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Direction of the Play: *A Raisin in the Sun*

Jesse S. Montes
Central Washington University

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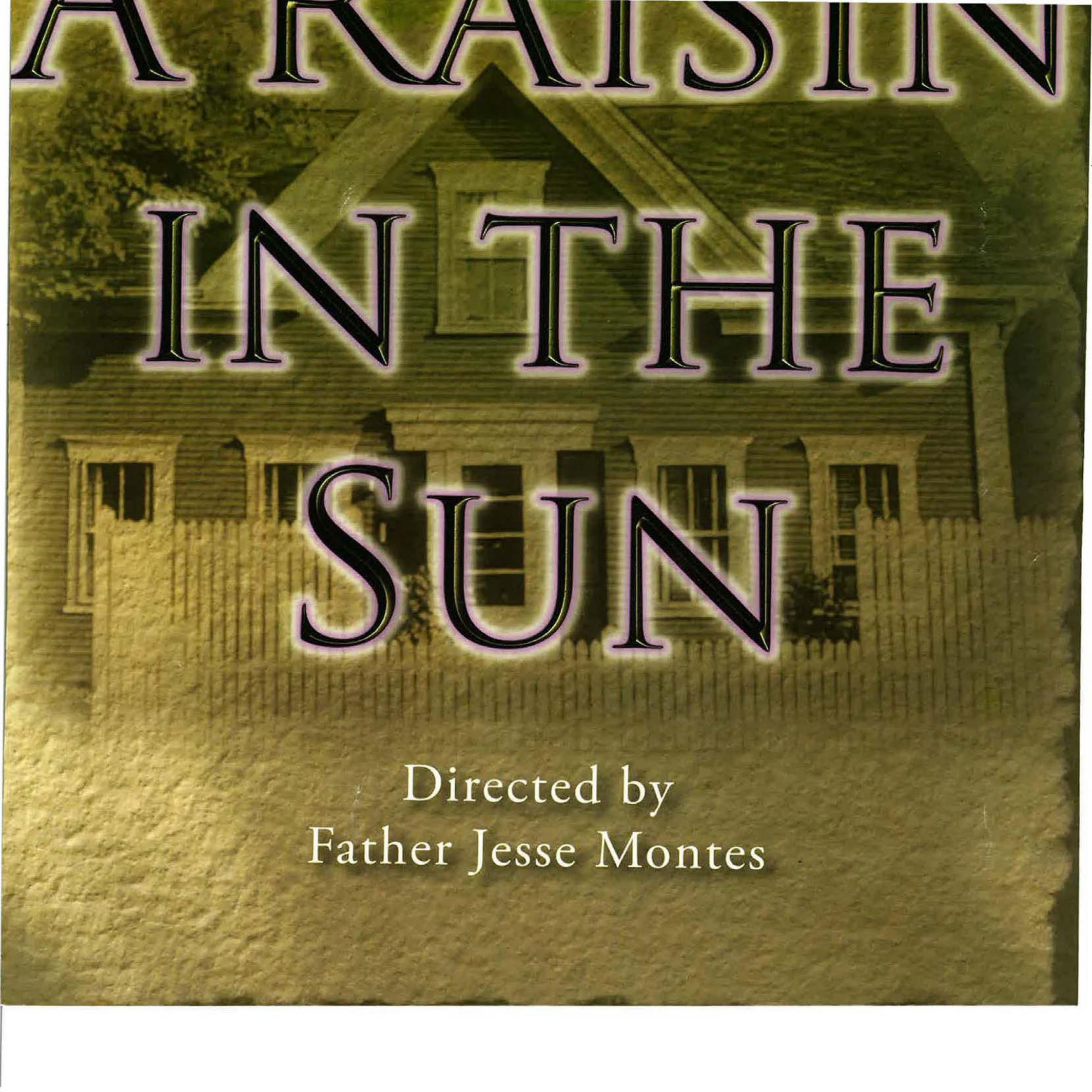
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ANNAIS IN
IN THE
SUN

Directed by
Father Jesse Montes

Direction of the Play: A Raisin in the Sun

A Project Report
Presented to
the Graduate Faculty
Central Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
Theatre Production

by
Jesse S. Montes
July, 2006

CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Graduate Studies

We hereby approve the project report of

Jesse S. Montes

Candidate for the degree of Master of Arts:

Theatre Production

APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

Date of
Signature

George Bellah III
Committee Chair

Date of
Signature

Christina Barrigan

Date of
Signature

Elise Forier

ABSTRACT

PROJECT REPORT

A Raisin in the Sun

Salesian High School Gym

Directed by

Jesse S. Montes

March, 2005

This project entailed the selection, background research, direction, dialect coaching, choreography, design, and post-production analysis of Salesian High School's production of Lorraine Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun. Documentation includes research and analysis of the play as a production. The analysis also includes a discussion regarding the directorial vision of this production.

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SALESIAN HIGH SCHOOL

SALESIANS OF SAINT JOHN BOSCO

August 26, 2005

Mr. George W. Bellah, III
Graduate Coordinator
Theatre Arts Department
400 E. University Way
Ellensburg, WA 08926

Dear Mr. Bellah,

Fr. Jesse Montes, S.D.B. requested permission to produce A Raisin in the Sun by Lorraine Hansberry at Salesian High School. Permission has been granted for the play in Salesian's gym/theatre on Friday, March 24; Saturday, March 25; Sunday, March 26, 2006. The two first performances begin at 8:00 p.m. with a matinee on Sunday at 2:00 p.m. Fr. Montes established the prices for entrance to the play at \$10.00 for adults and \$7.00 for senior citizens and youth.

The school community and the local public community look forward to this production of A Raisin in the Sun. Fr. Montes' previous productions at the school received a wonderful response from our communities. He is a talented and experienced producer, and we support his academic scholarship at Central Washington University.

If I can be of any further assistance in supporting Fr. Montes, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Timothy J. Chambers
Principal

CC: Fr. Jesse Montes, S.D.B., Fr. Nicholas Reina, S.D.B.

Please note: a signature has been redacted from this page due to privacy concerns.

MASTER'S THESIS PROJECT PLAYSCRIPT APPROVAL FORM

(PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT YOU HAVE READ THE PLAY SELECTION CRITERIA SECTION IN YOUR GRADUATE HANDBOOK)

SCRIPT TITLE A Raisin in the Sun

PLAYWRIGHT(S) [If musical, list lyricist/composer] Lorraine Hansberry

NUMBER OF ACTS Three (3) APPROXIMATE TOTAL PLAYING TME Two (2) HOURS forty-five (45) MIN.

CAST (fill in with the appropriate numbers)

MEN Seven (7) WOMEN Three (3) CHILDREN One (1) OVER 40 One (1)

ROLES REQUIRING PEOPLE OF COLOR Ten (10) ROLES COULD DOUBLE none.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CAST eleven (11) OTHER CASTING CONCERNS: None.

ARTISTIC STAFF (check those needed for this play or production idea)

MUSICAL DIRECTOR none DANCE CHOREOGRAPHER none

FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHER X DIALECT COACH X SPECIALTY HIRE none (specify what kind)

ORCHESTRA/BAND (specify what size) none

Will you be fulfilling any of the above? NO. If so, which? N/A

Will a guest artist be fulfilling any of the above? No. If so, which? N/A

SCENERY/PROPS (check those needed for this play or your concept of the play)

UNIT SET? (YES) NO (CIRCLE ONE) NUMBER OF SETTINGS One (1)

HISTORICAL PERIOD Late 1950's GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION Chicago, Illinois

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF SET CONCERNS OR SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS: Basically, one dilapidated, cramped room divided into three sections: a kitchen, a dining room, and a living room. There is one offstage bedroom that is visible and one that is not. There is also a visible hallway with a common restroom offstage.

APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF PROPS One hundred and fifty (150) PERIOD Late 1950's (some as earlier)

DIFFICULT OR UNUSUAL PROPS? (YES) NO (CIRCLE ONE) DESCRIBE: We will have to build an ICE-BOX and a multiple of household props from that era (late 1950's); many of the food packaging of that era will have to be recreated and product labels duplicated. Also a 78 RPM record player acquired and authentic music record covers found or duplicated.

WEAPONS OR FIREARMS? HOW MANY none DESCRIBE: N/A

COSTUMES (CHECK THOSE NEEDED FOR THIS PLAY OR YOUR CONCEPT OF THE PLAY)

APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF COSTUMES PER CHARACTER Four (4)

HISTORICAL PERIOD 1950's SEASON Autumn (near Winter)

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS: Avoid the new non-wrinkle materials. We have been given a valuable collection of 1950's female wardrobe—a plus. Shoe wear will create a problem especially finding the character George's white shoes.

JUSTIFICATION FOR CHOICE OF SCRIPT

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS SCRIPT PRODUCED? (YES) NO (CIRCLE ONE)

HAVE YOU DONE THIS PLAY BEFORE? BRIEFLY DESCRIBE YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE PRODUCTION:

Not the entire show. I have done one fifteen minute scene for the Lanaea Drama Festival at the Cal State Sacramento University.

WHY SHOULD YOUR ORGANIZATION PRODUCE THIS SCRIPT?

Because it is timely and appropriate in our area where there is a very large concentration of African Americans who are still suffering from the social ills of prejudice and injustice. Richmond and Oakland have led the nation in per capita homicides. This drama will help both the white and black communities revisit their moral stances on "love thy neighbor". We also have a well-prepared cast of students who have been or are presently members of my advanced drama course. Most of them have been in my previous productions. One student, who portrays the only white character in the play, has been in my plays since he was in the sixth grade.

WHAT ARE THE DRAWBACKS (IF ANY) TO DOING THIS PRODUCTION AT YOUR SCHOOL? The only drawback I see is that we have a few "rednecks" in our area who could, and might, cause some disturbance on the actual production dates. However, I really doubt that this will occur. Other than that, I see no problems in the future.

PLEASE GIVE A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE SCRIPT ON A SEPARATE SHEET OF PAPER AND ATTACH.

PLEASE INCLUDE A COPY OF THE SCRIPT FOR THE THESIS COMMITTEE TO REVIEW.

(The script has been handed in. That copy is in its thirtieth anniversary edition which includes the cuts taken from the original 1959 Broadway production. We are not included the cuts which require an added female character.

SUBMITTED BY: (Printed Name) Jesse S. Montes Date Submitted: November 19, 2005

(Signature) _____

Thesis Chair Approval: _____ Date Approved : _____

Thesis Committee Members Approval: _____ Date Approved : _____

Graduate Coordinator Approval: _____ Date Approved : _____

Please Note: Signature has been redacted due to security concerns.

George Bellah

**GRADUATE COMMITTEE
AND OPTION APPROVAL FORM
CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY**
(Submit the original and three copies)

Note: This form is to be completed as soon as the student has formed a committee and selected an option from the list below. Submit the original and three copies to the Office of Graduate Studies in Barge 305.

Student Name Jesse S. Montes Birth Date _____
Mailing Address _____ Student ID _____
City, State, Zipcode _____ Date 07/07/2005

Check option:

- | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Written Exam* | <u>JH 700</u> | <u>Master's Thesis</u> | <u>6</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Non-Thesis Project | Course No. | Title | Credits |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Creative Project | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Studio Project | Course No. | Title | Credits |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Portfolio Review | <u>MLA</u> | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Thesis | Style Manual for Thesis or Project | | |

*Students taking written exam option may omit items 1-5 below.

- Proposed Title: Direction of the ~~Production~~ Production A Raisin in the Sun.
- Purpose of Study: The direction ~~of~~ of the drama A Raisin in the Sun as the final stage in theatre graduate studies.
- Scope of Study: Documentation based upon the preparation of pre-production research, post-production evaluation, the direction of the production (including the casting and rehearsal of actors, the preparation of the Director's Production Book, and oral examination) shall be of benefit to both the student and the Theatre Arts Department.
- Procedure to be used: Three phases of study shall be included: 1. Pre-production research and thesis documentation; 2. Rehearsal and direction of the production; 3. Post-production evaluation and documentation.
- Does the procedure involve collection of data obtained from
Human Subjects (including use of surveys)? Yes** No
Use of Animals? Yes** No

** If yes, your procedures must be approved in writing by the Human Subjects Committee or the Animal Care and Use Committee before you initiate your research.

<u>Professor George Bellah</u> Committee Chair (typed or printed)	_____	<u>7/7/05</u> Date
<u>Professor Christina Barrigan</u> Committee Member (typed or printed)	_____	<u>7/10/05</u> Date
<u>Professor Elise Forier</u> Committee Member (typed or printed)	_____	<u>7/11/05</u> Date
Approved by: SIGNATURE ILLEGIBLE <u>7/12/05</u> Chair/Designee (signature) Date	Approved by: _____ Associate VP of Graduate Studies	<u>10-28-05</u> Date

Students will be required to submit two copies of all motion picture film, film strips, sound film strips, slides, tapes, cassettes, pictures, etc. produced as part of the thesis. These are to be submitted at the time the thesis (three copies) is submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies and Research.

Project Parameters and Suggested Performance Dates

Performance dates are set for the 23rd, 24th, 25th, and 26th of March. The dates we have suggested will not interfere with any sports event. Unfortunately, because the stage is in the gym, we will not be able to use the stage until all of the tournaments and championship games are over. That means we ultimately may have use of the gym for the week before performances only.

As far as the facilities, they are abominable. They have no fly space and it is only 19 feet deep. However, we have always managed. As far as the budget goes, we, again, are given carte blanche. The finance department generously allows us to spend as long as we come out in the black in the end.

I have hired a set designer who will not only design but build the entire set. One of our mothers will take care of the costumes. The lighting and sound crews have always come from the students. However, our equipment is dismal. 16 ellipsoidals hang from the vertical trees hung midway in the hall. The 12 Fresnels hang from a bar downstage. I am confident that the lighting crew will be ready as they have been strong in the past. Last year one student from the crew was chosen as one of eight finalists in the nation to participate in a lighting program at Disney World. Another graduate got a lighting crew job at the University of California at Santa Barbara. These two Salesian graduates have trained my present crews.

The sound crew will not fare as well because a component to the huge mixer had been stolen and cannot function without it. We will have to borrow the inferior school system.

January

Raisin in the Sun

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
	2 ALL REHEARSALS BEGIN AT 3:00 P.M. and end at 5:00 P.M. promptly.	3	4 3:00 PM Cast and crew meet. Perf. Arts Mobile. Read-thru. Business. Schedule.	5 [47-53] Beneatha & Asagai—Analysis & Block Off book Jan 20.	6 [11-19] Ruth, Travis, Walter—Analyze and Block. Off book Jan. 20.	7
8	9 No Rehearsal S e m e	10 No Rehearsal s t e r	11 No Rehearsal E x	12 No Rehearsal a m s	13 No Rehearsal	14
15	16 Martin Luther King Day No Rehearsal	17 [67-74] Beneatha & George—Analysis and Blocking. Last half hour finalize [11-19] Ruth-Trav-Walt.	18 [19-23] first hour. Ruth & Walter. Finalize blocking. [23-27] second half. Ben-Wal-Rut an. & b	19 [51-53] first Hour Beneatha & Asagai. Analyze and Block. [23-27] Second half Ben-Wal-Rut Finalize.	20 Entire Cast of Act I sc. 1 Off book. Polish. Prop Master bring in props.	21
22	23 A I s2 [41-47] Trav, Lena, Beneatha, Ruth Ben/ A [47-53]Tra Bn L R W [53-63] a & b.	24 Beneatha & Asagai (switch w. Geo.) [47-53] Polish. [113-117] Analyze and Block.	25 Act II Sc I [64-77] Ben. Walt. Ruth a & b (George) [64-74] Wa. & Ruth [74-77] a & b	26 Same as yesterday but with George. Polish [64-77]	27 [77-79] Walter and Ruth. Polish beat.	28
29	30 [77-84] Travis, Lena, Walter, Ruth. Polish Off book Feb 6.	31 Founder's Day No Practice		*If you are going to miss a rehearsal call Fr. Jesse at least a week before in order to make changes. (510) 387-7797		1 * Brackets [] indicate pages and beats in your script for that day. Come prepared.

2006

February

Raisin in the Sun

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
			1 Visited the set with cast and crew. Short day. Mr. Kramer begins set	2 [84-86] Beneatha & George. Analysis and Blocking. [87-89] Lena added.	3 Minimum Day NO Rehearsal	
5	6 Costume Hunting	7 [90-91] Travis and Walter An. and Blk. Act I s 2 All in that sc. Polish Off book.	8 [95-101] Lindner, Ruth, Beneatha, Walter. Analyze and Block.	9 [101-112] Same as yesterday without Lindner and with Bobo. Analyze & B.	10 [108-112] Polish the climax. Act II sc 2 All actor in this scene. Props for Act I & II	
12	13 Act III Beat 1 [113-128] & Beat 3 [132-134] <i>Update</i> of beat 1 is now [119-128]	14 Act III Beat 2 [128-132] Lindner, Lena, Ruth, Beneatha, Walter, Travis	15 Polish Act I Beat 1. All except Lindner.	16 Act I Beat 2 Lindner and cast.	17 Act III Entire cast.	
19	20	21	22	23	24	
26	27	28		ALL Rehearsals BEGIN AT 3:00 P.M. and end at 5:00 P.M. promptly.	*If you are going to miss a rehearsal call Fr. Jesse at least a week before in order to make changes. (510) 387-7797	

2006

March

Raisin in the Sun

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>	
<p>If you are going to miss a rehearsal call Fr. Jesse at least a week before so that we can make changes. (510) 387-7797</p>			<p>1 Act II scene 2 Rework and Polish</p>	<p>2 Act II scene 2 Rework and polish</p>	<p>3 Act II scene 3 Rework and polish</p>	<p>4 Entire Cast and Crew Act III Entire Cast 10 A.M. -- Noon</p>	
	<p>5</p>	<p>6 Entire play Run Thru We quit at 7 P. M.</p>	<p>7 Entire play Run Thursday We stop at 7 P.M.</p>	<p>8 Costume Break No Rehearsal</p>	<p>9 Costume parade</p>	<p>10 Rest: Set Walk Thru.</p>	<p>11 9:00 A.M. Act III After, take beats that need work. Noon-1 P.M. OFF. 1-5 Rework</p>
	<p>12</p>	<p>13 Rehearsal today in the gym Act I 7:30 – 9:30 P.M.</p>	<p>14 Rehearsal today in the Gym Act II 7 P.M.</p>	<p>15 Leave Salesian at 3:30 to get to dinner and RITS at Solano University.</p>	<p>16 Rehearsal in the gym Act I 7 P.M. – 9:30 P.M.</p>	<p>17 Rehearsal today in the gym Acts I & II Speed read 7 P.M. – 9:30 P.M.</p>	<p>18 9:00 A.M. Act III 10.30 A.M. Act I Noon – 1 P.M. 1-4:30 Act II</p>
	<p>19</p>	<p>20 Tech begins at 6.and</p>	<p>21 Tach and Cast 6 P/M/</p>	<p>22 Dress Rehearsal</p>	<p>23 6 P.M. CALL Performance</p>	<p>24 6 P.M. CALL Performance</p>	<p>25 6 P.M. CALL Performance</p>
	<p>26</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30</p>	<p>31</p>	

2006

N.B. The dates and schedules do not coincide with the journal's dates and schedules. The working out of the schedules depended on so many variables: illness of the cast, crew and/or director.

Evaluation of the Play as a Production Vehicle

A Raisin in the Sun is a perfect choice for the Richmond community. Richmond is a predominantly Black American community. Most of the community came from the deep South to work at the shipyards in the 1940's during World War II and made the Bay Area home. The prejudice and discrimination they found here was minimal when compared with the place from where they had "immigrated."

The Hansberry play is their story. To the south of Richmond lies one of the largest Black American communities in the West: Oakland. Even before we have begun to rehearse the play we have already been invited to Oakland to St. Leo's Grammar school to perform scenes from Raisin.

This play comes at a time when the black community realizes that the school systems in their communities are much below the standards of the white areas. Discouraging statistics are constants in the media. Per capita, Richmond has the most homicides per year in the country and most of the crimes are drug related and committed in the black community.

I believe that Raisin will offer some hope for the future of the Black American community. However, even in our private school there have already been comments of discontent. Why not an all white, or an all Filipino, or an all Latino or an all Asian play? My hope is that the school population and parents will realize the universality and all encompassing themes of the play. No matter what race or what economic level we estimate ourselves to be in, there will always be prejudice, but there will also always exist those human beings that see hope where others see none.

Director's Concept Statement

Realism depicts characters and places as they appear in everyday life. This principle extends to both the detailed representation of reality, but also the realistic complexity of

characters and their relationships. Lorraine Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun is a prime example of realism. The story is about the working-class Younger family, fighting against economic hardship and racial prejudice. Its effectiveness lies in the representation of their hardship and the believability of familial relations. However, of six productions I have seen, only one played the drama in an understated manner rather than as a constant shouting match. My philosophy is that external emotions should develop gradually through the inner spirit of an actor's words and movement. These realistic words and movement will present societal problems that appear meaningful to the audience.

Because of their racial and social make-up, most of our audience will not be knowledgeable of nor feel personally connected to the social upheavals of Raisin's era. However, the varied familial relationships forming and changing, or stubbornly remaining the same, might allow the audience to identify with the characters' lives. The key will be to lead the audience to believe that they are peering in on an actual domestic scene. Keeping "the fourth wall" impenetrable will hopefully provide the audience with a realism that will believably energize each scene. For this to occur, different facets of the production will be laden with countless details. The stage filled with era-specific props, the lighting stark (as if lit only by incandescent bulbs), and the costumes wrinkled and worn, so that the audience will believe that the action on the stage is really happening. This said, I want to emphasize the many realistic and metaphorical details that enshroud the play: the scrim wall, the pitiful potted plant, the African rhythms and designs, the afro-styled hair, and the generally decaying apartment. But most importantly this production must portray a family of human beings who, though they are striving in the weak rays of a hopeless existence, in the end, escape into the promising sunlight of a better life.

Section II

The Promise Made: Celebrating the Human Spirit

Initial Personal Response

Lorraine Hansberry's groundbreaking work, A Raisin in the Sun, has fascinated me ever since I first viewed the movie version in the early '60s. Sidney Poitier was my hero for weeks. Then the discovery: it was initially a play. I promised myself to read it and some day direct it. More than three decades later, Salesian High School, Richmond, California, will produce A Raisin in the Sun. It has been a long journey for both the play and myself.

46 years ago in 1959, Lorraine Vivian Hansberry's play was produced on Broadway. Ms. Hansberry was the first African-American and the youngest woman at 29, to win the New York Drama Critics Award. But her success is even greater considering Ms. Hansberry's times. Racial prejudice was rampant—she addressed it. The civil rights movement was virtually unknown – she anticipated it. Abortion was outlawed – she dealt with it. Feminism was unthinkable – one of her characters, Beneatha, personified it. Ms. Hansberry embraced all of these lofty themes in her play about a lowly black chauffeur and his family.

A Raisin in the Sun is a realistic play about three generations of the Younger family who live in a dilapidated tenement flat in Chicago's South Side in the 1950's. They fight racial discrimination and struggle economically. Lena Younger is the matriarch of the family, which includes Walter Lee and his wife Ruth Younger and son Travis. Beneatha, Walter's younger sister in her mid-twenties is studying to be a medical doctor and has two boyfriends: Joseph Asagai, an African exchange student and George Murchison, a wealthy African-American. Two of Walter's business associates, Bobo and Willy Harris, also play a part. There is only one white character, Mr. Karl Lindner, who serves as spokesperson for the community into which Lena and her family wish to move.

The action begins the day before a check for \$10,000.00 of life insurance money is supposed to arrive by mail. The insurance check sets the theme rolling from the start: a family's unfulfilled dreams. For Lena, moving out of the neighborhood has been a lifelong dream. Walter would like to spend the entire sum on a seemingly lucrative business deal. Ruth would like to move out of the ghetto and improve her son's lifestyle. Beneatha dreams of becoming a medical doctor. However, all of their dreams come crashing down in a devastatingly tragic scene in Act Two, Scene Two.

Nevertheless, the play ends hopefully. The Hegelian action-quest for a new life survives the resistance encountered. Georg W. F. Hegel, a nineteenth century German philosopher, placed ultimate reality in ideas rather than in things and used dialectic to understand an absolute idea behind phenomena. In his book on the arts, Aesthetika, Hegel stated that conflict is of central importance in tragedy. He was dissatisfied with procrastinating characters that did not pursue any energetic action when facing conflict. Hegel would have been proud of the Younger family for pursuing their dreams with tireless energy (Carlson 195).

One can also apply feminist standpoint theory to these characters as a way of plumbing their depths. First, this theory proposes that a person's location within society impacts their identity and life. This is certainly true of all the characters in Ms. Hansberry's play, including the white spokesperson who wants to bribe them out of moving into his community. Second, the theory posits the idea that race and class figure significantly, impacting the characters' points of view. Consequently, those in power have more resources to have their perspective heard (Tong 128). The all-white community, the Youngers' destination, has many more resources to try to keep them out than the Youngers have in trying to move in. The last tenet of this feminist theory holds that marginalized persons may have better insights into the human condition since they exist as invisible norms. Walter Younger, finally taking his patriarchal role seriously, addresses

Lindner, the white community representative: “We don’t want to make no trouble for nobody or fight any causes—and we will try to be good neighbors. And that’s all we got to say about that” (Hansberry, Raisin 109). Ms. Hansberry explains Walter’s words: “Walter makes no apology. In effect, he is making a simple statement of fact: Expect from us what we get from you” (Hansberry, Young, Gifted 131). The audience realizes that the Younger family, though marginalized, does have a better insight into the complicated workings of a nation on the verge of racial, political and economic chaos. Their mere livelihood faces that nation’s resistance.

These marginalized characters live in a mixture of laughter and tears. There are no climactic Oedipal moments, no shockingly hostile or obscene humors to mar this work—one that includes every main type of African-American personality. What is amazing is how Ms. Hansberry can take inspiration from the varied typical personalities extant in the black community and construct attractive, living characters without making them stereotypical.

Even the symbolism in the play is within the bounds of realism. For example, the potted plant, though scraggly and weak for lack of sun, is resilient and survives primarily because of the tender, loving care that Lena lavishes upon it. The plant needs a garden. It is a symbol for the Younger family. It, too, is broken and seeks the “garden” of a better life in a healthier, happier environment. There it can hopefully survive.

Another symbol is Beneatha’s changing hairstyles. When the play begins, her hair is processed and permed in imitation of white hairstyles. Halfway through the play, she has her hair cut and wears it in a “natural.” This symbolizes the acceptance of her heritage, not only because of her knowledge of African lore, but because it has become part of her being, a construct representing her entire life. She becomes the forerunner of that time when, in the early 1960’s, this hairstyle, “the Afro”, became symbolic of the African-American—no longer accepting the “Uncle Tom” image by emulating white hair styles. Yet, the ugly racist view of

blacks found in Uncle Tom's Cabin survives in Hansberry's world. The Youngers' dilapidated flat is replete with memories of "worrying about not being lynched," of not having to "ride on the back of nobody's streetcar," of trying to "stay alive and still have a pinch of dignity" (Hansberry, Raisin 61).

It will be a challenge to attempt to capture that "memory-of-other-eras" look in our stage design given our school venue. Just the kitchen accouterments of authentic food products and cleaning solutions of the 1950's will be a property-person's nightmare. Fortunately, two of our parents design professionally (one is a carpenter, the other a digital designer) and both are eager to help the students with the set and props. A year ago, a couple living in Richmond, California, donated a museum-quality women's wardrobe of the period. This gift will greatly enhance the veracity of our production. As an added bonus, I flew into Chicago to visit those areas that still resemble the slum areas of Chicago in the 1950's. This research trip resulted in a wealth of helpful information. Photographing building exteriors and interiors will surely give the production design a greater sense of authenticity.

Although the look of the production is important, its ultimate success will depend on the acting. The actors have already been cast. This cast will be challenged to form an acting ensemble. One of the strengths of this production will be that the actors have all passed through our drama courses. Our cast is entirely African-American, except for the Lindner role. I have been fortunate to have worked with the black community in West Oakland for two years and in the Richmond black community for six years. Furthermore, Sierra Leone, Africa, was my home for five weeks when I was substituting for a missionary on leave. These experiences in the black and African culture will inform my understanding of the material. Consequently, I feel better prepared to tackle the play's nuances and in turn make them more meaningful and less esoteric to our multi-racial audiences.

Early stages of production have not been without trials, however. For instance, casting the younger son, Travis, proved unexpectedly problematic. The character, after all, is ten years old. We had already cast a very young-looking and professional actor from our school for this part. Unfortunately, he grew five inches in a relatively short time and we had to cut him from the part. During the summer we had to put out an audition call at all of the grammar summer schools and summer programs around the area. Another potential weakness could have been the lack of a stage combat director for the slap and falling scenes. However, this last summer, George Bellah choreographed those scenes.

My self-imposed promise of directing Ms. Hansberry's masterpiece will be fulfilled in mid-March, 2006. Hundreds of rehearsal hours and just as many hours readying the set and other technical design elements will have been expended. However, the creative process is already half won—even before we begin production. We have Lorraine Hansberry's script.

Production History: The Troubled Life of a Broadway Success

Lorraine Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun went into rehearsal on December 27, 1958. Sidney Poitier, Claudia McNeil, Ruby Dee, Diana Sands, Ivan Dixon and Louis Gossett formed the cast. The director was Lloyd Richards. With the exception of one cast member, this was an all black production and it was Ms. Hansberry's first effort. A few months later the play was not only a resounding success on Broadway, but it also garnered the 1958-9 New York Drama Critics' Circle Award, beating out the likes of Tennessee Williams, Eugene O'Neill and Archibald MacLeish (Cheney 26). However, the history of the production, from its inception to the final curtain ran a difficult course at times.

Perhaps the most important challenge was the casting of the pivotal part of Walter Lee Younger. In Ms. Hansberry's mind there was only one person who could perform that role—Sidney Poitier. A Raisin in the Sun was first brought to Sidney Poitier's attention by an old friend, Philip Rose (Mitchell 181). Poitier was already considered "the best Negro actor in the history of the American theater" (Prideaux, "Poitier's Search" 140). Poitier was overwhelmed by the power of the material. He told Mr. Rose that he would be happy to play in it. As James Baldwin later noted, "Raisin [in the Sun] would never have been done if Sidney had not agreed to appear in it" ("Lorraine").

Since that time, Raisin has received numerous productions and many actors have tried their hand at Walter. Almost half a century after its Broadway premiere, in 2004, the role of Walter still has the air of artistic prestige. Perhaps this motivated Sean "P. Diddy" Combs to star as Walter in the first Broadway production since Raisin's premiere. The revival proved beneficial for the actresses as well: Phylicia Rashad (Lena) and Audra McDonald (Ruth) won Tonys for Best Actor and Best Supporting Actor respectively in the revival of A Raisin in the Sun. We have come full circle, and unfortunately, even though A Raisin in the Sun has

triumphed again, black theater is troubled. Black theater companies have cut programming and reduced staff (The New York Times). Some troupes have even cancelled shows. Public and private support continues to drop.

Frank Rich, theatre critic for The New York Times, says that Ms. Hansberry's play "encompasses everything from the rise of black nationalism in the United States and Africa to the advent of black militancy to the specific dimensions of the black woman's liberations movement; that she always saw the present and future in the light of the past—clear back to the slavery of the Old South and the new slavery that followed black workers who migrated to the industrial ghettos of the North. (The New York Times)

Langston Hugh's poem, "Harlem—A Dream Deferred" provided the play's title:

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? (221)

Within the poem, as within the different characters of the play, there are multiple responses to the deferred dream. The play takes the first as a title, but is evocative of all. Beneath the surface is the simmering threat of the last—the explosion. What the world needs today is a visionary like

Ms. Hansberry who can navigate away from the explosion of prejudice and hated.

Critical Response: A Polite Concurrence

There have been many productions of A Raisin in the Sun since the play's Broadway premiere. It is one of the most popular plays of our time, becoming a classic in the theatrical world, produced by thousands of amateur and college groups and seen in more than 30 countries (Cheney 151). To simplify, only the reviews of the original Broadway production will be considered here. This approach will hopefully provide a clearer understanding of the effect that Ms. Hansberry's play had on critics when it first appeared.

When A Raisin in the Sun premiered, the majority of the reviews were very much alike: high on praise but without many superlatives. However, a few months later, the play was awarded the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Play of the Year, upstaging plays by Tennessee Williams, Eugene O'Neill and Archibald McLeish. Something had been ruminating in these critics' minds since they stepped into the Ethel Barrymore Theater that first night.

Despite ultimate critical success, considering contemporary criticism of the play is interesting. Critics are products of their time and the 50's were a time when lines of racial demarcation were still firmly in place. The critics were certainly not expecting to find integrity in that night's premiere performance. These white critics were reviewing a production populated by the very people upon whom their society still looked down. They were totally unprepared for the introduction into "black living" that Ms. Hansberry had provided for them. Even then one of the critics, John McClain, unashamedly wrote in his review the next day for the Journal American, "when these [Negro] people create and participate in something for themselves they can make the rest of us look silly" (345). The New York Times critic, Brooks Atkinson, expressed surprise to find "no Uncle Tom involved" (345). Another critic, in his opening paragraph wrote, "not a big play, probably not even an important one" (Chapman 334). Initial

reviews were generally good, but their often patronizing tones indicate traces of the presuppositions of the nature of “black art” which the play challenged.

Of the seven daily newspaper notices consulted, all were full of praise, ranging from the lyrical to the merely exuberant. Richard Watts of the New York Post called it “a moving and impressive drama winning attentive respect” (Watts 334). John Chapman called it a “beautiful and lovely play” (Chapman 334). Atkinson, called it honest and “illuminating,” having “vigor as well as veracity” (345). He also compared the play to Chekhov’s work calling it “a Negro ‘The Cherry Orchard’” admitting that, although the social scale was different, “the knowledge of how character is controlled by environment is much the same, and the alternation of humor and pathos is similar” (345). Walter Kerr called it an “impressive first play, beautifully acted”, also naming A Raisin in the Sun a “superior play, not only good fun, but gripping theatre as well: a moving play” (346). Frank Aston called it “an honest drama (that) may rip you to shreds” (336).

The periodical reviews were similar in content. The Time magazine review describes A Raisin in the Sun as a work of genuine dramatic merit and remarks on how “honest” this play is (“Theatre” 58). Newsweek named it “one of the most stirring and revealing productions of the year” and added that it was “another contender for the best play of the year” (“With a Wallop” 76). Life magazine called it a landmark in Negro Literature (Prideaux, “Negro Talent” 137). Theatre Arts called it a solidly dramatic play (60). The famous critic and theatre scholar, John Gassner stated a centuries-old axiom that theatre should hold up a mirror to its age and declared Ms. Hansberry’s play to be “all mirror” (230).

In a dissenting review, Tom F. Driver, New Republic critic, said that it was “old fashioned writing” (21). He said that if the play had been written by a white person and been about a white family it would have recovered its investment. Then he marveled at the fact that A Raisin in the Sun was making it. He goes on to say that Ms. Hansberry’s play does not engender

emotions that are relevant to social and political realities. Driver apparently missed the point of the play: Ms. Hansberry's play, in the long run, did change the way whites looked at blacks. Driver called it merely "sentimental—were it not for the acting" (21).

The Theatre Arts review was the most objective, relating that Ms. Hansberry had to triumph over many obstacles to get this show on the road. It praised the playwright for possessing the gift of creating characters which were "readily identifiable types capable of gaining universal recognition and sympathy," yet "sufficiently individualized to escape the fate of being nothing more than types" (22). Then, the critic hit the nail on the head, noting that: "Ms. Hansberry has rooted her play in the realm of the possible as we know it in the age of improving but still imperfect race relations" (23). Ms. Hansberry would totally agree. She was not a naturalist but a realist. She did not deal only with the world as it was, but with a world where possibilities created her reality—a world as it could be.

The critics did bestow unanimous praise on one aspect of A Raisin in the Sun: the acting ability of Sidney Poitier. He was on the one hand "a pent up dynamo, a sledge hammer force" and on the other hand, was "eloquent when he had nothing to say" (Prideaux, "Poitier's Search" 140). He exuded enormous power that was always under control, and yet, was "a towering actor extravagantly emotional" (Atkinson 345). He was a "master of the contrasting facets of his role, superb, and a cumulative swell of emotions" (Aston 346).

The critics' responses gifted A Raisin in the Sun by focusing attention on the play. However, the best response has yet to be written. That response would focus on those opening night critics and expose their biases and prejudices. It is amazing to see what the cast and crews were confronted with on that evening in March of 1959. It was a night that changed the way the majority had viewed most of the black minority. Ms. Hansberry's play overcame a white, patriarchal and exclusionary critical press and rose beyond their smallness to become the huge

success it was meant to be.

Scholarly Response

Would a scholar, in analyzing an author's work, more easily find out how valid or how applicable his analysis is if he were to have access to that author's own self analysis? As we review scholarly analyses on Lorraine Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun we may find that some creative inferences were made, mainly because of Ms. Hansberry's inspired play.

First, we will consider thoughts from Ms. Lorraine Hansberry. In an interview in the historical documentary Black Theatre: The Making of a Movement, when asked how she was inspired to create, she said:

It grows out of a . . . thought of mine that, as I have studied history . . . that, firstly, all of us are what our circumstances allow us to be. And, that it really doesn't matter whether you are talking about the oppressed or the oppressor. The most ordinary human being has within him, elements of profundity . . . of profound anguish . . . you don't have to go to the queen or king of the earth. I think the Greeks and the Elizabethans did this because it was . . . a logical concept. But, every human being is in an enormous conflict about something . . . even if it's how you get to work in the morning. So that I thought that it would be very interesting in the contemporary American theatrical moment, to explore the most ordinary man, say, on the South Side of Chicago; we think we know . . . you know, he drives you to work . . . and you say, 'Well, he's a nice fellow.' But see what he's like at home . . . in the ordinary events . . . By the time he gets to work I have a complicated and large person. (Black Theatre)

In the documentary Lorraine Hansberry: The Black Experience in the Creation of Drama, when asked if she was a Naturalist, Ms. Hansberry immediately retorted, "No, I am a genuine realist" (Mantell). While both Naturalism and Realism suggest an objective depiction of

life, naturalist philosophy believes man to be as any animal and probes mankind's relationship to its environment. As literary critic Terry Eagleton points out, in naturalism man is "conforming to social reality as 'natural' rather than critically questioning how it, and ourselves, came to be constructed, and so could possibly be transformed" (162). Hansberry's purpose, on the contrary, was to portray the real day to day life of black America, but always with the critical questions.

Doris E. Abramson, in her retrospective on black playwrights, called A Raisin in the Sun the climax of a realistic emphasis in plays about Negro life (vii). Genevieve Fabre corroborates, adding that the play uses "the tradition of social realism to show an idealized image of the working class" (13). The language in A Raisin in the Sun is for the most part the speech of actual life; but, it is almost always unusually expressive. This is a combination of the written words and their context. As Arthur France notes, tragedy does dictate a nobility of language (407-8). Therefore, ordinary words can carry the weight of the most stylized tragedy. For some, these ordinary words were too ordinary. Critics accused Ms. Hansberry for using that style which they felt was better fitted for semi-documentary and television and no longer belonged to the theater. Unexpectedly, Harold Clurman, one of her harshest critics, defended Ms. Hansberry's use of realism, stating that while the drift away from naturalism in the American theatre is healthy, it is entirely false to assume that we have no further use for the old realism. He went on to say that America is still but little explored as far as significant stage realism goes. The traditional realistic play needs genuine identification with its subject matter in addition to objectivity and heart. He felt Ms. Hansberry was determined to say "what she had seen and experienced" (301).

And, what Ms. Hansberry experienced most was a very keen desire to help the poor, the ghetto folk, and the marginalized. But more broadly, in her private writings of the 1950's, she pondered the roles imposed on women and lesbians and strategies for their liberation (Anderson

210). Ms. Hansberry insisted that A Raisin in the Sun was not simply a play about the “Black Experience.” In an interview in 1964, Hansberry stated that her play was about an American family in conflict with a corrupt society, not a play about Negroes (Fabre 14). Gerald Weales agrees: “Miss Hansberry has come as close as possible to what she intended—a play about Negroes which is not simply a Negro play” (530). Doris Abramson contends however that “A Raisin in the Sun is set up to demonstrate the clash of dreams, a clash between generations, between men and women, and even—because for all its commonality with domestic dramas about white people, and in spite of Ms. Hansberry’s statement to the contrary, it is a black play—the clash between black and white” (243).

Ms. Hansberry loved to explore clashes and tensions within the black community internally as well as the external tensions of the black community in a white world. Dramatic conflict arose when the Younger code of expectations was broken by one or more of the members, precipitating a showdown. When Walter Lee does not live up to the family hopes and dreams, he comes into conflict with Lena. The tension between Walter and Mama is important because it drives the plot and reveals the human contradictions and complexities of African Americans (Wilkerson 4). But some of the plays’ complexities were adopted by the white population as their own. They would identify with the characters on stage. This caused a strong adverse reaction within the black community. But there were always critics like Abramson who took her side. Even in the late 60’s, Abramson still considered Ms. Hansberry’s play “dramaturgically sounder” than any black plays written up to that era. Ms. Abramson contended that even though Ms. Hansberry’s was accused of being a soap opera, it was a well-made play: characters are clearly defined and the dialogue is both entertaining and revealing (265-6). Genevieve Fabre stated that undoubtedly Hansberry’s A Raisin in the Sun provides the most interesting prototype of the black family ever developed in contemporary theatre. She also

contends that it has served as a paradigm for a whole series of representations in which this model is sometimes amplified and diversified, and sometimes radically contested (124).

There were also those tensions and clashes coming from the external forum. The personal and familial crises in A Raisin in the Sun are finally resolved by the open challenge offered, interestingly enough, by the white world. The white community's voice, portrayed in Karl Lindner's insulting offer, is delivered with courtesy but it stings Walter into a response which simultaneously gives him back his dignity and commits him to an involvement which he had sought to escape. Also the Youngers, by leaving the ghetto, commit themselves to a new level of struggle (159-160).

Finally, the personal clashes and tensions the author had to bear because of her work were extensive. Ms. Hansberry was accused of personifying the era when black playwrights were not making white people uncomfortable in the theatre. Some black playwrights began to worry about their voice (Mitchell 182). To counter the Hansberry experience, black playwrights and producers began bringing street theatre indoors. A prime example of this reaction against Ms. Hansberry's work was the avant-garde play, Big Time Buck White by Joseph Dolan Tuotti. It first played in San Francisco in a huge warehouse where I had the intense experience of attending a performance. As the play began, doors were bolted and "secured" with chains and locks. Then during the play the white audience was taunted, tormented and scared out of their wits with threats, expletives and haranguing. At intermission, a collection plate was passed around by a Herculean type whom one felt could kill with his look . . . people, including myself, were panicking, writing checks and dropping in twenty dollar bills. If they had no funds they would beg other audience members for money to donate to the "cause." It was something in which Ms. Hansberry would never have wanted to take a part (Mitchell 74).

A Raisin in the Sun used the tradition of social realism to show an idealized image of the

working class (Fabre 13). The subject of Ms. Hansberry's play is the integration of a black family into a white neighborhood. But instead of showing the consequences of such a leap, Hansberry depicted the efforts that preceded the realization of the dream (33). Hansberry is less concerned about the causes of the family's poverty than about the moral conflict between family members over what to do with the money. The image Ms. Hansberry gives of the black community is deliberately selective. She avoids lowlife characters and mobsters and depicts the ghetto as a place to leave (34).

Though the Hansberry family left their ghetto life behind, Lorraine never forgot it. When she spoke of those who remained in the ghetto, she spoke so favorably of the fact that: "There were no other children who laughed longer and harder. I envied them...they never understood my envy and they never will" (Mantell). Among those children there were many whom we name today "latch key kids." They wore a chain or string around their necks on which they had their house keys. Just to be like them, Lorraine would wear her skate keys like a precious necklace. As a result of their example, she always believed that "things" and money do not create happiness. Rather, one has to transcend material goods to achieve human dignity (Mantell).

Some critics have found various literary weaknesses in A Raisin in the Sun. For instance, the deus ex machina device of the insurance money is seen as clumsy. Why would Walter give his partner all of the money when he just needed a few hundred to bribe the licensing officials? Other critics have complained that Ms. Hansberry endorses the middle-class materialistic values, whereby the Youngers' happiness is tied up with owning a house and other economic opportunities.

In perusing all these varying opinions about the play, many contradictory, one thing is clear: even though its story is relatively simple, A Raisin in the Sun must be very rich to bear so

well the weight of examination. In closing, what better words than these offered by Chicago critic Frank Rich, who wrote, on the 25th anniversary of the premiere of A Raisin in the Sun on Broadway: “In the triumphant final moment (of the play)—in which Walter’s mother takes a last look at her tenement home before leaving it forever—we can almost feel Lorraine Hansberry herself looking ahead to the future that she helped make, but tragically, never knew” (New York Times).

Playwright's Life and Impact on the Text: The Trouble of Success

The Hansberry family was a Chicago-bred middle class family who escaped the rigors of the Great Depression. They had lived in an affluent black neighborhood. Her father, a banker, decided to move into an all white neighborhood. This was unheard of—even in the North. When Lorraine was ready to go to school, she had to attend a black school due to the segregation laws of the time. One day, Lorraine and her sister, Mamie, were playing in the yard when a pro-segregation mob approached their house. The two frightened girls ran indoors. Suddenly, a brick crashed through the window. It missed her head by a half inch. Hansberry biographer, Anne Cheney believes that this incident could have provided the germ for A Raisin in the Sun (9).

For Ms. Hansberry, the brick was a symbol of the turmoil, the poverty, the loss of identity of her race in the States. Ever since she was in school, Lorraine had an affinity for the poor and marginalized. In Ms. Hansberry's household there were two values that were never to be betrayed: the family and the race (Hansberry, Young, Gifted 18). Her dreams were to help the white race understand the black race as its equal (91). This "brick incident" gave her a feeling that her dreams were lost. She had to find a way to rekindle that dream. Her journey would be doubly trying because she was not only black, but a woman. With A Raisin in the Sun, Ms. Hansberry forced both blacks and whites "to re-examine the deferred dreams of black America; she demanded that whites not impede the fulfillment of those dreams for a second" (Rich).

However, even though A Raisin in the Sun was a resounding success on Broadway, there were two occasions when the play faced possible oblivion. The first of these incidents could have been the fatal blow. Lorraine Hansberry, now twenty-eight and married, had written poetry and reviewed plays for Freedom, an uptown journal. But though she had started working on a number of plays, she never completed any. One night, she sat working on a family play. She

became annoyed with it, flung the pages into the air and they scattered over the floor. Her husband, Robert Nemiroff, kept calm (Mitchell 180). As Ms. Hansberry described the outcome, she:

started to sweep them all into the fireplace. Bob didn't rebuke me at all, except with a look. He just got on the floor and picked up every sheet of it . . . put it back in order and kept it out of my sight for several days. And then one night when I was moping around, he got it out and put it in front of me. I went to work and finished it. (Cheney 23)

She finished it by Monday, March 10, 1954 and the rest was history (Hansberry, Young, Gifted 88).

Toward the end of her life Ms. Hansberry had been sadly troubled. She believed that she had not done enough for the civil rights movements (Donohue 32). She did not realize that she had already made a great contribution by writing a play that changed the way whites think about blacks and blacks think about themselves. It had a great effect on the country as a whole. James Baldwin, one of the most celebrated literary voices of the civil rights movement, wrote:

In order for a person to bear life, he needs a valid re-creation of that life, which is why Raisin in the Sun meant so much to black people. The root argument of the play is really far more subtle than either its detractors or the bulk of its admirers were able to see. ("Lorraine")

Considering the profound impact, one can only wonder what Ms. Hansberry might have achieved had her promising career not been cut short by her untimely death. Just as her characters suffered, hoped, and triumphed over the enormous barriers erected by the dominant culture so had she. But in her journey, she had brought back to a divided nation the elixir of this seminal play which "sparked the growth of the black theater movement in the 1960's" (Rich).

Her influence is vast. In her lifetime, she discovered her work translated into a multitude of languages, including Capek, a dialect of Czechoslovakia, and Cantonese (Hansberry, Young, Gifted 149-150).

Summary: A Rainbow in the Sun

In a darkened art house, a few summers ago, I made a startling discovery: one of my favorite artists, Frida Kahlo, was bi-sexual. Although the biographical movie was stunningly beautiful, all I focused on was the newly divulged, but unexpected, secret. However, recently I made another heart-stopping discovery: Lorraine Hansberry was a lesbian. This information, originally found on the internet, was difficult to believe. Perhaps it was not factual, I thought. But, after checking every legitimate internet list of famous lesbians, Ms. Hansberry's name appeared in almost all of them. Accepting this historical fact, it was easier to choose the theorist I used to substantiate this paper's opinions and conclusions. This theorist was chosen not because of her sexual preference, but because of her overall feminist stance that is informed by gay sensibilities. Marilyn French is a second wave feminist critic, social theorist, and novelist. She and Ms. Hansberry share some values and causes. French's standpoint theory will be applied to Beneatha.

Recently, I was sitting at the Central Washington University audio-visual viewing room. I had asked to watch a video about Ms. Hansberry and ended up in a tiny room with a rickety, noisy and antiquated 16 millimeter projector. But, on the bare wall screen was Ms. Hansberry in all her splendor (Mantell). She had an aura about her. She spoke very distinctly and was very articulate.

In Mantell's film, Ms. Hansberry said that she likes to "poke fun" at the Beneatha character. She agreed with all that Beneatha stood for because, after all, she had modeled that character after herself. Throughout Hansberry's script, Beneatha gives hints of her possible, though not yet fully formed sexual preference, perhaps most strongly in her response to her suitors. Talking about her wealthy boyfriend, George:

BENEATHA. George looks good—he's got a beautiful car and he takes

me to nice places and I even like him sometimes—but if the Youngers are sitting around waiting to see if, little Bennie is going to tie up the family with the Murchinsons, they are wasting their time...No I wouldn't marry him if all I felt for him was what I feel now. (Hansberry, Raisin 37)

Then Mama and Ruth, Beneatha's sister-in-law, pass some comical comments. But Beneatha retorts in anger:

BENEATHA. Get over it? What are you talking about, Ruth? 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 . . . (38)

Beneatha does not commit to a gay sexual identity, however. Nor does she dismiss marriage entirely. After the two older women make some snide remarks about a woman needing a man, Beneatha remarks forcefully:

BENEATHA. Oh, I probably will (get married)—but first I'm going to be a doctor, and George, for one, still thinks that very funny. I couldn't be bothered with that. I am going to be a doctor and everybody around here better understand that. (38)

Her interest in herself and her own career is what is truly revolutionary. The women around her—Ruth and Lena—are both women devoted to their family. As mothers, they both desire to take the families out of the ghetto and into a place where they can thrive. Hansberry's script does not criticize this, but it does make the case for why Beneatha might not find that an attractive option. Consider George (the suitor of whom the family approves) and his come-on during a sexually intimate moment:

GEORGE. I know it and I don't mind it sometimes—Look, I want you to

cut it out, see—the moody stuff. I don't like it. You're a nice-looking girl—all over. That's all you need, honey, forget the atmosphere. Guys aren't going to go for the atmosphere—they're going to go for what they see. Be glad for that. Beneatha, please drop the Garbo routine. It doesn't go well with you. As for myself, I want a nice (groping) simple—(thoughtfully) sophisticated girl—Not a poet—O.K.? (starts to kiss her. She turns her face away. He jumps up.) (85)

Beneatha, not surprisingly, bids him good night. Whether this scene tells us anything about her sexual preference or not, it shows either a woman independent enough to wait for her ideal man or a woman caught in an ugly man's world waiting to take a liberating step, or jump, “out of the closet.”

Feminist Marilyn French would deconstruct this scene, theorizing that Beneatha is being impacted negatively by her brother and her boyfriend—they are trying to mold her identity, her whole life. Class is significant here as well. George is the son of a very prominent and wealthy industrialist. She can imagine how his parents must look down on her, making her approach him with less sense of self. And though the world around her and outside of her environment might seem to have more resources, Beneatha has her knowledge and her clean mind that shows much more power than they can imagine because she is one of the marginalized ones. She will endure.

But, something still kept nagging in my mind as to Ms. Hansberry's sexual identity. What about her marriage to famed musician and activist, Robert Nemiroff? Then I remembered what a long-time homosexual friend has told me. Joey, whom I had taught and known since September, 1969, was a well-known bartender in the San Francisco area at one of the trendy restaurants in North Beach. One day I asked him about one of our acquaintances. He told me that this acquaintance was gay. Shocked, I questioned him. “Oh, Jess,” he said, “a lot of gays

are married—especially if they want to keep it ‘under wraps.’”

Consulting an expert, Ms. Kristin G. Esterberg, Sociology Professor at the University of Massachusetts, writes that even though married for a time some women must have been on “an experimental bisexual journey to a more permanent gay identity” (Esterberg 219).

The point, perhaps, is not so much whether or not Beneatha is gay. We are not wrong to suspect she may be, since Ms. Hansberry says Beneatha has much in common with herself. However, what is fascinating to this author is that if Beneatha can be understood as gay, then Ms. Hansberry provides a space for the portrayal of gay characters just as she did Black America. And while no one in the 1950’s was ready to talk about sexual preference, Ms. Hansberry added this layer nonetheless for those who were ready to find it. The theatre is in desperate need for such politically committed and far seeing writers. Of all the areas I need to be more open and accepting is in this arena. I feel that I have come a long way thanks to the insight of Ms. Hansberry.

Section III

Production Journal

The summer of 2005

During the summer I spent a few days in Chicago. The weather was hot and un-inviting. I quickly realized that I was not in California anymore. I stayed with my religious community in the Latino district west of the city center. With map in hand, I quickly got my bearings. On the first day, I visited the DuSable Museum on East 56th Place. It was considered the premier African-American museum in the area. I did not get much information there, so, I traveled across town to the city public library. There I was allowed to enter the special collections room. Putting on white gloves, I was able to hold in an actual original program of Raisin. I was also able to handle some photographs of buildings, homes and rooms, and portraits from the late 1950's.

The following day I traveled by the subway train to the South Side. What a revelation! Prejudice waxed thicker than the sweltering humidity. I had never seen such squalor as I had witnessed that afternoon—not even when I had visited some Southern states. It was no wonder Lorraine Hansberry was impelled by her environment to write so vividly about the conditions of her race. Not much seemed significantly changed from her descriptions. At every turn the neighborhood inhabitants asked me what I was doing there. I realized soon enough that I was the only white man visible for miles around.

The next day I went to visit the sights and sounds of the neighborhood where Ms. Hansberry had grown up. I had borrowed a car and was able to travel more extensively. After this sojourn, I now felt more comfortable in his preparation to color the show with a greater sense of that reality that inspired Ms Hansberry to write her memorable script.

The Winter of 2005

I had already picked my cast. However, some changes had to be made. One of the actors had braces and she would wear them into the production. I did not want to destroy the historical accuracy of the production since the poor could not afford braces let alone dental care in that era. So I gently explained the situation. She very graciously understood and gave up her part; and, by a stroke of luck a replacement, Syeda Lee, was chosen. I hope this works out.

During mid December we had our first parents' meeting. Amazingly, all of the parents of the cast and the crew showed up. I welcomed them and explained the importance of this particular production, asked them for financial support and help in the various production areas. I handed them a schedule-calendar and asked them to review it and then return it to me signed, agreeing to the dates and times of the practices and final performances. If they had any previous appointments or any type of rehearsals and practices (sports) they were to indicate it on the calendar. The meeting ended with questions and clarifications. A short reception followed.

I got together with the set designer, Mr. Jim Kramer. I was quite taken aback with Jim's model because he had switched the kitchen area with the living room space. I attempted to explain the difficulty this would cause. I would have to re-design the blocking. But, he had already designed the scene and materials had been ordered; he was ready to start working the following week. I decided that it would be better to let things go, since rehearsals had not started yet. It would mean readjusting my mind set (pun not intended).

Day 1 January 4, 2006 Wednesday

This was the first full day of production. We began at 3:10 P.M. I introduced myself to the cast and crew since some freshmen crew did not know me. I then introduced information on the author, play and history of its production from inception to the various major theatrical presentations. The actors then read through the play. Because the cast members are already

friends and on a first name basis, it will be easier to put them in an ensemble mode. Even the two Cobb boys (the Cobbs are the sons of our religion teacher and librarian, one of whom is playing Travis) know our actors and they, in turn, know the Cobbs. The cold reading went well. Even now the cast seems to be getting at some idea of subtext. Some of the lines brought about laughter. Good! The evening ended with Rayna, our stage manager, handing out the schedules. I asked the cast and crew to sell ads for the program. They are required to sell at least \$200.00 of ads and tickets.

Day 2 January 6, 2006 Thursday

This day is, as are all of the Thursdays, dedicated to work with Beneatha and Asagai. Today the director discovered the value of having an authentic African dialect coach. A religious nun from Nigeria, Sister Caroline Mbonu, HHSJ, has been an invaluable addition to our production staff. She has worked with Asagai for a solid day. The director and the actors went over the “return of Asagai” bit. [pp. 47-53] They have a good chemistry. Both have already quasi-memorized their lines. It makes it easier if they are acquainted with their lines. We started blocking the piece. Kirra (Beneatha) is very mechanical in her gait. This is one of my main concerns. Even though Kirra is an athlete, her movement on stage is quite tense. On the other hand Asagai has a natural way about him. The scene worked well, but the blocking is still somewhat static. Time, hopefully, will energize this scene.

Day 3 January 6, 2006 Friday.

The character of Ruth was replaced by Syeda Lee. She has the look of a woman in her thirties. The maturity exuded by this actress is phenomenal. I am truly blessed. This is the first time I saw the interaction between husband and wife, mother and son, and family. The reading went well. Travis is another blessed choice. He is only nine years old but a little genius. He is presently at the middle school level in math. He memorized all of his lines. The only difficulty I

foresee is Travis' serious asthma condition. He needs a breathing apparatus, a nebulizer, when his asthma becomes seriously aggravated. The scene moved on monotonically. The scene needed much more attention to playing the conditions (Hodge's date). They were too awake for having just awakened. I had to slow down the actors movements. The dialogue needed a groggy feel. Aside from all of that by the end of the practice the director was satisfied today. The scene was not only well executed but it was humorous. [pp. 11-19]

Day 4 January 9, 2006 Monday-January 13, 2006

Final Exam Week; no practice but actors were told to memorize Act I scene 2 and keep Act I scene 1 fresh. I am not worried about the cast's grades. Most are on the honor roll and some are AP students. But they have to keep their grades up. Since most are seniors we want them to steer clear of "senioritis"

Day 9 January 16, 2006 Monday

Martin Luther King Day; no rehearsal.

Day 10 January 17, 2006 Tuesday

Tuesdays belong to Beneatha and George. Today we worked pages 67-74. I made a discouraging discovery this afternoon. The actor playing Beneatha is a veritable prude. She will not get intimate with any of the actors. She refuses any intimate posture which I propose. What will happen in the kissing scenes with Asagai?

Beneatha's stiffness is becoming more apparent with each consecutive rehearsal. She surely put on a great show to have gotten the part. The practice went well though. Asagai is slipping in coming prepared with at least having read the beat of the day. I finalized the blocking for this beat, pages 11-19.

Day 11 January 18, 2006 Wednesday

The actors were phlegmatic, most likely caused by the rigorous final exam week. We went on with the second beat of this scene [pp. 19-23]. The scene plays well but the set poses a problem. It forces Walter into an awkward position in relation to the window, the only real source of light in the play. We finally fixed the blocking. Their lines are finally letting the subtext seep through.

Mrs. Lenita Miller, our costume designer, came to see the period 1950's clothes donated to us. She will take the young ladies to the second-hand store next week. We also rehearsed the Walter-Beneatha altercation [pp. 23-27]. In this scene, Beneatha's character surprisingly came alive. The conflict scenes bring out the best in Beneatha. The blocking was a triad with Ruth in the background. It worked well even when a diagonal was formed as Beneatha strides to stage left. The emotional transitions are smoother.

Day 12 January 19, 2006 Thursday

The scene with Asagai and Beneatha [pp. 51-53] sparks up when Lena enters the scene. The comedic timing is more than I expected. The blocking, especially Asagai's exit, needs work.

Day 13 January 20, 2006 Friday

We ran through Act I scene 1. It dragged in places but overall it's not bad. The blocking is complete and most of the lines are not only memorized but meaningful. Unfortunately, Travis had a baseball game and came quite late. Hoping this will not be a normal occurrence.

Day 14 January 23, 2006 Monday

Act I scene 2. The beginning beat [pp.41-47] was performed in a triangle of placed actors and it emphasizes Ruth's entrance and it was performed well. All of the actresses know their lines. The scenes with Asagai are weaker now than they were last week. The director must have a serious talk with Beneatha. [pp. 47-53] The "abortion" beat was strong, projecting some ensemble work.

The meaning is clear and Lena came through loud and strong. Ruth provided an added punch: she clearly understands Walter's demeaning behavior towards her. [pp. 53-63] Great work!

Day 15 January 24, 2006 Tuesday

I decided to omit certain beats from the Asagai-Beneatha kissing scene. Beneatha will not cooperate and refuses to do these scenes as written. Instead of a fake love scene, I decided to shorten the scene. We practiced the clipped beat and it works. [pp. 113-117]

Day 16 January 25, 2006 Wednesday

Today we worked on Act II scene 1 [pp. 64-77] without George. He will be in tomorrow and we will finalize the blocking then. Ruth and Walter have not memorized their parts at all. Even though Beneatha is the weaker actor she is always prepared. She has her scene perfectly memorized and on most occasions the subtext is captured as well. I am very proud of her. We went over the initial blocking. Without George, it is difficult to tell if Beneatha's movements make sense. She is hopping from a standing position downstage left, and moves to the divan. She slides from the left side of the divan to the right of it then to the chair in quick succession. It looks good but with George it may not work. We will see tomorrow. By the end of the practice Ruth and Walter have at least become very comfortable in the last beat of this scene.

Day 17 January 26, 2006 Thursday

It worked—George, who almost always comes prepared with his lines memorized, fits as best he can in the blocking of Act II scene 1. I don't think that the foursome realize the humor they are injecting this scene with by their fine timing. It has taken a few years to hone this type of acting especially by Walter who has been with me for five seasons. An encouraging day!

Day 18 January 27, 2006 Friday

The post-Prometheus beat [pp. 74-77] is a rest in the action which is hurling toward the money-liquor store issue. It is an acerbic beat. At first I was afraid the "adults" would falter in a

husband-wife argument, appearing juvenile and ineffective. Walter and Ruth's chemistry dispelled my fears. The spousal argument feels real even at this early stage. The blocking is awkward—again the set switched around. But it is too late to change it to the original design.

Day 19 January 30, 2006 Monday

Travis came in early. He had to stay the entire session. Mrs. Cobb had an appointment. There was some trepidation that he would be distracting the other actors. But the director discovered that Travis is a highly motivated youngster...he worked on his homework when he wasn't on stage and was no trouble at all. The scene went well. Again Lena steals the show. When the director offered her the part in her freshman year he was right on. She is reaching deep into her psyche to bring forward some emotions that did not seem any part of her. When HURT is called for, Lena delivers it magnanimously. But of course, Ruth, Walter, Travis help her arrive at her best by their supportive acting.

Day 20 January 31, 2006 Tuesday

Today is the feast of our founder, Don Bosco. No practice.

Day 21 February 1, 2006 Wednesday

The set was started today. Mr. Jim Kramer, his wife and son will tackle this job. He is retired at an early age (I still do not know what type of clandestine work he does). This is a wonderful help to our program: a great weight off the director's shoulders.

Day 22 February 2, 2006 Thursday

This scene had to be abbreviated. The "making-out" scene between George and Beneatha is not going to happen [pp. 84-86] . Instead of causing Beneatha undue stress I decided to shorten the scene—a beat already quite short. Unfortunate—but better to sacrifice this scene than to sacrifice the feelings of Beneatha. Topic ended. The scene looks good nevertheless. It is interesting how some moments—like the tender thank you to her mom, Lena—can bring out the

best in Beneatha. The blocking serves to move this scene quickly. It serves a purpose: to move up to the crucial house-buying announcement. I am hoping the shark-tooth scrim, which is on its way here from Musson's in Santa Clara, will help the scene and further the emotional level.

Day 23 February 3, 2006 Friday

Minimum day; no practice.

Day 24 February 6, 2006 Monday

Instead of practice, we spent the entire time at the Thrift Shop and the Salvation Army. Costume time. We found some wonderful full suits, vests and all. The ladies found excellent period sleepwear. We also bought some props.

Day 25 February 7, 2006 Tuesday

Travis and Walter—a crucial scene. Walter is afraid of the page long line in a tender moment with his son. Walter has not even tackled this scene. After a few stabs at it...we have decided to cut the end of the act. We had been practicing for about one hour when I came to the conclusion that it would be asking too much of Walter to memorize all of those lines at this late a date.

Decision: delete the scene. We read it without this beat. It worked. The way it was re-written shows no sign that it was ever part of the script. Another hurdle cleared.

We began the reworking of Act I scene 2. The three beats flow seamlessly into each other. The ensemble is gratifying. The ARE off book.

Day 26 February 8, 2006 Wednesday

First time blocking the Lindner scene [pp. 95-101]. Lindner speaks a bit too fast. Although he speaks too rapidly he can be understood. But the point is that the audience needs a slower rate of speech to capture and process the ideas behind the words. The director needs to temper the speed. This senior actor has been with the director since the fifth grade. He was in The Wiz. So, he is a seasoned actor. He recently had an unfortunate incident in his personal life. He is

harried and nervous...but he is a trooper and will take his time improving his characterization. He takes direction well.

Day 27 February 9, 2006 Thursday

The inter-scene needed work [pp. 101-112]. We had to delete the humorous “Gardening Hat” beat. It is unfortunate because the levity of the scene could have aggrandized the results of the emotionally cathartic climax.

We shortened this scene to its bare bones. I am worried about the memorization. Most of the cast have fallen behind. Blocking this scene has been made far more complex because of the editing.

Day 28 February 10, 2006 Friday

Bobo is wonderful. He has a slight lisp which he is either not aware of or ignores. Either way, I allowed the lisp. It adds to the characterization of Bobo. He gives the scene a sobering tone. Bobo’s moving compassion, the way I had imagined it, is all there—with minimal direction. So I will just allow Bobo to go as far as he takes the development of his character. It is right on. The other actors have formed a wonderful ensemble and Bobo fits right in. Act II scene 3 is blocked. I added a coffee table to the scene (remnants of The Odd Couple set). I felt it could add another level to the scene where Walter stands on the table. I will switch him to the coffee table. It may take up too much space in our small stage and therefore hamper the movement of one or two main characters. As of now the director is blocking the actors without the actual coffee table. Again Lena really shines in this scene [pp. 108-112]. It is moving!

Day 29 February 13, 2006 Monday

Act III We divided the script into three sections. The first is Ruth and Beneatha as they confront Lena’s indecision to move or not to move plus Walter’s decision [pp. 113-128]. The second is Lindner’s return which we will practice tomorrow. The last is Exodus [pp. 132-134].

The two phases went well. Some of the cuts again are hurting the cohesiveness of the production. I will have to smooth out the transitions so that the editing does not feel jarring. The actors seem much more confident than they did in the past few weeks. The practice was a success. Act III looks good. Some of the props are still missing. However, Mr. Tom Wright, alumnus and unofficial dramaturge, just brought us a six-pack of period Coca Colas in the original six pack carrying carton, the traditional, on-every-table-in-America plastic salt and pepper shakers, a period waxed-paper, aluminum foil dispenser, period glasses and cups, and so forth. Last week we bought an antique glass milk bottle. We found a period wooden ironing board and a cabinet record player.

Day 30 February 14, 2006 Tuesday

Act III Lindner's return [pp. 128-132]. The Lindner character is still a bit too rapid in his dialog. The blocking was difficult with most of the cast on stage. But the lines are almost all memorized. This will be a great satisfying falling action that will leave audiences with a sense of hope for the future.

Day 31 February 15, 2006 Wednesday

We went over Act III part 1 . . . just the lines. Then we polished Act III part 1. Lindner was given the day off. The act is progressing well. The chemistry between the actors has grown a great amount.

Day 32 February 16, 2006 Thursday

Act III part 2 Lindner is finally tempering down his tempo, his lines. Travis needs to focus on his environment. I have to remember he is only a little child. But it will help him in the future with his concentration. He will learn now.

Day 33 February 17, 2006 Friday

We did a run through today which was positively enlightening. And then a terrifying dead-end: first real life crisis in this play. Walter wants to join the track and field team. We needed intervention. My thinking is that Walter chose the play over football. And, this season the football team took the state championship. Some team members have been shining their silver and diamond Super-Bowl-Championship-looking ring in Walter's face. Not nice. Walter and I had severe words and it seems we have lost our main actor. I have always felt that Walter has been spoiled because he has a diagnosed learning disability, even though he is very bright. He walked out on my discussion with him. I am already planning to contact his parents. If that fails, I will contact a nearby school who has done this play and also the professional who did it in December. After practice today I saw Walter in the parking lot. I had to bring Mr. Cobb who is Travis' dad, a teacher here at Salesian, to intervene. After speaking to Walter, Mr. Cobb called me over and the three had a pretty heated argument. We even called in the track and field coach. After it was all over we had our leading actor back. I blame it all on the pressure of the impending performances and just plain fear on the actor's part. I think that Walter now recognizes the high importance of his role in the scheme of things.

Day 34 February 20, 2006

Minimum day; no practice.

Day 35 February 20, 2006 Monday

President's Day Holiday; No practice.

Day 36 February 21, 2006 Tuesday

We took the day off. Mrs. Lenita Miller, our costume mistress, took some of the actors to the nearby costume shop. Costume Corner has just received hundreds of costumes from a costume store going out of business.

Day 37 February 22, 2006 Wednesday Act II scene 3

[pp. 92-95] After practice we left for Los Angeles to participate in the University of La Verne's Drama Festival and Competition. I hope we get some award. Unfortunately, one of our main actors could not attend due to class work so Ruth proffered her sister.

Day 38 February 23, 2006 Thursday

Our competition was hampered by some snobbish actors preparing for their scene in the adjacent theatre. But at awards time we came home with a best actor award: Ms. Simone Hamilton. If the other students had put in as much effort at this stage of the game we certainly would have taken the best production award. The other actors recognized this fact only too late. This experience will hopefully help then turn on the juice for our performance dates. The unfortunate incident of last minute sub proved better for Ruth's sister. She was commended on her fine presentation after the judges learned of the last minute understudy.

Day 39 February 24, 2006 Friday

Spent the day in L A touring and then back to Richmond

Day 40 February 27, 2006 Monday

The cast practiced Act I scene 1. The blocking is working for a better look and succeeding. The words and movement flow realistically. We have most of the props now which is such a relief. Fine work today. As soon as we finished the scene, we called it a day.

Day 41 February 28, 2006 Tuesday

Act I Scene 2 The scene is still not polished. Our resident Puritan, Beneatha will not do any intimate scene. It is really killing the play. I should have taken the young lady with the braces. Very prudish but I must respect her sentiments. Asagai is indifferent.

Day 42 March 1, 2006 Wednesday

Act II scene 1 A wonderful job. George is doing a better job. Not as stiff as before. But Walter is not a convincing drunk. I know he has never been drunk or drugged. His father is a cop.

How to get him to play the drunk? We worked on it. I gave him three movie titles to help him in this aspect of his characterization: The Lost Weekend in which Ray Milland won the Best Actor Oscar, The Days of Wine and Roses with Jack Lemmon, and Robert Redford in Barefoot in the Park. That ought to help him.

Day 43 March 2, 2006

Thursday Act II scene 2 Beneatha has finally come up to her own potential ...but she will not do the intimate scenes. It hurts the production because the scenes are there for variation and character development. A great lesson for the future. If one is having any type or intimate kissing scene or love scene make sure you audition for that. I fault myself for that. However, in the future I will do a lighter type of drama with high school actors.

Day 44 March 3, 2006 Friday

Act II scene 3 Worked and polished the Beneatha-Ruth-Walter scene. The dancing still looks awkward and phony. I should have hired a choreographer. Lindner is still rushing his lines and motivation is lacking. No attempt to change the tempo, especially in his long speeches. I should have held fast to my editing those scenes.

Day 45 March 4, 2006 Saturday

Act III The Asagai-Beneatha unit remains not memorized. I am seriously thinking of cutting it. Lindner is still rushing ahead. The others are doing much better. Bobo and Lena are just so far ahead in dedication and style. The best.

Day 46 March 6, 2006 Monday

Run through the entire play. We got up to Act II scene 1. Not bad. We began with a longer relaxation session. Get rid of tension. The work now is to improve with each consecutive practice. I am more satisfied with this play than with most I have produced.

Day 47 March 7, 2006 Tuesday

Started where we left off yesterday. The actors are totally ensemble. No one is playing the diva. We finished the play.

Day 48 March 8, 2006 Wednesday

The actors were given the day off to finish getting their wardrobes.

Day 49 March 9, 2006 Thursday

We had a costume parade today. Some of the costumes are atrocious. We had to change some and just alter others. We ended up with some impressive work.

Day 50 March 10, 2006 Friday

This cast went to the gym today to see the progress on the set. We found the Kramer family happily at work. The set looks wonderful. The design left us very little acting space. However, I am hoping this will add the claustrophobic look that I am looking for.

Day 51 March 11, 2006 Saturday

Two weeks to go. The students cannot wait to get on the boards on Monday. It is unfortunate that we cannot use our own facility until just two weeks before the production. Sports!

We started with Act III. A few of the beats need tightening up. The scene when they are finally moving out needs more hustle and bustle. We have decided to cut the Asagai-Beneatha beat. It just does not work with the removal of the intimate scenes between the two in the first act.

Another set-back because with the scene out, so much subtext has to be added in the scene between Lena and Beneatha: the announcement that Asagai has invited her to practice in Africa. Today we found out that it did work out.

Day 52 March 13, 2006 Monday

Due to the end of the sports play offs, this is a memorable day: our first time on our stage. The set is nearly completed. It just needs a few brush strokes here and there and the rest of the props. The heavy furniture is on stage. The lighting must be adjusted. The music cues have to be set

and practiced. But, we are finally on stage. We ran through Act I scenes 1 & 2. They have finally memorized their lines. These last minute sessions are already hurting us. But most realize this is it.

Day 53 March 14, 2006 Tuesday

Act II scenes 1, 2, & 3. The scenes flowed well. I decided to make additional cuts. There is not time to polish some scenes that are still not down to memory. Other than that, it is not a bad job.

Day 54 March 15, 2006 Wednesday

Minimum day. Instead of the usual practice, I decided to take the entire cast and crew to a performance of Solano College's Raisin in the Sun. It was directed by L. Peter Callendar, a well-known actor. However, the production was very uneven. The characters not well developed and the timing was off. The director, who was seated at the back of the audience, was distracting. He was howling at jokes that the audience did not get. He was just a nuisance. I wanted the students to get some last minute ideas for their characterizations but I feel they could have helped some of their actors with some of ours. We had a wonderful pre-show dinner at one of the nearby Mexican restaurants owned by one of our graduates.

Day 55 March 16, 2006 Thursday

Run through. Act I scenes 1 and 2. I have the bad habit of constantly interrupting the actors when they make any mistake. This is one of my worst faults which I have tried to diminish and has succeeded substantially. It just aggravates the actors. Patience. The run through was encouraging. The subtext is bursting out wonderfully; their physical workouts have really helped. It was cumbersome at the time, but it paid off. The relaxation exercises before these run-throughs has helped immensely.

Day 56 March 17, 2006 Friday

We did a “speed through” of all three acts: reciting lines as fast as the actors could go. Rayna, our stage manager, followed the script and stopped the actors when they deviated from the script. It went well. With cuts the play lasts about two hours adding a half hour for prop use and pauses.

Day 57 March 18, 2006 Saturday

We practiced the entire day. Not a minute wasted. The actors realize that this is it. The play will not change substantially from what it is now. If we haven’t given our best in all fields it will show. The practice lasted a half day. Then the stage crew and lighting and sound crews came in for final lights set up, practice the scene changes, go over the sound cues, and set up the sound system ready for Monday.

Day 58 March 20, 2006 Monday

Today was our first real run through tech rehearsal. Though the lighting cues are minimal we tried to time them according to the mood of the play. The window-lighting effect leaves a bit more to be desired. Hopefully, the darker blue gels we will add after practice today will make it work.

Day 59 March 21, 2006 Tuesday

Tech and cast were given final comments. In this production, the cast and crew do not look down on each other. I have finally cleaned up the mess left by the preceding crew.

Day 59 March 22, 2006 Wednesday

The run through was amazing. I did not have to intervene as much: mainly due to the Stage Manager who asked me not to. She is a wonderful at directing the cast and crew. She can be demanding and curt but she commands respect.

Day 60 March 23, 2006 Thursday

I was intrigued. It was not like me to have such few interventions during this taped performance. The pieces all fell together masterfully. It is the most relaxed I have felt of any prior dress rehearsal. The performance moved smoothly. The lighting was a little abrupt. The fades looked more like blackouts. By the end of the night that had been adjusted well. The programs have been printed and the concessions readied for tomorrow. Volunteer parents and student have been chosen to take care of the house and concessions.

Day 60 March 24, 2006 Friday

The premiere was in a way a sobering event for director, cast and crew. It was the first time in recent memory that there was no major fluke. The performances were much better than at the dress rehearsal. An audience does add a lot. Again Lena lit up the stage with her magnetic presence. Walter is finally giving it more energy and filling out his role.

Day 61 March 25, 2006 day, Saturday

This was quite a tense performance due most likely to the presence of my professor- critic. But more stress was created when one of the crew members did not show. I later was informed that the backstage crew person had called in sick. I wish I had been informed earlier to clear up some crucial scene changes that did not occur tonight. The performance was taped by a different videographer. Hope it's good. Travis was very distracted today. He was not ill but lost control (but he's only nine).

Day 62 March 26, 2006 Sunday

This last performance was our best even though the changes which my professor-critic had pointed out the previous night, and were inserted into the matinee, failed miserably. The standing lamp was inadvertently plugged into a dead extension cord in the middle of the second act whereas it had worked in the first act when it was not needed. The packing boxes in the last scene were all not piled on top of each other but hidden one behind the other. Travis' asthma

attack was acute. Between scenes he was running to his breathing machine. A little hero! But on the bright side, the acting was tight, exciting and the timing was right on. Nevertheless, the added music score between acts provided for a better transition between acts and scenes and the musical variations were quite fitting. This caused the feel of the play to veer to a more moving climax. After the play we decided not to tear down a thing. The cast and crew went to the faculty residence and celebrated the afternoon's success.

**CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
THEATRE ARTS GRADUATE PROGRAM**

THESIS PROJECT/ PRODUCTION PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

STUDENT- Fr. Jesse Montes

SS#-

UNDER CONSIDERATION IS DIRECTION OF: A Raisin in the Sun by Lorraine Hansberry

EVALUATOR'S NAME: George Bellah **TITLE:** Graduate Coordinator

PLACE OF PERFORMANCE: Salesian High School, Richmond, CA

DATE OF VIEWING: 3/25/06

DESCRIPTION OF PERFORMANCE VENUE: The performance space is a typical "gymnasium", which must be shared with athletics and other school groups/events. This seriously limits the "produce-ability" of the space for theatrical events, as the ability to rehearse without interruption or build sets in a timely fashion is compromised.

The space also has serious acoustical problems [which affects voice production for the actor and makes a frustrating experience for the audience] and a small stage with no fly system or wing space to speak of [which seriously limits the size and quality of the scenic elements].

Lighting positions, both in the stage house and front of house, are too few and at too great a distance/angle from the stage to be useful. Two box booms on either side of the stage help to provide side light. House lighting is poor, being banks of fluorescent lights which cannot be dimmed, only switched on and off abruptly. A new lighting system is desperately needed.

A speaker cluster resides above stage center and units occupy each side above the stage. Sound is problematic and it seems either an overhaul of the current system or a completely new one might be needed. The heaters were very loud and distracting.

Masking seems inadequate, especially above the stage.

No raked seating means the audience experience is also compromised in this space due to poor sightlines and uncomfortable folding chairs. Also, there seems to be no good way to set up the box office/ticket sales or to handle crowd control/latecomers.

The school seriously needs a dedicated theatrical performance space, if the theatrical arts are to grow and prosper.

DESCRIPTION OF CONCEPT: The director has appropriately chosen a very realistic presentation of the play. His written concept statement seems focused on realistic detail, visually and in the acting. He also wanted to appropriately use certain theatrical devices to tell the story, such as the scrim, and metaphorical props, such as the withered plant. He did not seem to have a unifying concept or metaphor beyond this and seemed to be lacking a specific choice of color palette.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTUAL PRODUCTION DIRECTION AND/OR
REALIZED DESIGN OF SETS, PROPS, COSTUMES, LIGHTING, SOUND:**

Scenic Design- The design of the set was adequate for the production, but suffered due to the small size of the stage. I especially liked the clever use of the scrim for one wall of the bedroom, revealing action "behind closed doors". However, the set seemed inappropriately

cramped. Although the apartment is supposed to be too small for the family [and the set worked in this regard], it felt too small for the actors, inhibiting blocking, composition, and stage pictures. There were some awkward angles in the walls and the set seemed very shallow and flat.

The sense of detail was uneven, especially with the furniture. Some of the furniture was antique and period-appropriate, while some seemed anachronistic [such as the coffee table and coat rack]. The walls seemed rather empty and perhaps not distressed enough. The pictures on the walls seemed too small, proportionately.

Properties- Props design and detail was uneven. On the one hand, there were some nice period food props in the cupboards, yet the jars were empty during the “borrowing from the neighbors” sequence and a bar code was visible on the end of a cardboard box. Also, when eating breakfast, it was obvious there was no real food and no water was in a glass being drunk out of by a character. A major symbol in the play, the dying plant, looked too healthy. I wondered why the family wasn’t a little more “packed” for the moving scene at the end of the play.

Costume Design- Costumes looked good and were well-thought-out, for the most part. The design maintained a consistent period look and the actors seemed comfortable in the costumes [although Beneatha had some trouble with hers during the first act during the gift-giving scene with Assagai.

Lighting Design- The set needed to be “warmed” by light before the curtain went up. Practicals begged to be used, such as the floor lamp which was not turned on for the evening scenes. Dimming the general light would have helped point up/focus the action taking place behind the scrim. There was one obvious miscue, when the lights came up too soon near the end of Act 2.

Sound Design- Some music to frame the show [pre-show, entr’acte, scene transitions, and post show] would have been nice, but apparently the director ran out of time and the board amp was stolen and had to be replaced. Sound coming out of the House Left speaker during the performance was very distracting.

HOW DID THE PRODUCTION DIRECTION IMPLEMENT THE IDEAS EXPRESSED IN THE CONCEPT STATEMENT? Visually, the production was uneven in achieving the ideas expressed in the concept statement. The set, while appropriately small and cramped, restricted movement too much and lacked detail in texture and dressing. The furniture and properties mostly gave us a sense of the period, but sometimes jarred us because it was anachronistic. The costumes were mostly successful in their look, but the actors had some trouble looking like they should be wearing them. The lighting, a unifying element in most productions, was not very realistic or natural. Finally, the acting was unevenly realistic. All of the actors had moments where they shone, but also moments where they lacked power, subtext, or understanding of the text.

APPROPRIATENESS OF CHOICE OF SCRIPT FOR ABILITIES OF PERFORMERS, AUDIENCE, VENUE, AND/OR ACADEMIC SETTING? This script was a very appropriate choice for the audience [Salesian has a high population of minorities] as well as a vehicle for learning [tying it to classroom study]. The script offered both rewards and challenges for the student performers involved. While the performers certainly understood and connected to the civil & human rights issues involved, the life experience and complexity of the characters were somewhat beyond them. The venue is a challenging one in which to produce any play and this one was no different. Although appropriate for the cramped nature of the play’s setting, it seemed crowded on this stage.

Overall, I would say this was a very challenging choice.

ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING IF APPLICABLE: CLEAR DELINEATION OF UNITS OF ACTION, MOTIVATED BLOCKING, VISUALLY INTERESTING COMPOSITION, VISUAL EXPRESSION OF METAPHOR, USE OF PICTURIZATION IN STORYTELLING, CLEAR AND BELIEVABLE CHARACTERIZATION, ADEQUATE USE OF BODY AND VOICE, UNITY OF PRODUCTION ELEMENTS, CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING.

The direction and performance of the play was uneven and somewhat inconsistent. I felt by the end of the [somewhat lengthy] evening that I had clearly “heard” the play, yet I also felt that many details and nuances were lacking or inconsistent.

Units of action were sometimes very clearly delineated and others were somewhat muddy. The overall tempo-rhythm of the units was nice, with clear and appropriate pauses. The end of Act One seemed flat for some reason. Scene dynamics overall seemed flat in the first half of the play. Sometimes the ends of scenes need a stronger closure, especially those ended by Walter Lee. The “moving” scene needed a big change in energy.

Blocking was mostly motivated, but there were moments that did not seem organically connected to character and situation. Ruth, for example, says “I’m tired” without really seeming to be. I also didn’t understand why Lena says “Get me my hat”. Sometimes actors had trouble staying open and upstaging themselves, though this may have been attributable to the cramped set. Actors need to clear for entrances better, but again, this could have been a problem with the set.

There were several very nice compositions and pictures, but I’m not sure I could have followed the action of the play if the sound had been turned down. Some pictures looked a bit “clumpy”. There was a particularly good picture at the end of Act One. The “breakdown scene seemed crowded.

Vocally, the actors periodically struggled with poor articulation and falling inflection at the ends of lines and words. Walter Lee seemed to spend too much time in his upper register. Asagai struggled with articulation at times.

Overall, the actors had good connectedness with each other and the play, but at times seemed disconnected. For example, I wondered why Linder didn’t seem to want anything. He seemed to be rushing

Actors need to be aware of covering their own, and others, lines with things like door slams or crossing while speaking. The slap looked really good and well-rehearsed, but Lena beating Walter Lee didn’t look believable. The dance sequence looked uncomfortable and wasn’t very believable. The curtain call needed to be a little more brisk and the actors needed to SMILE!

WITHIN THE CONFINES OF THIS PARTICULAR PERFORMANCE VENUE, WAS THIS PRODUCTION SATISFACTORY OR UNSATISFACTORY?

It should be noted that this production was very strongly supported by the students, faculty, staff, and community, as evidenced by the audience makeup and attendance.

Given that this is a very challenging play being produced in a limited venue with young actors, I feel this was a satisfactory production.

Final Self-evaluation

A few months after final performance of Salesian High School's A Raisin in the Sun, I took the DVD of the performance and inserted the disc into a player and watched my version of the classic. After the viewing, I happily felt that the strengths, in my opinion, far outweighed the weaknesses. I remember the arguments from the various camps against such a production. That it was made for Little Theatre casts. That it was too mature a theme for a cast of high school students to pull it off. I stand firm that the students under my direction did pull it off.

Existentially, the tears, the laughter, the hushed audience, the applause of strangers and the kudos of so many emotional outpourings first led to me this conclusion. But it was furthered by watching my students a few months later and being moved that crowned that belief.

However, there were also a few very prominent weaknesses. As Professor George Bellah III pointed out, is our facility. Coming on stage only one week before performances to block, re-block, set lights, and set the sound is defeating. Our usual lighting man had decided on sports instead of theater this year. Our lighting system left so much to be desired. The lighting design and execution were poor.

And our stage is so small. However, in the original design I had more room and the sightlines were much wider. As far as the props: When we did it on Friday night all the props were "working". The night Professor Bellah saw it, two of our backstage crew were missing. They had reportedly taken ill. So many props were either missing or not fully dressed. The "somewhat flat" section of the play was due to lack of rehearsal on the part of some of the actors. But the responsibility was mine for not enforcing the rehearsal regulations. We might have lost an actor or two but we might have gained more responsible actors. As far as the actors' pronunciation, I continually advised them, especially Walter to employ circumflex inflection, especially in their longer lines. However, Walter was always quite sure his Sidney Pointier

imitation was correct. He refused to change even when some friends told him a few times they could not hear him.

Because of the nature of our school there was not enough of a pool of black students to cull from. Some of my best drama class students were winning state championships or ineligible because of grades. And yet the acting was not bad as a whole. And thanks to the courses at Central Washington University, the blocking and production values had improved due to the analysis, the planning, the organizational values that I had been lacking in previous productions. This cut down on my usual explosive tantrums due to nervous anxiety and the depression of not being prepared or better organized.

The set was another weakness. I should have taken more control of the situation. On the other hand, I would have lost my designer if I had been too curt and tyrannical. It was not as bad as it appeared. The scrim which I hated worked well on the TV screen.

I also realized that he should have been more demanding and more strict in conducting the rehearsals. I have to tackle the job with more seriousness.

However, all said, I was proud of my students, my crew and content with myself in having attempted a play that I always admired deeply. In the end, one of the proposed performances, the Thursday preview, was cancelled. A sign that I was afraid that those arguments that had preceded the production were somehow true and that we were really not ready and would never be. But in my estimation the direction proved those arguments wrong.

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Jesse Montes

Professor Michael Smith

TH 540.21

July 17, 2005

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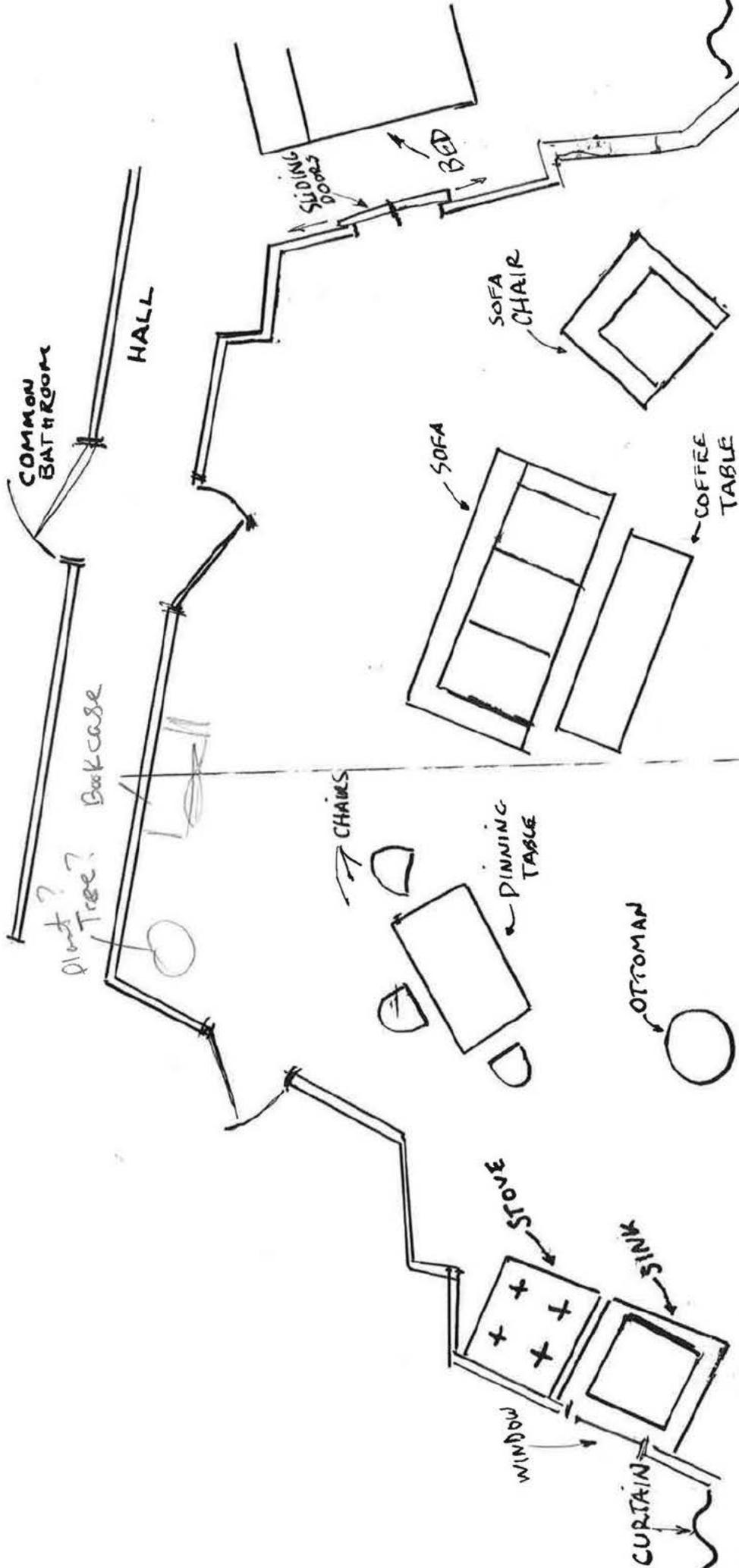
Jesse -
Look to
the models
of past
thesis
projects
re-structure
of the
TofC

Groundplan I

Salesian High School stage

BACK WALL

CYCLOGRAMA OF CHICAGO TENEMENTS?



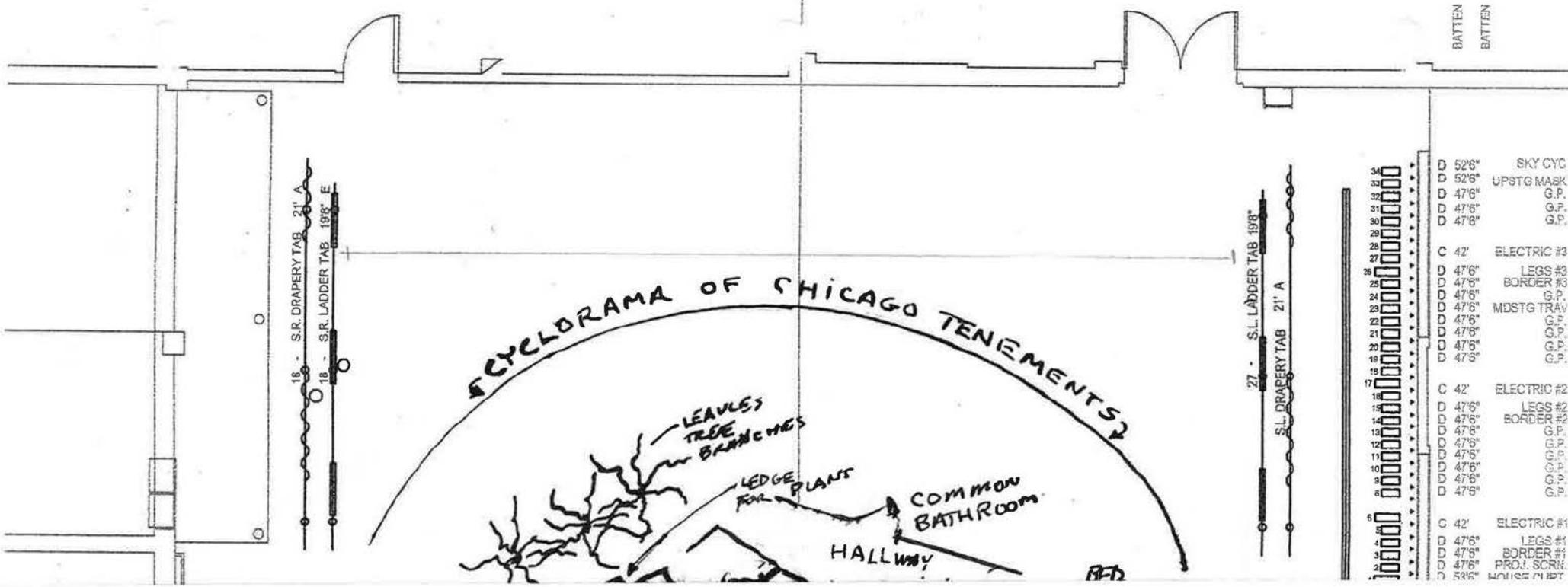
3/8" = 1'
DONE IN DRAFTING INK
USING A No. 5 W & MITCHELL PEN

SALESIAN HIGH SCHOOL'S
PRODUCTION OF
ARAIN IN THE SUN

JESSE S. MAINTES
JULY 18, 2005

Groundplan II

CWU McConnell stage



Jesse Montes
 July 19, 2005
 SCENE DESIGN
A Raisin in the Sun
 1/8" = 1'
 Done using DRAFTING INK
 No. 5 W^M Mitchell PEN

Additional research topics that could be used to expand your understanding of the play:

Time: Significance of date, time of year, exact day, connection to something that happened either in the playwrights life or in history on that day. Season, climate, weather, tidal patterns, significant weather events, span of time throughout the play, significance of the period you have chosen which might differ from the play

Location: exact place, house, street, city or town, state, country, maps of the period, pictures of the location, significance of location to playwright or in history.

Economic Environment: barter or money, what kind of money, how much do most important things cost, what different classes are represented, what are the pay scales for different jobs, what economic events are significant in history at the particular time of the play, most successful businesses

Political Environment: forms of government, how people influence their government, who were the leaders, specific references to leaders or people that you find out more about, immigration issues, corruption, major political issues (probably related to economics and religion), who are the privileged people and who are not and why

Social Environment: relationships between the sexes, how do they live, eat, sleep, have sex, use the restroom, shave, smoke, entertain themselves, dance, court, go to school or get educated, did families live together, did people live alone, what sorts of etiquette manuals were around and what did they say, how did they entertain at home, drugs and alcohol, games they played, differences between children's and adult's activities, clothing, props, furniture, types of food, types of common hand props, what kind of music, hobbies,

Religious Environment: What are the various denominations, kinds of religion, customs, rituals, myths, influences, legends, religious texts, music, clothing, rules, customs, specific statements in the text that are religious, significance of Biblical quotes

Staging: if play was staged in a way that is different than most contemporary situations, what did they do and how did that impact the play.

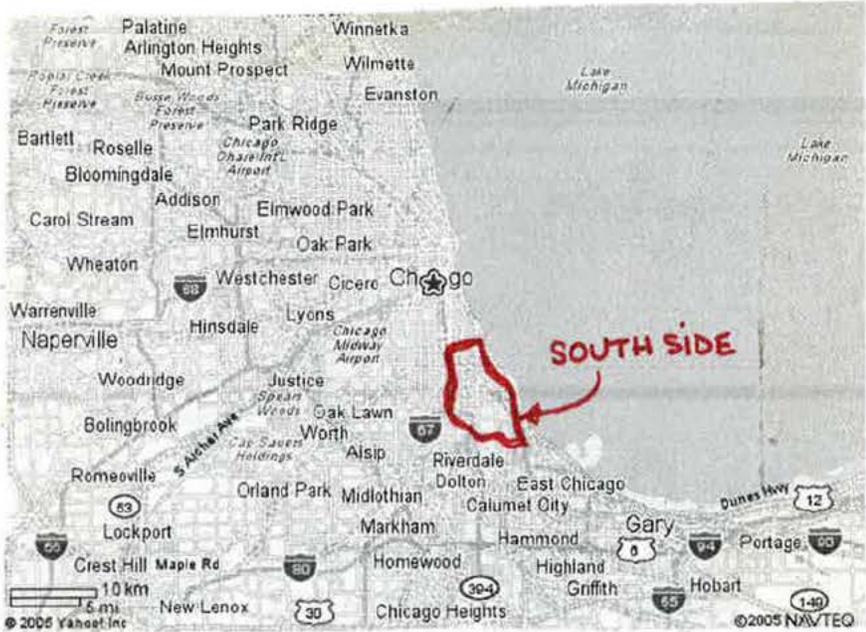
Get pictures of everything, like houses, furniture, costumes, magazines, actual locations, etc....If you are moving the play to another period, these visual ideas are crucial.

Given Circumstances

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTS:

Geographical Location

- The place is Southside Chicago center around 88th and 106th Streets.



- The climate is seasonal. The location of Southside by Lake Michigan makes that area quite windy. Fr. Oswaldo Guillen, Pastoral associate of St. John Bosco Church, Chicago, explained that taking the descriptions of weather proffered by the play: The actions most likely took place during, the months of October and November. Before those months, usually, no one needs to be reminded not wear winter clothes: it's very hot. After those two months there is likewise no need to remind one to wear winter clothing—it is so cold.

*Jesse -
This is
conceptually
interesting
but structurally
suspect*

Date

- The time, Ms. Hansberry writes, is the early 50's. It is the fall season. The days vary; however, studying the following scenes we can make some precise deductions:

Act I scene 1: First day is a Friday, early morning.

Act I scene 2: Next day, Saturday, morning.

Act II scene 1: Same Saturday, afternoon.

Act II scene 2: A few weeks later (three weeks), Friday, night.

Act II scene 3: One week later, Saturday, early afternoon.

Act III : Same Saturday, one hour later.

The action takes place within the space of approximately a five week span.

Economic environment

- The Younger family just has enough for the essential^S. They are scraping a living and all members work. No retirement plans for Mama. Dead-end jobs with no chance of promotion.
- They just have enough money for transportation and Travis' school lunch and special activities.
- ~~But~~ one of Beneatha's boyfriends is rich and he represents^{one of} the very few blacks who are successful, ~~and~~ though not accepted socially, ^{they} have become at least lower upper class. ^{middle class?}

Political environment

- ^{Political graft} ~~The grafting of political officials~~ was commonplace. So Walter goes in for the quick buck and gets burned.
- Beneatha is searching for equal representation in every field, political and otherwise.

She is the first feminist protagonist.

According to what research?

Social environment

- The main ethical principles were being followed in the play: that staunch religious ethic of Mama and the secularist humanism of Beneatha.

- The matriarchal tradition of the black family is exemplified throughout the play.
- However, the play ends with the matriarch ^{acceding} ~~bowing out~~ to the patriarch and thus assimilating Black social customs to White Anglo Saxon Protestant ideals.

Religious environment

why are these capitalized??

- Mama believes deeply that God controls reality like a miraculous savior of every aspect of the human condition. The “it’s-Gods’s-Will” syndrome. Beneatha strikes against it. But Mama’s faith will not allow deviance. Even though they are believers, they don’t seem to speak to ritual.
- The pastor, if they belong to an organized religious group, never enters the story. So, we can surmise that this is a family who believes in the tenets of the faith but in their own personal belief.

Research of Given Circumstances

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTS

Economic environment

- In 1913, Negroes, as blacks were referred to in that era, “no matter how respectful or successful” they were, they could not enter the wider urban world around them.
(Mayer 252-54)
- In the 50’s little had changed. A most recent study of environmental racism [2005] in Chicago from 1865-1954 states that twenty years after the Environmental Justice Movement, a disproportionate percentage of the poor, minority communities are worst off now as it was in the 50’s. (Washington)
- In the 60’s “over-crowding in the Southside was “staggering.” (Mayer 406).

Political environment

- Until recently, Chicago has been one of the most corrupt political venues in the United States. (PBS three part series Chicago:)
- In Black Metropolis: A Study (of) Negro Life in a Northern City [Chicago], easily the most up-to-date study of a black population in its day [1945], states that every white group in Chicago hated the transplanted Southern black—that is, except one group: the politicians. Privately, the politicians harbored hatred for the blacks. But the politicians were realists—they were deeply interested in the black vote. The blacks lacked the large campaign funds. They had no media support. And worst, the blacks were totally inexperienced in the jungle politics of the city slum. (342)

Social environment

- One of the most powerful factors implementing the persistence of the prejudiced segregation was the concern for the preservation and enhancement of social status.
- The ways to improve blacks social status: create a favorable public opinion towards blacks; respect the cultural differences of all races; equal opportunity for all; and in the 1950's mixed race marriages be accepted.

Religious environment

- Interesting how Francis Hodge advises the reader to lump politics and religion together. But one historical treatise does the same. Speaking to the 1940's, authors St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton write:

Much of the political history of (Chicago) has involved the fight of reform Groups against "machine politics." Negroes, as a low-income group , looked down upon by the white middle class and feared by white labor, have seldom supported the reformers. They have preferred to deal with hardheaded realists who are willing to trade political positions and favorable legislation for votes. In the past this had meant dealing with "corrupt" machines, and even the clergy have not hesitated to play the game. (Drake)

- The churches and church schools in the black neighborhood, Southside were mainly Baptist. The catholic ones were just about all segregated. There were plenty National churches. These catered to one or another ethnic group, the Italian National Church being the most exclusive even up to the 1960's. Fortunately, later on during the Civil Rights movement the tide turned and many priest and religious joined to desegregate their areas. Ms. Hansberry's mother had a deep ~~seated~~ dislike for the Catholic Church.

Research: Added Chicago Study

Watching the five hour saga, the Public Broadcasting Company's Chicago: The City of the Century was an enthralling documentary that presented me with a very historically unbiased relating of the behemoth of a city.

ORGANIZE THIS
FOR THE
WRITING

Following are my scattered and immediate notes from the DVD presentation.

From Donald L Miller's book. PBS Series. The American experience series. City was an education in itself. The city that had opened the prairie and open the continent.

The shock city of America. The world of endless opportunity. Lured people from 14 nations.

They did dirtiest hardest work and were hated for it

Politics was a more than ballots...a tough business. there were not rules in the battle between capital and labor. A city driven by profit blind to nature. Children playing with maggots as if little pets.

Columbian expo. 400 anniv. of Columbus.

Mudhole to Metropolis. In 1673 Marquette and group first whites to map Mississippi. Natives called it "chicagooah". The place of the foul onion. Joliet first to see potential ..return and create the colony...could command colonies ..French lost North American.. and for 100 ...nothing

It was a sole black who settled there. 1780 Jean Baptiste Prande de Salle prospered ..house had a piano. 1830, fur trade. fur trade dried up. The Chicago New Orleans connection. Via

river..Native Americans had to go. Plied the Indians with liquor to take the land away from them.

1833 on as if natives had never lived there. Sold lots for canal building. First waves from new

York and England. Almost hustles no monied wealth make it there. 200 dollars in morning and a few

?

thousand in afternoon. [?] [some came get in sell and get out] Ogden 16 ... yr old when dad died .
 wall street investors. Recoup by selling one third of land...maybe good staying. 1837
 incorporation as city. W. B Ogden fist mayor. Irish not only poor but drunken and riotous.
 1838 thousands died of accidents. Money owed them into land grants. April 1848.
 Abraham ^{Q.} praised it. Ended in New York and Michigan canal. But RR...met a farmer one then 30.
 Economic revolution see prarie bog into a great city. Selfish as well as civis Ogden. 1848
 strategic location . first factory that year. Reaper. Harvesting was a problem Cyrun Paul feed
 men worldwide to cycle and scythe McCormick...losing cause couldn't keep up 400 reapers ...
 Revolutionized not only production but how its transported and sold...very expensive way ...so
 RR's best. /railroad hub of America delivered an entire eco-system to east and Europe. Grain
 elevator also revolutionary. Carl Snadberg called a stacker of wheat he was refereeing to rain
 elevator. The first skyscrapers. Beat the Russians in grain production (Odessa). Lumber from
 upper great lakes area...then treeless areas craved for it. By time of civil war Chi largest lumber
 market in world. Ready made to built. By late 1850's a hell hole. Trains right into town. Killed
 many pedestrians. Immigrants in overwhelming numbers...skilled workers Germans fit more
 easily than Irish ..unskilled. to slums south of river...and then Irish moved up German moved up.
 Balcks move in a tiny area. vice district city refused law to return fugitive slaves.
 No culture except the church. Potter Palmer a quaker. Impressed by tons of activity and few
 woman shoppers. Lure women. Has time and income to shop as what we call recreational
 consumption. First to sale and bargain days The intruder...had to keep up. On block from
 river ...smell of river. By 1857...Merchant prince....Broaden the street. Marble palace. And left
 for land selling. Marshall Field.

Bacon came from: all knew ...but nature. Plants idle in summer when they spoiled Chicago turned this world on its head. Packers like Gurdin Hubbard found way to Turn summer into winter. Began cutting ice and kept factories open all year wrong. Porkopolis. 75.000 hogs What happened changed us industry but smelled. Processing smell permeated everything. In abuoyt 15 minutes pigs pass tru. A week In a day 100 hogs in one day...largest id Phillip Armour

190 thousand in one day. Global scope transl atlantic ..first of global industries was packing. Was all business...in office 6:30 AM get there before the polished nails came in...knew it all. Hog butcher of he world. IN love with honest plunder. "Nothing was left but the squeal." Upton Sinclair was upset. "squeal of the universe.: " It intrigued Henry Ford who found his model for the assembly line. A futures market grain that did not exist...not in hogs but in the future price of hogs...Chicago board of trade...today...cholera 18 49 from New Orleans crept up toward Chicago..become violently ill...shut the canal. But though bleak come high or high water we gonna over come this.

George Pullman would jack up Chicago. Lifted the city and high sewers caught up. Lake chicagos water supply...fish comes out of faucet. Water project never worked...rain brought it out. Reversed rivers flow. No longer east but west down to Illinois river. Purified water without messing with business...grow without making river sewer. To less powerful towns. What right has Chicago to bring death to us... Germans brought their own tradtions with them including beer. Irish a bracer after work.. Germans different leisure but drink on Sunday. Stopped Sunday beer and pubs outlawing freedom of speechchances to get labor together. Germans and Irish charged city hall...Mayor ordered bridges open and keep others out and on river bridges to jail.

Protestant elite hostile to immigrants but no mayor closed saloon. Anti-Irish sentiment. Scratch a convent and a pauper and it's a skin of an Irish Catholic...lazy etc. like blacks NO Irish need apply...even Blacks moved out when Irish moved close. The Palmer house. Wife ..only fire proof in USA. He imported staffed the hotel with several hundred uniformed Negroes/ He announced proudly.

Years after civil War were boom years. 1871-- IN less then 40 years it had grown from fur trading post to a metropolis of 300.000. the colony had come to command a continent.

By October a drought. Fire dept Oct 8. SW corner. Barn Catherine OLeary rumor cow kicked it over.

Chicago had to be the best in everything. Catholic, Irish and poor and a woman: a perfect patsy for the fire. Terrible thing for her to endure: get rid of the slums...keep creditors.

. Two years after the fire wanted to be an Architect. Sullivan, Gustavus Swift. Made money in the byproduct. 1875 frugal no curtains for wife. Revolutionized beef industry. Packers 1850's had the solution...Swift into ice business. Ice meat , embalmed meat. Hired bankrupt butchers as transporters.

Four room apartments held a family of twelve. By 1890's packing town had become the vilest slum in Chicago..poles...largest dumping ground in the city. Children played there and women scavenged. Railroad kids killed trying to get to school. Swift and meatpackers depended on Railroads.

The begging of the Civil Rights Marshall Field fought workers. Call federal troops...fear of socialism, capitalism vulnerable ...new wealth...mass meeting before riot. type Albert Parsons 2nd voyage of the Mayflower..fought for South but after war felt so guilty that he apologized to black nanny claims. Became very active in texas politics the 14th and 15th Raidcal

republic...pushing amendments fighting the clan married giving blacks civil married Lucy Parson
 mixed race came to Chicago cutting edge of industrial change revolution already questioning
 capitalism ..secure stage ownership of industry...must resist. Parsons fired from Chicago times
 and escorted to city hall and crossed examined who you ...theyre gonna string you up..whose\
 They the board of trade police chief said. Went there to board of trade. Pistol to head now go..I
 felt alone with no friend. Powerful to give and take ones life. "The social revolution had begun
 and must be settled one way or another."

George Mortimer Pullman...solve true social engineering..unruly worker cause of squalid
 surroundings Take the roughest man and take him into a nice room and wow. Refining influences
 of beauty.

Tackled problems that bugged him. Travelers pay four times for a Pullman? People would ruin
 them...Lincoln used a Pullman...hired only black porter..former slaves "knew how to serve" he
 said...Beauty uplifts behavior> Build model town and factory . No drinking Housed 12,000
 workers. Blacks as waiters in boarding houses. Taking care of workers. Utopian vision.

Education for children. If workers satisfied and taken care of...no need for unions or strikes
 plagued Chicago till then. 1876 The cordless engine most powerful...1881 pushed button.

The disturbing conditions of strikes would not be found. Enlightened capitalism. Pullman at
 vanguard...want to believe there must way to reconcile the material possibilities of capitalism
 which was seemed to be extraordinary cost. Changing system, improving it for the workers and
 making a profit. Maybe that's the way to go. Pullman controlled everyone ...he could surely
 control his workers. Downtown could not believe the spectacle...the L congestion. Best transit
 system in the world. 1882...longer to get to downtown than to get in RR to Milwaukee. Who
 cleared it up. Cable cars. Rest of the city had horse cars. Clean out water tunnerls. Then elevated

but no one liked him...seen as a monster..imperious. Stap hanger provides me my margin of profie. A thief. Charles Tyson...Made 15 million went to London and built its famous underground.

Builder since the fire second time 1880 and 90's rebuilt...first skyscraper but made loop nowhere to go but up. Elevators and structural steel make skyscrapers possible. Up fast inschedule on cost and so start to get rents. Peter Brooks: Boston and Chicago. Clean it up less expensive.

New American style simplicity and strength. Louis Henry Sullivan said it won't intimidate people. 90 % Glass windows see product and go in and buy it. Decorative details on ground floors. In an age before decent lights. All this at the service of capital, PERIOD. All trains stopped at the loop. Set up to get off stay at hotel shop then next day take train to city.

By 1890's almost all buyers customers were women. Selling you a slice of the good life of he upper echelons of society. More women than men in Chicago. Field had few friends. Work was his life. Alber Parsons abandoned socialism. August Speeds. Germans turned against the system after stuffed ballot. Large number out of socialist party anarchists violent using dynamite.

It was the local war politicians...destroy state by single act of violence ...capital crumble and new society would take place a society of communes. German Sunday picnics recruiting ...spoke of dynamite science place within reach of oppressed. Thanksgiving day, 1884, anarchists unfurl new symbols black and red flags...through city to Prairie Ave. homes of rich neighborhoods. Never before. Want bread and power. Pullman catholic non English speakers..Pullman ...they are a threat I want Parsons...totally alien to our American way of life. Board of thieves luxury for the few. "Blow it up with Dynamite." Czar Alexander killed ...in europe..now this is serious. And they mean to stop them...May 1, 1886 Strikers parade 80,000. Mayor OKs march. May 2nd Packers strike...May 3 reaper works...Iron molders union will be done away with by auto-

mated methods...scabs attacked. Wrote a protest. Steeds. Banner Revenge not Steeds .mistake
 Capt. Bonfill dismissed most of his men not all. Samuel Fielden. Speaker...inflammatory...police
 march. No one notice man lurking in the shadows. Seven police killed mainly by friendly fire.
 Papers yellow sheets. Remember ; CHICAGO IS THE world's WIDOW INTO THE FUTURE
 people from the world saw what city life was gonna be for them 20 30 year along the road.
 Marshall law passed. Three on road arrest. Union papers closed down leaders to jails.
 Out to crush labor movement. Forget the anarchists they can fake it unionist in same batch.
 Albert Parsons, naïve, comes back from Wisconsin. Deeply prejudiced jury. Hang them and you
 save our society. Marshall Field was not opposed. Hard line as threats to property worst things
 would come. Property sacrosanct. Can't lose control of own choosing. No freedom for workers.
 The west side of Chicago poorest.

Politics was purely an economic phenomenon you sold your vote cause that was one fo the few
 things you had to sell and the matter of morality and idea of political or citizenship as an abstract
 phenomenon was simply not a part of their world.

Jane Adams: Saint Jane. Among first generation of women to graduate from college. At age 19
 Hull house...only way to understand poverty is to move into it. Shakespeare in the middle of
 poverty ridden west side. Soon learned neighbors had more basic needs. Benny Goodman joined
 the Hull House band. 9,000 visitors a week. Wow. Mistake...a ready apt is better than no apt at all.
 Made playground out of Tenement. Home food program fails.

The exposition: There were exhibits from culture all over the world... but the Africans from the
 month of September from Tahomy chill from sept. to civil right leader Frederick
 Douglas it was racist...the fair presented no accomplishment of more than 8
 million black Americans only African savages brought here to act the monkey.

There was also a colored peoples day ...used it a s pulpit...we ask only to be treated as those who fought against it. Knew how to take advantage of opportunity. They thoroughly enjoyed themselves. The winter after closed, arsonists. The exposition was burned down. It seemed to symbolize the illusion of the urban ideal--

To Ida B. Wells Chicago's problems were overshadowed by possibilities. she found a haven she could not have found in the south for her campaigning for civil rights. She remained after the fair. In coming decades black Americans would follow her migratin from the south by the tens of thousand in search of work. they came because they saw in Chicago not problems but opportunity.

Great - now
51 FT for
APPENDIX INFO -

Previous Action

All of the citations are taken from the Thirtieth Anniversary Edition of A Raisin in the Sun, 1987

(Page 12) Younger family has been sharing common apartment bathroom.

(Page 14) Walter shares yesterday's news item: Atomic bomb testing.

(Page 14) Walter had friends stay very late on previous night.

(Page 15) Walter been smoking every morning before breakfast.

(Page 16) Travis' school teacher had asked for money for a school project.

(Page 20) Walter and his friend, Willy, were talking previous night.

(Page 21) Walter talks about a money deal on the make these past weeks.

(Page 22) Walter's was and is a chauffeur for a Mr. Arnold.

(Page 23) Beneatha dissected a frog in Biology class previous day.

(Page 24) Family's been told a check is coming tomorrow.

(Page 29) Mama noticed all Travis had for breakfast last week was cold cereal.

(Page 32, 33, 34) Mama reminisces about her husband.

(Page 33) Mama lost a child at birth.

(Page 33) Mama's husband was a womanizer.

(Page 35-36) Beneatha had joined and quit many college extra-curriculars: a drama club, a horse-back riding club, and now guitar lessons.

(Page 37) Beneatha has a boyfriend and has met his mom.

(Page 41) Mama's been dreaming of having a yard with a garden.

(Page 42) Beneatha also has an African boyfriend who's been away in Canada and now returns to Chicago.

(Page 43) Mama has given money at her church for missionary work.

Polar Attitudes

Walter—I want to be someone in this world and money is the solution. (Beginning)

I want to be someone in this world and family is the solution. (Ending)

Mama—I, the matriarch, rule this microcosm of a family and what I says goes. (Beginning)

I, the mother-grandmother image, will keep this family together, sharing responsibilities as mature adults and maturing child. (Ending)

Ruth— I must try to please all and be at service to all no matter what. (Beginning)

I must matter to myself and have a life so that, feeling like a real person,

I can truly serve others by serving my needs too. (Ending)

Beneatha—The world revolves around me and my goals; I will achieve them by myself.

(Beginning)

The world is my environment where I achieve my goals and help other^s achieve theirs...I am not a solipsist. (Ending)

Information on the Author

The Hansberry family was a Chicago-bred middle class family who escaped the rigors of the depression. They had lived in an affluent black neighborhood. Her father, a banker, decided to move into an all white neighborhood. This was unheard of—even in the North. When Lorraine was ready to go to school, she had to attend a black one due to the segregation laws of the time. One day, Lorraine and her sister, Mamie, were playing in the yard when a pro segregation mob approached their house. The two frightened girls ran indoors. Suddenly, a brick crashed through the window. It missed her head by a half inch. Cheney says that this incident could have provided the germ for A Raisin in the Sun (9). The brick was a symbol of the turmoil, the poverty, the loss of identity of her race in the States.

From the time she entered school,
~~Ever since she was in school,~~ Lorraine had an affinity for the poor and marginalized. In Ms. Hansberry's household there were two values that were never to be betrayed: the family and the race (Hansberry 18). Her dreams were to help the white race understand the black race as its equal (Hansberry 91). This "brick incident" gave her a feeling that her dreams were lost. She had to find a way to rekindle that dream. Her journey would be truly painful because she was not only black, but a woman. With A Raisin in the Sun, Ms. Hansberry forced both blacks and whites "to re-examine the deferred dreams of black America; she demanded that whites not impede the fulfillment of those dreams for a second" (Rich).

However, even though A Raisin in the Sun was a resounding success on Broadway, there were two occasions when the play faced possible oblivion. The first of these incidents could have been the fatal blow. Lorraine Hansberry, now twenty-eight and married, had written poetry and reviewed plays for the Freedom, an uptown journal. She had started working on a number of plays but never completed any. One night, she sat working on a family play. She became annoyed with

it, flung the pages into the air and they scattered over the floor. Her husband, Robert Nemiroff, kept collected (Mitchell 180). Ms. Hansberry described the outcome: She “started to sweep them all into the fireplace. Bob didn’t rebuke me at all, except with a look. He just got on the floor and picked up every sheet of it...put it back in order and kept it out of my sight for several days. And then one night when I was moping around, he got it out and put it in front of me. I went to work and finished it” (Cheney 23). She finished it by Monday, March 10, 1954 and the rest was history (Hansberry 88).

The second occasion which provided a possible fiasco was in choosing the actor for the part of Walter Lee Younger. In Ms. Hansberry’s mind there was only one person who could have performed that role. “A Raisin in the Sun was first brought to Sidney Poitier’s attention by an old friend, Philip Rose (Mitchell 181). Poitier was already considered almost without question “the best Negro actor in the history of the American theater” (Prideaux 140). Poitier was overwhelmed by the power of the material. He told Mr. Rose that he would be happy to play in it. As James Baldwin later noted, “Raisin [in the Sun] would never have been done if Sidney had not agreed to appear in it” (Petrie Insert).

Toward the end of her life Ms. Hansberry had been sadly troubled. She believed that she had not done enough for the civil rights movements (Donohue 32). She did not realize that she had already made a great contribution by writing a play that changed the way whites think about whites and blacks think about themselves. It had a great effect on the country as a whole. James Baldwin wrote:

“...in order for a person to bear life, he needs a valid re-creation of that life, which is why...Raisin in the Sun meant so much to black people...the root argument of the play is really far more subtle than either its detractors or the bulk of its admirers

were able to see (Baldwin 1).

Considering the profound impact, one can only wonder what Ms. Hansberry might have next achieved had her promising career not been cut short by her untimely death. Just as her characters suffered, hoped, and triumphed over the enormous barriers erected by the dominant culture so had she. But in her journey, she had brought back to a divided nation the elixir of this seminal play which “sparked the growth of the black theater movement in the 1960’s” (Rich). Her influence was vast. In her lifetime, she discovered her work translated into a multitude of languages, including Capek of Czechoslovakia and mainland Chinese (Hansberry 149-150).

Finally, almost half a century after its Broadway premiere, in 2004, Phylicia Rashad and Audra McDonald won the Tony for Best Actor and Best Supporting Actor respectively in the revival of A Raisin in the Sun. They starred with Sean Combs, the famed rapper. We have gone full circle and unfortunately, even though A Raisin in the Sun has triumphed again, black theater is troubled. Black companies have cut programming and reduced staff (The New York Times). Some troupes have even cancelled shows. Public and private support continues to drop (the New York Times).

Rich says that Ms. Hansberry’s play encompasses everything from the rise of black nationalism in the United States and Africa to the advent of black militancy to the specific dimensions of the black woman’s liberations movement; that she always saw the present and future in the light of the past—clear back to the slavery of the Old South and the new slavery that followed for black workers who migrated to the industrial ghettos of the North (Rich). What the world needs today is a visionary like Ms. Hansberry who can dodge the brick of prejudice and hatred and avoid becoming the raisin in the sun.

Please Note: Pages have been redacted due to copyright concerns.

Hansberry, Lorraine. *A Raisin in the Sun*. New York, The Modern Library, 1995, pp. 60-79.

Idea of the Play

When Ms. Lorraine Hansberry was interviewed after her phenomenal triumph on Broadway, she was asked if A Raisin in the Sun was in style, naturalism. She very quickly negated that idea and said that is was realism. She said that you cannot take the characters anywhere. Make them reach the skies. Take them where they metaphysic out of this world.

Taking her lead, and the style of the play I will also take the same path in my production. However, the term realism has been defined as a concern for fact or reality and rejection of the impractical and visionary. I will not approach this play in the mid-19th century movement style. I will approach it in Ms. Hansberry's understanding: realism is contrasted with both idealism and materialism—and in this sense I can truly work with universals.

That there are great artists who knew Ms. Hansberry who are living will very much enhance our production. Rita Moreno, who starred in Ms. Hansberry's last play before the playwright passed away, will be interviewed in the fall. Mel Brooks, who kept Ms. Hansberry's play afloat after tepid reviews, will also be interviewed. This summer I will stop off in Chicago and New York for further interviews and photography sessions that will greatly aggrandize my knowledge of the author and her environment. Hopefully, these primary sources will prove invaluable to settle, underscore and validate my thesis.

All Ms. Lorraine Hansberry wanted to do was to push blacks and whites and others to get along. My aim in this production is similar: to show the beauty of the common man and woman: the universals that huddle us together as a crowd of understanding and, sometimes, inhuman realities.

UNCLEAR

AWKWARD

TITLE? WHO??

WIKI? WHO??

DISCOURAGE?

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*ESTHETIKA, kvesti?
KOBZANO UCTOBA?
NORMAN,
ABRANKA*

*COMBINE
THIS WITH
OTHER WORKS CITED*

Please note: A page has been redacted due to copyright concerns.

Hansberry, Lorraine. *A Raisin in the Sun*. New York, The Modern Library, 1995.

A Work in Progress: Album

This first section of this album consists of pictures depicting events and situations that Ms. Hansberry may have witnessed and most likely was told stories about these events. These events and situations surely influenced her to write A Raisin in the Sun.

The second batches of pictures, highly contrasting the previous section, are of Ms. Hansberry's cast members and friends. The last photograph is of the original Travis, "all grow'd up."

YOU NEED TO LABEL/EXPLAIN WHY YOU HAVE
SOME AND CERTAIN PICS/IMAGES & WHAT
BRANCH THEY HAVE ON YOUR PRODUCTION —

Please note: Pages have been redacted due to copyright concerns.

Hansberry, Lorraine. *The Movement: Documentary of a Struggle for Equality*. New York, Simon and Schuster, 1964.

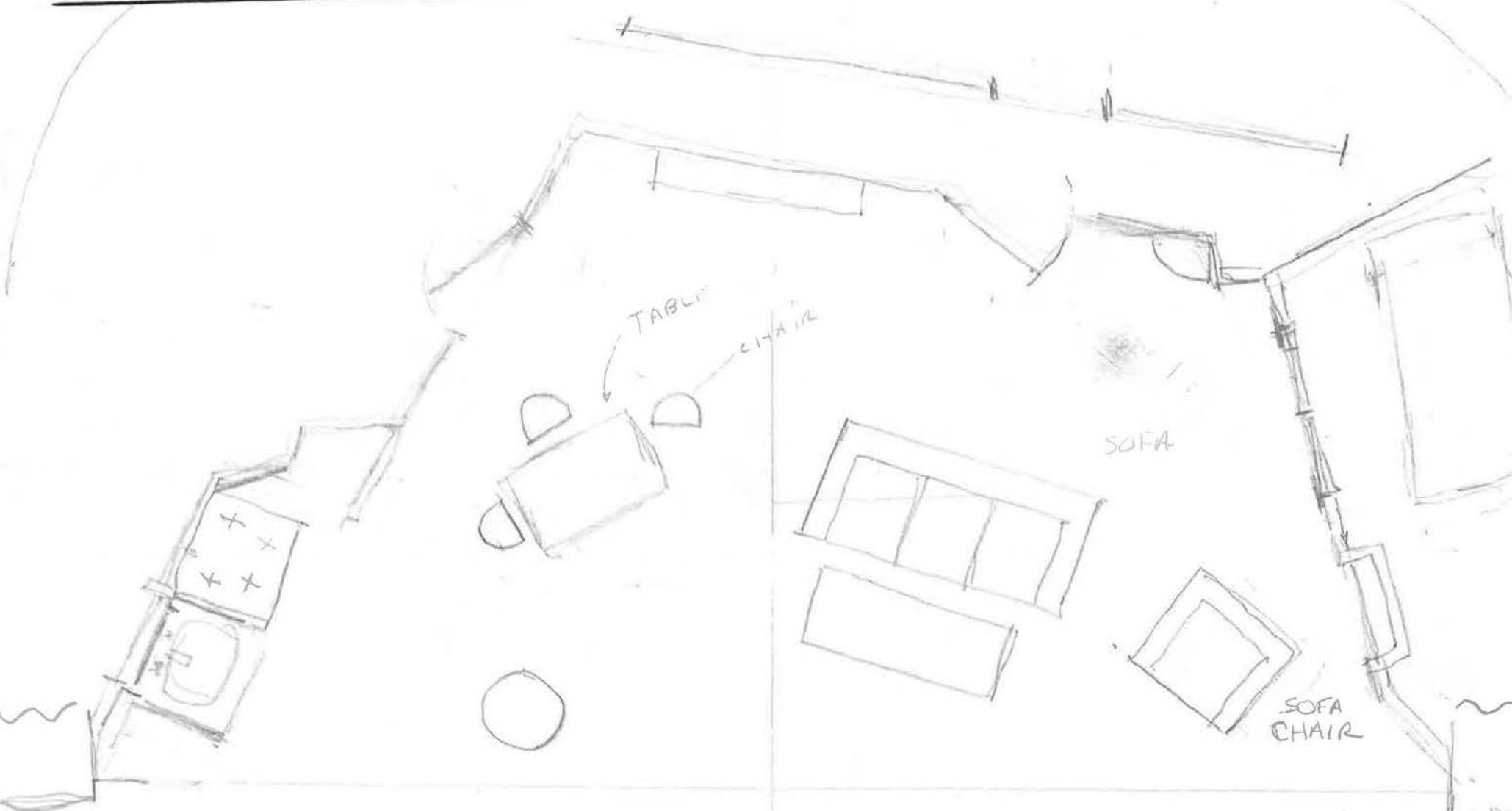
Please note: Pages have been redacted due to privacy concerns.

CYCLORAMA

CYCLORAMA OF CHICAGO TENEMENTS

OF TENEMENTS

CYCLORAMA



TABLE

CHAIR

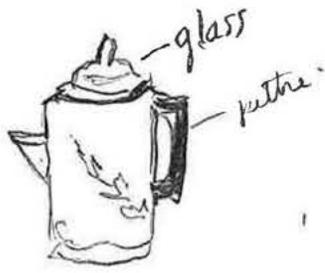
SOFA

SOFA
CHAIR

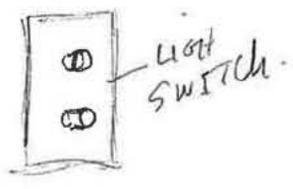
OTTOMAN

$\frac{3}{8}'' = 1'$

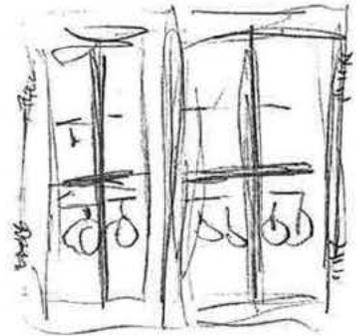
Please note: pages have been redacted due to copyright concerns.



Milk
BOTTLE



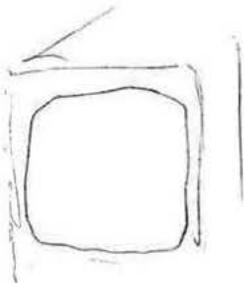
Light
SWITCH



FELIX
Diet



Dish
RACK



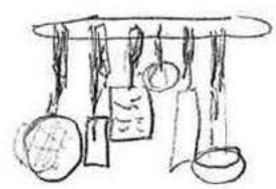
DUSTER
by closet



Wooden
table

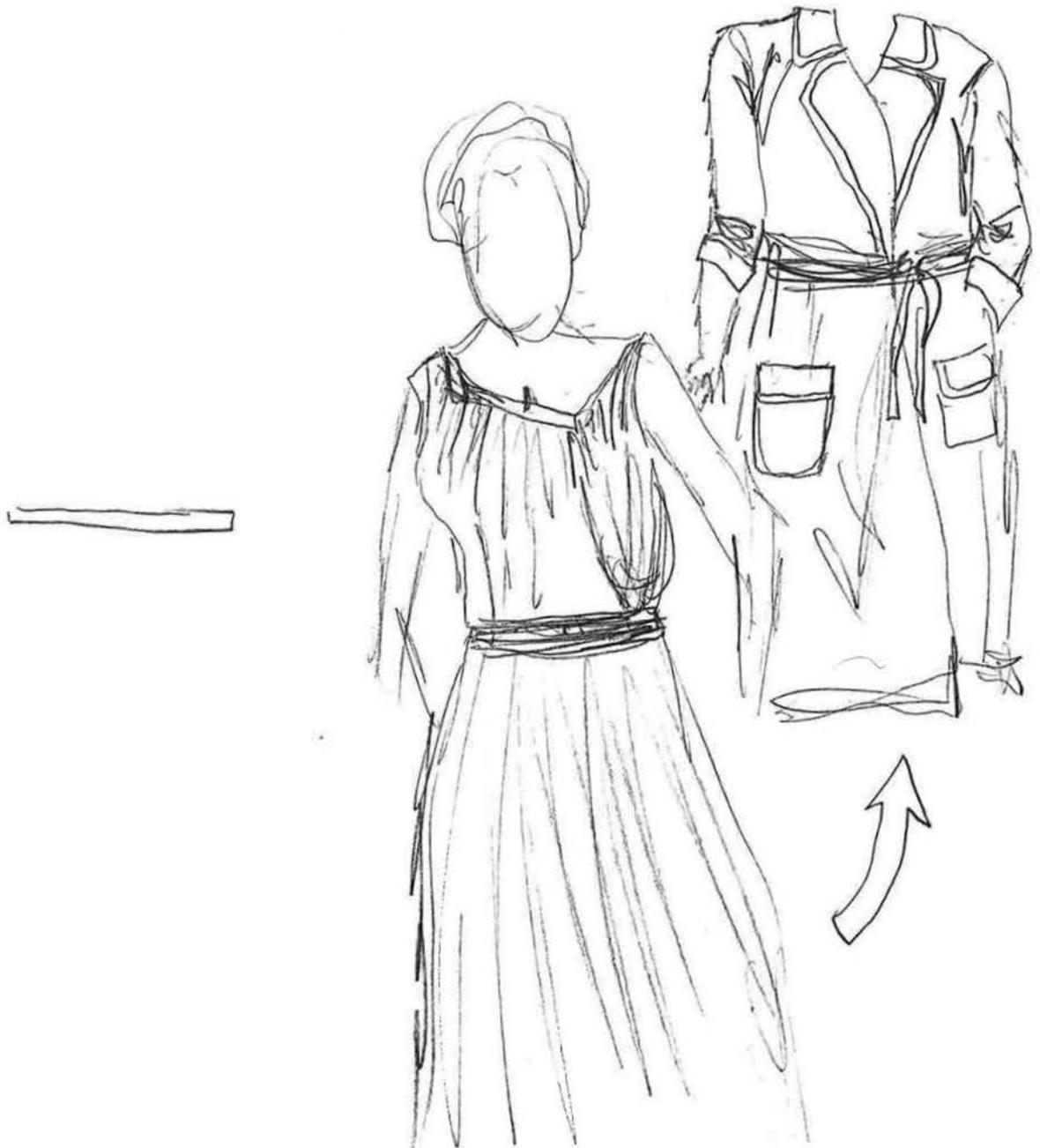


RADIO



Wooden
board

RUTH YOUNGER

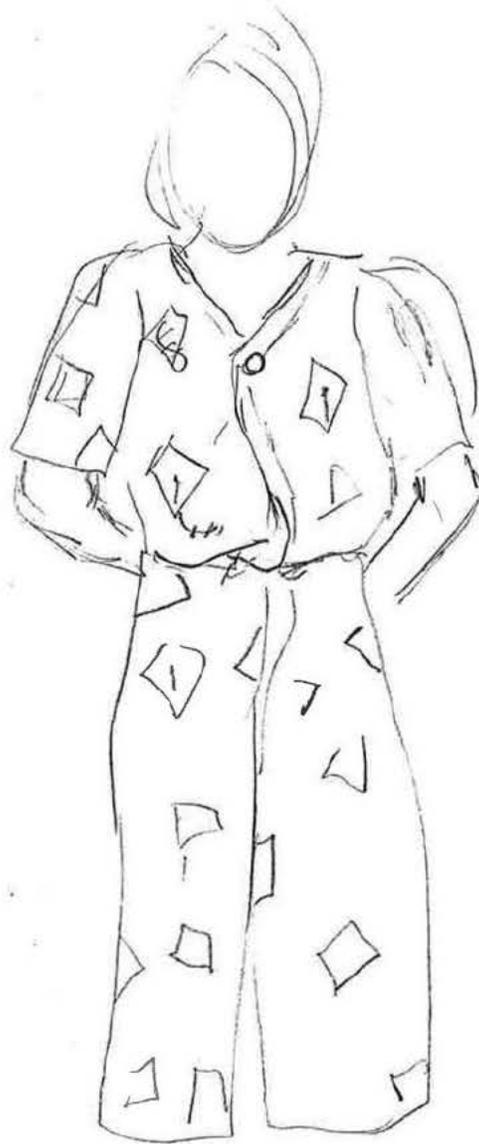


BENEATTA Younger



ACT I SC 1

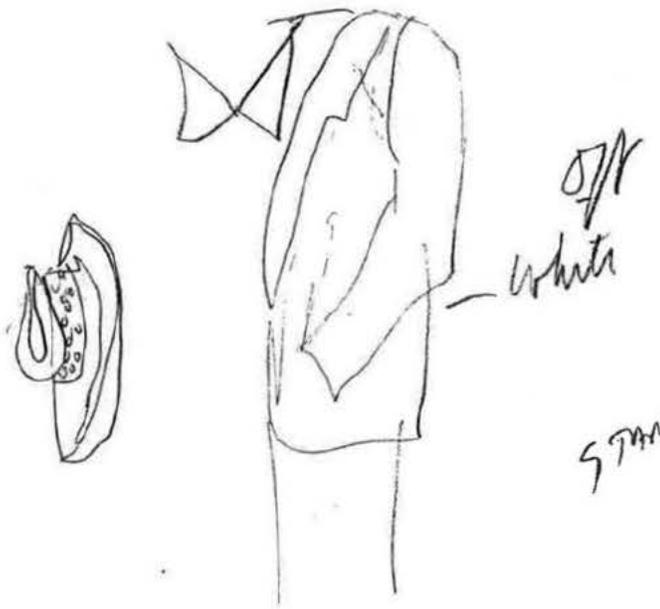
TRAVIS YOUNGER



JUST FLOW TO
SIDE - NO
UP UP

ACT I SCENE 1

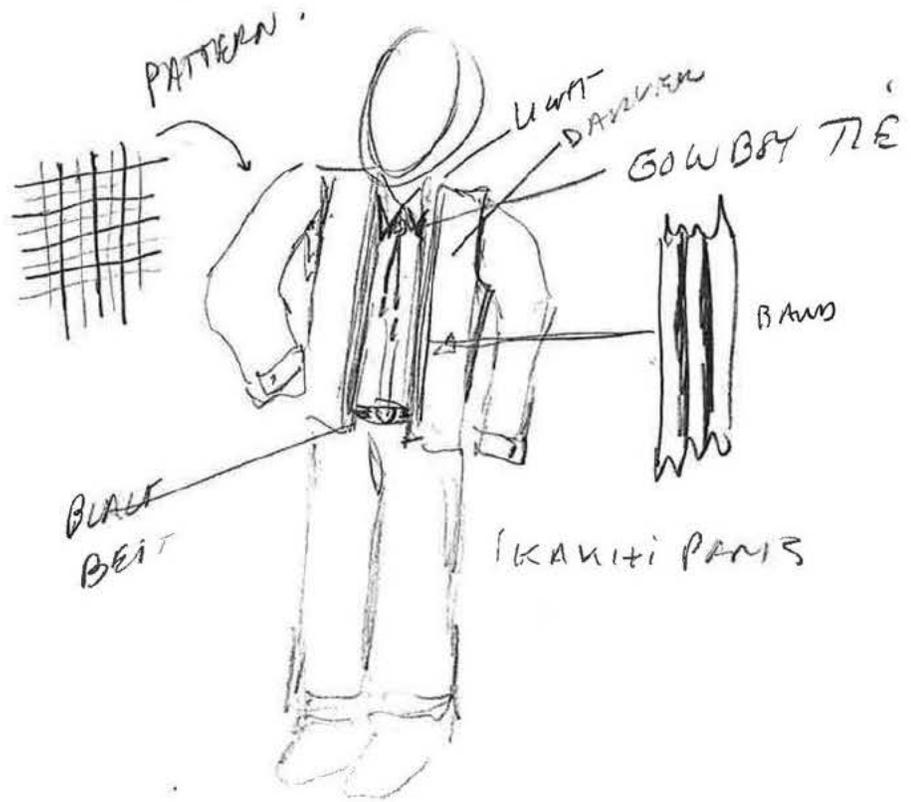
wire rimmed
glasses



off
white

5 PMS

TRAVIS YOUNGER



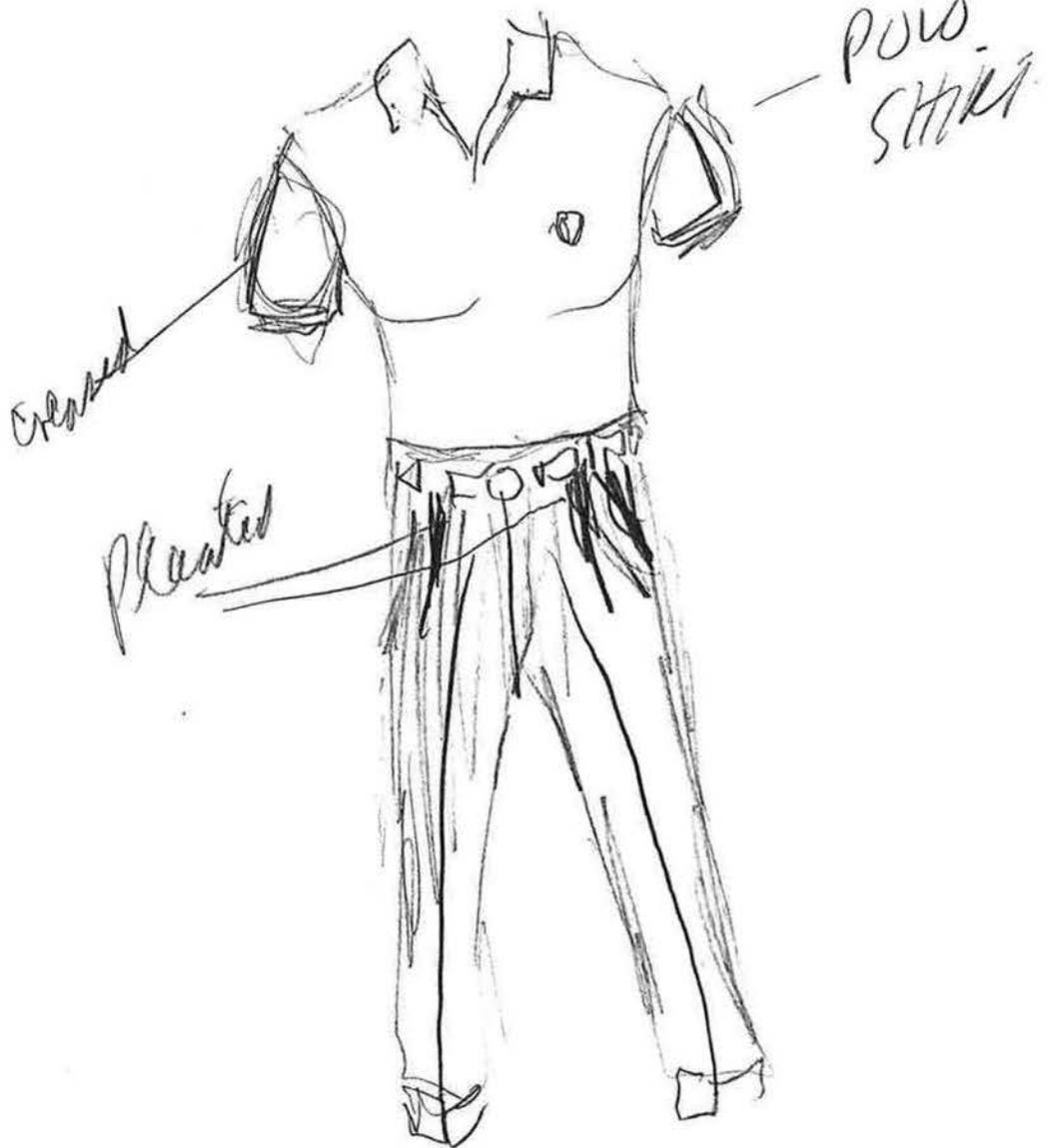
WALTER LEE YOUNGER



ACT I

Scene 1.

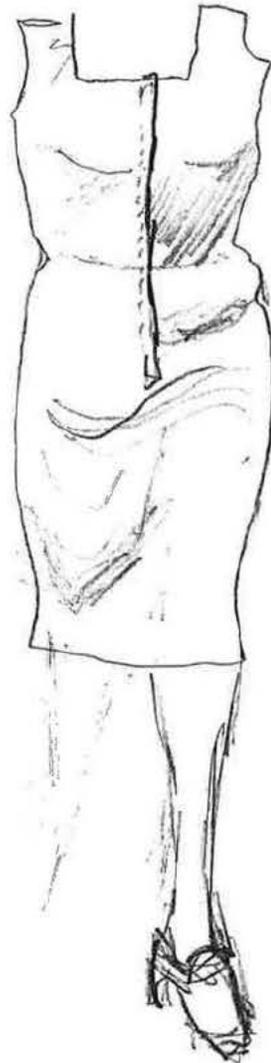
WALTER



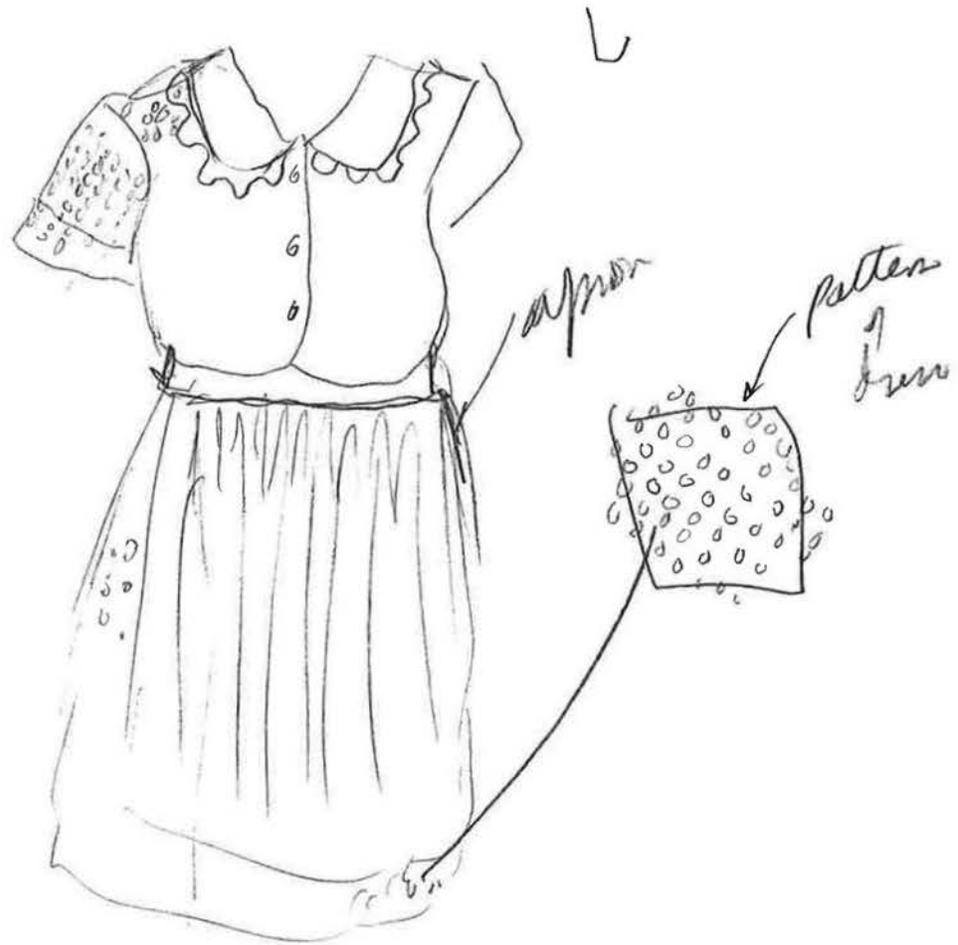
Runt



RUNT



Lena Younger (MAMA)

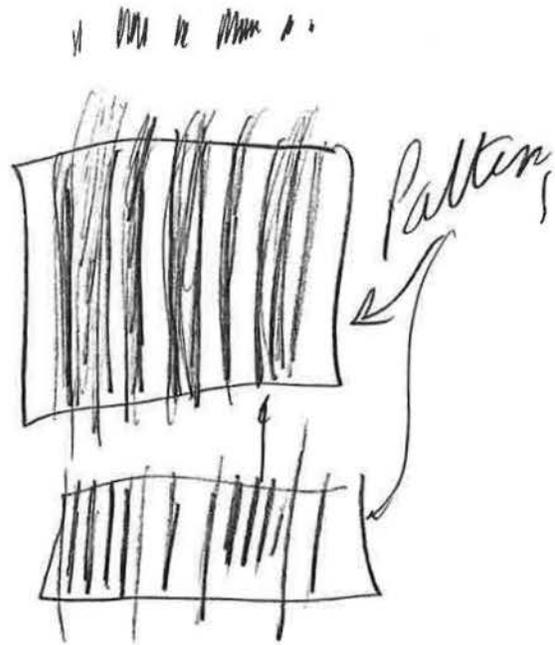




No T shirt
or slip

frontal

rear



hands
on

she opens

front side

A table



A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE SCRIPT

The play takes place in a Southside Chicago tenement built at the turn of the century. The Younger family lives in one of the apartment located on the second floor and shares a common bathroom with the other families. The time is the late 1950's. The play begins on a work day morning. Walter Lee, a black chauffeur, heads the Younger family household, made up of his wife, Ruth, his sister, Beneatha, his ten year old son, Travis, and his mother, the matriarch, Lena. They are all anxiously awaiting at \$10,000.00 check from her recently deceased husband's life insurance, as they try to survive in the ghetto. They all have needs that can be met with the check's arrival. However, Walter hopes to use the money to open a liquor store. The rest of the family realizes that it is Lena's prerogative to use the money as she pleases. Lena rejects Walter's plans and uses some of the money to purchase a home (to the surprise of all: in a white neighborhood) to escape their miserable poverty and find a new lifestyle. Lena gives the rest of the money, in an act of trust, to Walter for safe keeping. Some of the money is to be reserved for Beneatha's college education which Walter is to deposit in the bank. Unfortunately, Walter sinks the rest of the money into his business scheme only to have it stolen by a con artist. Mr. Linder, a representative of the all-white neighborhood, tries to bribe them not to move into their new home.

Walter initially rejects the offer. However, after his financial fiasco, Walter reneges. When Linder returns with a fat check that offers the family much more than they had paid, Walter refuses the payoff and decides that the family will take the house and he regains his pride and integrity.

Please note: Pages redacted. The full text of this thesis can be viewed in its entirety at the Central Washington University Library, Special Collections and Archives.