية معتبرا رعايتها لنباتاتها رد فعل سياسي وثقافي واجتماعي في وجه الاضطهاد التاريخي المنهجي ، روث يونغر تكشف الإرهاق العاطفي والجسدي للنساء السود. يُظهر عملها كخادمة ألم النساء السود ومعاناتهن وسعيهن لتحقيق ذواتهن. واخر قسم يعرض بينينا يونغر الابنة حيث تسعى لإعادة تعريف ذاتها وتحقيق استقلاليتها وسعيها لحياة أفضل. الخاتمة تلخص نتائج البحث. الكلمات المفتاحية: (القمع ، التمييز الجنسي، التوقعات الاجتماعية).

## 1-1 *A Raisin in the Sun: An Over View*

*A Raisin in the Sun* (1958) (hence then as *A Raisin*), a groundbreaking play written by Lorraine Hansberry. It acts as cornerstone in American theater to reveal the unwritten truth of Black people's life. It delves deep into African American family's life in the mid of twentieth century providing truthful documentation to their struggle. The family consists of Walter, the son and Ruth, his wife along with their son Travis, their daughter Beneatha, and Lena, the mother pointed to as Mama in the play. It sets in small

suffocated flat on Chicago's South Side. Hansberry sends a letter to her mother asserting the reason behind this play: "Mama, it is a play that tells the truth about people. Negroes, and life and I think it will help a lot of people to understand how we are just as complicated as they are and just as mixed up—but above all, that we have among our miserable and downtrodden ranks people who are the very essence of human dignity" (Grant 1).

It is an influential and politically significant play revolves around the Black family's heritage and culture and their ability to respond, challenge and reject what is beyond the racist oppressed communities. The play highlights the most influential aspect towards Black women which is the double oppression (intersectionality) including racism, sexism, and gender roles confronted by the Black women. In her book *Ain't I women*, bell hooks says that: "Lorraine Hansberry's play was a foretelling of future conflict between black women and men over the issue of sex-role patterns" (179), she also asserts that their actions envision the future "They portray the future Black family is the two-parent nuclear set-up where in man assumes a patriarchal role, the role of decision maker, protector, and upholder of family pride and honor" (179).

Hansberry skillfully portrays the deferred dreams and the complex relationship among gender, race, identity, and the pursuit of happiness in White dominant American society. Politically speaking, the play reflects the historical, political, societal struggle of Black people, the racial inequality

and injustice in mid-twentieth-century America. Hansberry retells her personal experiences maturing in Chicago during the 1930s and 1940s that frames her view towards racial injustice, especially the incident when her family quest to move to different district dominant by White people. Hansberry was influenced by an amazing poem named “Harlem” written by Langston Hughes. She wares of the consequences of the dream. Hughes’s “Harlem” poem brings to her mind her father’s personal experience and his demand for house in other district which was dominant by White people, yet his dream was eliminated by race.

Hughes notably says: “What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?” (Hughes, quoted in Hansberry, Preface, xvii). This question is regarded as the backbone of the play, as each member of the family quests his dream which is delayed by forces beyond their control. Thus, their deferred dreams in *A Raisin* not only reflects their personal frustration, but documents their collective pain of Black Americans as well as their challenging to the status que of the societal barriers to success.

## 1-2 A Close Look to the Play

*A Raisin* is three-act play, provides harsh truth about American dream. It shows that oppression is fundamentally restrictive towards African American portability, self-dignity, and freedom. The play stands against all the misjudgment and negative narratives that dealt with the Black people community, traditions, culture, heritage, and spot a light on their lives

through younger family and their relationship with their neighbors reflecting the specialty of African American family. Hansberry writes that: “There is always something left to love” is the central line of this play (*A Raisin* 145). The turning point in the family’s life was that the insurance money, after the death of the father. Each one of them has his own dreams to get of poverty and miserable life; an opportunity which rarely happened to a Black family in White dominant society to refine their life. The characters act as real, their reaction is honest. Hansberry shows how the family is trying to survive in such a suppressed environment and in a world that heavily rely on Black women through making them carry their pain and hope at the same time.

Mama wants a comfortable house reflecting her hope to have a place in a world that keeps subjecting, humiliating, and telling them they do not belong to this area. By combining her own struggles along with the imagery and metaphor of Hughes’s poem, Hansberry creates luminary narrative about family’s struggle for a better life as well as addresses universal experience of Black Americans’ demand for the same right, justice and equality. The story of the family acts as one of resilience, and hope for better future far away from the structural systemic oppression and racism.

Walter, the son chases his dreams as a reflection to the idea of pride and identity. Walter works as chauffeur and feels degraded and humiliated because he is Black, poor, and of low social status. He exposes his suffering out when he cries, “I want so many things that they are driving me kind of

crazy . . . . Mama — look at me” (50). He wishes to invest in a liquor store which is not related to money issue only, but to reclaim his manliness, respect and rights. He believes that owning material wealth is the key to both his self-worth and the respect of his family. Beneatha the daughter wants to be doctor. She aspires for better future challenging the status que against gender. She is fond of her heritage and rejects assimilation of the mainstream of White society. She expresses her demand to take guitar lessons.

Ruth, Walters’ wife, faced pregnancy dilemma, and troubled marriage. She works as a maid to help her husband in financial matters. She treated badly by White people whom she works for. Her quiet defiance against Walter’s neglect, she supports Mama’s decision to buy a house despite Walter’s opposition. Despite she considered abortion for the first time due to the immense financial and emotional dryness, she decided to keep the baby as a hope for bright future in their new house. The play examines various themes such as the American Dream, that America is the land of opportunity for all, all are equal, and each one can achieve his or her dream through hard working, but the reality is vise- versa. All their dreams are faced by the harsh reality of an oppressed norms, yet they challenged all.

### **1-3 Questioning the Narrow Vision of Black Liberation**

Robert Nemiroff exposes philosophical and political statements about racism, sexism and the social norms of the time, many of which still persist today. Among those revealed statements in *A Raisin* are those about African

American citizenship, gender identities, invisibility, visibility, family and cultural formation, White privilege, willful ignorance and interpersonal relationships, in the Introduction of the play, Nemiroff says that:

Produced in 1959, the play presaged the revolution black and women's consciousness-and the revolutionary ferment in Africa that exploded in the years following the playwright's death in 1965 to ineradicably alter the social fabric and of the nation and the world . . . in the play at the time, speaks to issues that are now inescapable: value systems of the black family; concepts of African American beauty and identity (Nemiroff Introduction 1- 2) .

Soyica Diggs Colbert in her significant book *Radical Vision: A Biography of Lorraine Hansberry* examines the play's realism and radical vision to politics. Colbert delves deep into Hansberry's work and how she conceptualizes the Black family. She affirms that Hansberry's portraying of the Younger family act as a reflection of the larger struggle beyond the individual's suffering for identity and unity within the Black community, and adds that "Hansberry did not advocate for racial hierarchies but she did require an accounting for how power dynamics inform an individual's position and ability to maneuver over time. The political acts of a group that has been historically oppressed, therefore, must differ from the options open

to the oppressor” (124). Colbert asserts that dynamic force extends far beyond the experience of the younger family into a broader historical marginalization context where the African Americans confronting with the remnants of segregation while fighting for civil rights and economic justice.

The play spots a light upon the larger institutional structures of classism, racism and gender oppression that Black men used to witness. Colbert clarifies that:

A Raisin in the Sun contributes to a global vision of Black freedom predicated not only on what is but also on what is possible . . . The family reflects a long history of Black people’s foreclosed desires and denied opportunities (96 - 97).

Colbert reveals that Hansberry’s using a small apartment setting is not just a scenery, but as a metaphor for racial and economic containment and how her characters’ Lena, Walter, Ruth, and Beneatha pursuing after their personal desire and struggle for legacy, autonomy, and self-worth. She reads *A Raisin*, particularly through the lens of the growing activism of the 1960s. She noticed that Hansberry’s work foreshadows the Black Power movement, which focused on the historical cultural pride along with the autonomy, and affirms that the play is not representation of the plight, assimilation, marginalization confronted by the African American society only but it challenged and reimagined what is meant by Black liberation and freedom. Politically speaking, Hansberry writes that: “You see, our people don’t really have a choice. We must come out of the ghettos of America, because the

ghettos are killing us; not only our dreams, as Mama says, but our very bodies” ( qtd. in Colbert 115-116).

As for, Harold Cruse, his critique of *A Raisin* provides a thought-provoking counterpoint to the more celebratory readings of the play. Cruse’s skepticism about the play’s ability to critique the structures of racial and economic oppression leads him to question its ultimate impact on the Black community. Cruse’s book *The Crisis of the Negro* is considered a challenge to the ways in which Black life is represented in mainstream American literature. He asserts that although the play has an emotional power, it finally documented a simplified and an authentic version of Black people’s struggles. He describes the play as “glorified soap opera” that presents his belief in reducing the difficulties of Black life into something that is easier for White audiences to realize. He writes the play “has to be seen against the background of the temper of the racial situation in America . . . when *A Raisin* burst on the scene with a Negro star, . . . everybody on Broadway was startled and very apprehensive about what this play might *say*” (277-278).

His main concerns are on Younger family pursuing for acceptance and mobility in White society and Hansberry’s personal background which influenced her depiction of the Black experience. Hansberry’s play powerfully captures certain aspects of Black life, however, Cruse affirms that it falls more with radical, labor struggles which were crucial for Black liberation in the 1960s. In *A Raisin*, the Younger family’s demand to change

their place and move into a White neighborhood. Cruse envisions the assimilation as a barrier to the kind of radical change that could lead to true Black liberation. He documented what Hansberry had said about the play “I write plays about various matters which have both Negro and White characters in them, and there is really nothing else that I can think of to say about the matter” ( qtd. in Cruse 283). The true change needs more than courtroom victories, it requires rewriting the rules, to confronting with institutionalized societal norms, challenging and dismantle the hierarchies.

#### **1-4 Lena Younger (Mama): The Weight of Love and Sacrifice: A Black Matriarch’s Quiet War on Redlining**

Hansberry does not only reveal what the Black women face in White society that marked by gender, racism, and sexism, but she makes us notice their exhaustion, suffering, quiet rebellions, resilience, and their hopes to change their miserable situation. Silvia Castro Borrego in her luminary book *Integration, Assimilation, and Identity in Lorraine Hansberry’s* notices that: “The American social and political spheres demonstrate the understanding and subsequent development of African American culture and values: while integration was seen as desirable by blacks” (١٧).

Black People were neglected by the White people who discriminated them and deprived them from their equal rights. The characters in the play are not only symbols of resistance, but are people who fight to breathe in a world that always keep squeezing them tighter. Parul Chauhan acknowledges

the deep oppression towards Black women planted deep in history reflecting long suffering, struggling, and discrimination which they are confronted with. He says that: “Tracing the history of black feminism, it becomes evident that the social construction of racism, sexism and classism was the driving force behind the widespread violence and discrimination against black women. They are found searching and struggling to attain their identity in this patriarchal world” (189).

Mama is the matriarch of the family, a Black woman who lives in a cramped Chicago apartment. She receives life’s insurance check of \$10,000 after her husband’s death “the insurance money serves as a catalyst, projecting the family into a situation that not only causes dramatic conflicts, but tests their individual characters” (195). The sparks and the turning point in the family’s life begins with how to use the insurance money. Lena is described by hooks as “symbolizing the strength and self –sacrificing nature of the single black mother working to ensure the survival of her family” (179). Lena has a dream to have a house to unite her family and provide a sense of stability, reflecting her hope for a better future for them despite the institutional systemic oppression marked by racism and economic hardship.

She stands for resilience and faith as Hansberry describes her stating that: “She is a woman in her early sixties, full-bodied and strong. She is one of those women of a certain grace and beauty . . . being a woman who has adjusted to many things in life and overcome many more, her face is full of

strength” and she adds that: “Her bearing is perhaps most like the noble bearing of the women of the Herero’s of Southwest Africa” (*A Raisin* 17).

She defies racism and patriarchy by her quiet strength. She symbolizes the struggles of most the Black women who endure the weight of their families while resisting systemic oppression. Samuel O. Idowu praises Lena’s significant role that she plays in her family’s life asserting that she has great determination which rises from her roots. Mama is metaphorically placed within a lineage of resilient women who have carried the burdens of survival with grace, a comparison strengthened by the reference to the Herero women of Southwest Africa, who bore their responsibilities with extraordinary dignity (56).

Lena decides to use the money to buy a house in Clybourne Park that is dominated by a White neighborhood. She challenges the segregation when she buys that house despite being isolated their houses “Them houses they put up for colored in them areas way out all seem to cost twice as much as other houses” (*A Raisin* 70). This shows the way that she combats racism by securing family’s future. Despite her role to keep her family tied together, she has another dream not only to have a house but with a garden that she can take care of. The first thing that she does when she wakes up every morning is that she opens the window for fresh air for a new beginning and to take care of her plants reflecting how Black women’s personal desires are often sacrificed. Her plants have symbolic significance as she insists on

taking them with her to the new house in the scene before going out “she comes back in, grabs her plant, and goes out for the last time” (125). It shows how is she tied to her roots just like these plants.

Mama’s plant depicts both, dream and care for her dearest family. She takes care of her plant just as she takes care of her children, unconditional love. Beneatha (the daughter) asks her mother while she is watering the plants about what is she going to do with the money of the insurance then Lena knowingly replays;

BENEATHA. Mama. what are you doing?

MAMA. Fixing my plant so it won’t get hurt none on the way...

BENEATHA. Mama. you going to take that to the new house? Mama Un-huh

BENEATHA. That raggedy-looking old thing?

MAMA. It expresses ME!” (96)

Her success with the plant foreshadows her belief that one day all things will come to be true and she would be successful as a gardener. She refuses the lies that Black families worth nothing and not equal to the White one. Mama fights against sexism within her community as well as her family for defying the important role of the woman. All in all, Lena has strong values. She faces many difficulties in her life including her domestic work as laborer reflecting the matrices of domination as being Black women, but confront all of them with her wit and wisdom. She challenges the norms of the double

oppression including racism, and gender societal expectation not through challenging them only, but through steadfast, enduring, and resistance which rooted in love and survival. She seeks dignity and space for her family in a White domineering society that neglects the Black people's right in general.

### **1-5 Ruth's Exhaustion: The Unheard Voice of Black Womanhood**

Ruth, Walter's wife, a significant member of the family, young lady in her thirties. Hansberry describes her facial appearance saying that: "Ruth is about thirty. We can see that she was a pretty girl, even exceptionally so, but now it is apparent that life has been little that she expected, and disappointment has already begun to hang in her face" (*A Raisin* 2). She struggles with the loss of opportunities just like Mama's life, in the domestic labor and she is emotionally exhausted. She is forced to bear the emotional, physical and psychological weight of the double oppression. She works in other people's kitchens as if this is the only work that suits Black women.

Despite her exhaustion, she speaks louder than any other. Hansberry reveals how the domestic labor, economic fragility, and emotional self-erasure are linked in the life of a Black woman who is trying to hold a family together. Her inner resistance increases when she knows that she is pregnant. She does not feel happy, she has Travis "The child, a sturdy, handsome little boy of ten or eleven" (3). She does not want another child to live in poverty; thus, she thinks of abortion, When Mama asks her where she goes early in

the morning, she discovers what she wants to do. They have this conversation

MAMA. Where did you go today, girl?

RUTH. to the doctor.

MAMA. (Impatiently) Now, Ruth . . . you know better than that. Old Doctor Jones is strange enough in his way but there ain't nothing about him make somebody slip and call him "she"-like you done this morning.

RUTH. Well, that's what happens -my tongue slipped.

MAMA. You went to see that woman, didn't you? (47).

Mama refuses what Ruth wants to do saying that "When the world gets ugly enough-a woman will do anything for her family . . . we a people who give children life, not who destroys them" (52). Despite her misery and the suffering of her every day working class, yet she expresses her rejoice when Mama declares that she has bought a house saying in happy voice: "HALLELUJAH! AND GOOD-BYE MISERY . . . I DON'T NEVER WANT TO SEE YOUR UGLY FACE AGAIN!" (70). She envisions a new bright life for her son, Travis. She affirms her own right to live in peace.

In his luminary work *From Mammies to Militants*, Trudier Harris considers the strength of Black women being a myth and he critiques those who assume their strength saying that: "They are more likely than the others to be ideal servants, the mammy figures traditionally identified with southern plantation households" (23). He asserts that Black women are not

and cannot be equal to White women, the only role they can have is to be maids and mammie observing that: He argues that they are destined to do these domestic roles like that played by Ruth in the play. Yet she has the will and right to challenge. Harris severely critiques such kind of oppression towards Black women to dismantle their cultural and historical background assuming that they have none. Hansberry uses Ruth's character to hint to the exploitation of Black working-class women, a job planted in sexism, racial and gendered oppression as she remarks that: "I'm tired" (*A Raisin* 20). Ruth is tired and faints down after she wakes, Mama tells her to have a rest at home and have a day off from work, Ruth replies:

RUTH. I can't stay home. She' be calling up the agency and screaming at them, my girl didn't come in today-send me somebody! My girl didn't come in! Oh, she just have a fit.

MAMA. Well, let her have it. I'll just call her up and say you got the flu-

RUTH. (Laughing) Why the flu?

MAMA. Cause it sounds respectable to'em. Something white people get, too. They know about the flu. Otherwise they think you been cut up or something when you tell'em you sick.

RUTH. I go to go in. We need the money (21).

Ruth's speech, reflects the cruelty of institutional systematic norms of oppression towards Black women. These norms consider Black women machines whether they are sick or not they have to work. Hansberry honors

the quiet endurance of women through Ruth's character the unspoken rebellion of the Black women whose strength is utterly essential. hooks reported the historical exploitation towards Black women and their labor that is represented in Ruth's personal misery which mirrors the various burden of the White systemic oppression towards them. Although her resilience was admirable, but it raises series of critical questions whether such resilience and endurance accidentally sustains in the very oppressive system that oppress her along with other Black women in her society (89). hooks adds that Black women were victimized by the norms of the White society as well as theirs. The Black women have no right to speak their needs or desires, she says that: "Black women are victimized . . . in a society that refuses to acknowledge the reality of their lives" (7).

Ruth's stress is deep, quiet, and profound, illustrating the way suppression and oppression navigate and can be traced through daily erosion rather than singular acts that documented the violence. Ruth challenges the patriarchal norms of her husband through her patience and various ways of resistance. She reclaims her agency in a world that seeks to deny Black women the right to control their homes and families. In her significant work *Black Feminist Thought*, Patricia Hill Collins states that: "Historically, racial segregation in housing, education, and employment fostered group commonalities that encouraged the formation of a group –based, collective stand point . . . . Black women in domestic work coupled with racial

segregation in housing and schools” (24). Thus, Ruth is forced to work in the kitchens of the White people.

Ruth’s fortitude is deeply intertwined with her commitment to her family’s collective survival. Her insistence, along with Mama, for the house in White neighborhood need to take the risk. Rachel Hillebrand considered Ruth’s “a fighter who has grown tired of fighting, a strong but worn-out woman” (60). This resonates with what Ruth demands for when she says “We got to get OUT OF HERE !!” (*A Raisin* 114), for here the place looks like prison and she cannot breathe any longer. This reflects the suffocated environment that she has been enduring for a long time as she says then “LET’S GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE!” (123). This highlights Ruth’s resilience, as she embodies quiet heroism in facing daily challenges and continually rising again. Culturally speaking, Hillenbrand hints to the way that Black women endure their hard life through their deep connection to each other and to their families. Hillenbrand confirms that Ruth: “represents the average person, who was dealt a challenging hand in life but chooses to persevere through it anyway” ( 61 ).

In anoteshell, Ruth’s journey during the play illustrates the battle against the double burdens that Black women face. As a Black woman, she confronted the oppression on two fronts: the racial discrimination and marginalization that reduce her role to domestic work, and the gendered expectations imposed on her that she is expected to remain silent and bear

the family's burden. Yet, she refuses to be mashed any longer by these oppressions. She challenges racism by rejecting the ghetto's boundaries between Black and White in housing, and sexism by refusing the endlessly patient wife role. Ruth's strength lies in her way to endure without breaking, the way that she protects her family, and how she keeps dreaming for better future days even when the present seems harsh, suffocated, and unbearable. Her story shows that oppression may frame individuals' circumstances, but it does not define their spirit.

### **1-6 Beneatha Younger's Defiant Duality**

Beneatha in *A Raisin*, serves as a clear manifestation of the young Black woman. Hansberry characterizes her as "about twenty, as slim and intense as her brother . . . almost intellectual face has a handsomeness of its own" (*A Raisin* 13). Her character is dimensional, daring, intellectual, and strive for re-defining herself by on her own ways. She epitomizes the endurance and persistence to the heavy burden of the double oppression including racism, gender expectation and sexism. She is aspiring to her dreams, and ambitions in an environment that frequently suppresses her desires.

As a Black woman in the 1950 in America, her aspiration to become a doctor challenges the rigid educational boundaries which were historically limited only to the White people. It is not because of the kind of education she demands, but because she confronts the deeply rooted racial and

gendered expectations in both her community as well as her family. Her brother Walter ridicules her when she reveals that she wants to become a doctor, he says that: “Who the hell told you you had to be a doctor? . . . be a nurse like other women—or just get married and be quiet” (16). These lines reveal the way women were relegated and socially constructed to be confined to motherhood, caretakers of her family and husband, or at most, nurse only. At this point of societal rupture, Beneatha realizes that she is a Black in a White world, and a woman in a male-dominated one. For her, these limitations are marked by racism; woman in a society dominant by male authority, and a Black woman in a deeply entrenched racist society that did not envision doctors who looked like her.

Beneatha has the seed of determination, inspired by her roots, hooks denotes that: “if we do not define ourselves for ourselves, we will be defined by others . . . . The development of self-defined Black women, ready to explore and pursue our power and interests within our communities, is a vital component in the war for Black liberation” (*Ain't I A Woman* 36). Beneatha insists on giving voice to her dreams and wishes. She questions the patriarchal norms, politics, and asserting her independence when she declares; after her brother's reject of her dreams to be a doctor and the guesses of her mother, she says “Listen, I'm going to be a doctor. I'm not worried about who I'm going to marry yet - if I ever get married” (*A Raisin*

27-28). At that time women were expected to define themselves through marriage the only path allowed to them.

Beneatha insists on obtaining her personal agency and intellectual identity and she proceeds to accomplish her dreams. She expresses her aspiring in which her mother and Ruth replied stating that:

MAMA. A in't nobody trying to stop you. I just wonders sometimes Why you has to flit so from one thing to another all the time. You ain't never done nothing with all that camera equipment you brought home

BENEATHA. I don't flit! I-I experiment with different forms of expression-

RUTH. Like riding a horse?

BENEATHA. People have to express themselves one way or another.

MAMA. What is it you want to express?

BENEATHA. (Angrily) Me! (25-26)

Hansberry uses Beneatha's character imagining a new kind of a Black woman, aware of both the societal structural norms which were designed to neglect her dreams and demands. Joseph Asagai, Beneatha's friend whom she met on campus representing the well-meaning people, Asagai "He's an African boy" (33). He represents Afrocentric worldview as he criticizes her hair as "mutilated . . . ugly" (39). Beneatha shifted her hair into natural hair, thus, when her family asks her about, she reply that: "Nothing –except cut it off" (57)

What could be seen as a small thing is, for her, a big deal that is symbolic related to her African roots. It is a quiet, powerful “no” to the idea that she has to fit in by changing herself. This is not about appearance, but about a caress to her heritage; it is a refusal of the idea that her Blackness needs to be hidden. George Murchison is Beneatha’s second friend, a wealthy and well-educated man, represents assimilationist Black masculinity. Beneatha fond of her roots, culture and talked about most of time in contrasted to Murchison, who was annoyed of her interest, thus he says  
GEORGE. Because this is stupid!

BENEATHA. Then why reads books? Why go to school?

GEORGE. It’s simple. You read books –to learn facts-to get grades – to pass the course-to get a degree. That’s all –it has nothing to do with thoughts (72-73).

Beneatha challenges him, being proud in her roots and ancestors. Her dreams and desires are rooted in her deep demands to make a difference being woman and Black.

## **Conclusion**

Hansberry’s play critiques the systemic oppression through a Black feminist perspective, exposing how the female characters in the Younger family; Lena, Ruth, and Beneatha challenge these layered forms of subjugation. The curtain falls without providing definitive answers, instead posing questions: What worlds might Black women rebuild? Can they be

freed from the burden of double oppression? Hansberry suggests that the play itself serves as an invitation to continue planting, dreaming, fighting, and challenging the societal norms.

Lena pursuits home in a White neighborhood embodies her resistance to the segregation enforced between Black and White communities. Her resilience reframes survival as a weapon for challenging the systemic oppression that seeks to confine her family's future.

Moreover, Ruth's silent suffering, marked by the exhaustion of balancing domestic duties and enduring low-wage labor, her consideration of abortion is shaped by economic despair and marital alienation. Her life embodies the historical and ongoing exploitation of Black women, including physical, mental, and emotional oppression that traces back to the era of slavery. Ruth challenges feminist discourses that demand liberation within frameworks prioritizing White experiences while neglecting those of Black's ones. Her resistance is considered an act of quiet rebellion, a refusal to be alienated by the societal force. Beneatha portrays culturally and intellectually defiant form of respectability. Her demands to become a doctor and her embrace of her African heritage subvert the racist and patriarchal structural norms that define what is means to be a Black woman. Beneatha challenges the limitations imposed on Black women's voices. Her idealism is tempered by the play's ambivalent attitude toward assimilation and

liberation, exposing how Black women's identities are often marginalized even within movements that claim to pursue liberation

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