A Raisin In The Sun: Movie Adaptation Analysis

“A Raisin in the Sun” is the first Broadway-produced drama written by an African American woman. Lorraine Hansberry wrote the play in 1959 around the Civil Rights Era. It revolves around the Younger family, starring Danny Glover as Walter Lee and Esther Rolle as Mama Lena.

The story begins in Chicago’s ghetto at the Younger's meager home. Immediately the family is portrayed as African Americans all dreaming of a better life. Walter Lee wants to own his own business - a liquor store. His wife Ruth simply wants to live a settled life like ordinary wives and mothers. Walter’s sister, Beneatha, is in school to be a doctor, as she juggles relationships and self identity. Their mother Lena wants what’s best for her family - for them to get along and for them to remember who they are and how they were raised. We can see that as a whole the family is frustrated. Beneatha makes the remark that they are a “generation of people who can’t do nothing but moan, pray, and have babies.” They spend the majority of the film fighting and arguing, especially when it comes to the insurance check from Big Walter’s death.

Each family member has a different idea of how it should be spent. Conflict arises when Mama Lena pays the down payment on a house in Claiborne Park, a white neighborhood, and gives Walter domain over the other $6,500. After losing the money, the family must make some critical decisions. Throughout the film, they struggle to overcome inequality and obstacles faced by blacks in this world.

Hansberry presented several theories and ideas in the drama. She reflected on the fundamental black dream of equality. She also described common problems faced by women at the time. Joseph even stated, “The world’s most liberated women are not liberated at all.” Women were told to forget about their dreams and ambitions, get married, and be housewives. If not careful, they were viewed as a pretty face and not a mind. “A Raisin in the Sun” emphasized segregation, inequality, and dreams deferred during its runtime. Walter describes himself as “a giant surrounded by ants.” This frustration causes him to be “sacked up with bitterness,” according to George. He turns to excessive drinking, which worries his family. Mama Lena says, “It’s dangerous...when a man goes outside of his house to find peace.” We saw as characters developed in their search for identity, as well as how families can overcome the weight of the world. Mama Lena tells Beneatha that “There is always something left to love,” after she becomes angry at her brother for losing the remaining $6,500. We see that “black heritage” was not easily accepted at the time. Natural Afros were absurd and pressing hair was the norm.

Relationships and religion were also presented as challenging parts of everyday life. After asking her to marry him, Joseph tells Beneatha to “Never be afraid to sit a while and think.” Overall, Hansberry’s thought provoking plot did not hold back on the good, the bad, the ugly, or the appealing incidents that come with life, past or present. It was relatable, representing real problems faced by real people everyday. From Beneatha not believing in God and being skeptical about the men in her life to Ruth feeling her marriage become cold and distant, the Younger family was placed in positions familiar to many of us. The actors made the roles their own, and even the music evokes emotion, illustrating the dramatic and tense tone. On the downside, the story is one that obviously took place in the past and may not be as easily

accepted or enjoyed by younger generations.

My opinionated review suggests that the movie was worth watching, especially if you are African American. It dealt a lot with our culture, frequently mentioning heritage and the ignorance behind assimilationism, as well as oppression and overcoming it. Even if you are another race, the film causes you to question society, its choices, and it’s morals/values. It catches your attention with everyday issues and makes you wonder about all the dreams deferred, that have dried up like raisins in the sun. It will change the way you see people and their reasoning.