

**Social Evolution and Demographic Change in Lorraine
Hansberry's (A Raisin in the Sun) And Bruce Norris'
"Clybourne Park"**

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Abstract

This paper attempts to investigate social evolution and demographic change in Lorraine Hansberry's (1930-1965) masterpiece *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959) and Bruce Norris's (1960---) *Clybourne Park* (2010). It explores how far the dreams and hopes of the black Younger family are fulfilled in the play, and to which extent the family is keen on mobility towards Clybourne Park, the white area, thereby defying the challenges to movement . As for Norris's *Clybourne Park* , the play features two time periods: Act I is set in 1959; whereas Act II takes place in 2009. In Act I, a white couple is moving from Clybourne Park in order to build a better future in another place. It happens to be that it is the Younger family of Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* that has bought this white couple's house. However, the white residents of Clybourne Park are discontent with the arrival of this first black family for racial reasons. In Act II the tables are turned and the place has become a gentrified black area. After the passage of fifty years, the same house is bought by a young white couple who plan to raze the house and re-structure it. Corresponding to the disapproval of the whites in Act I, the black residents disapprove of the white couple's arrival and their intended action. Hence, the present study tackles issues of race, social evolution, demographic change; and, more importantly, explores how far property and possession would give way to an absolute right of defending one's interests and the interests of the surrounding community.

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التطور الإجتماعي و التغيير الديموغرافي في مسرحية "زيبب في الشمس"
للوران هانسبري و "كليبورن بارك" لبروس نوريسحنان محمود سراج الدين

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ملخص

يتناول هذا البحث التطور الإجتماعي و التغيير الديموغرافي في مسرحية "زيبب في الشمس" للوران هانسبري و "كليبورن بارك" لبروس نوريس . يكشف البحث عن مدى التحرك الإجتماعي لعائلة "ينجر" السوداء في مسرحية "زيبب في الشمس" للعيش في كليبورن بارك الذي يقطنه البيض و مدى تحقيقهم لأحلامهم من خلال هذا التحرك الإجتماعي على الرغم من رفض البيض لهم . اما مسرحية "كليبورن بارك" يمكننا القول أنها تبدأ بنهاية "زيبب في الشمس" فمنطقة كليبورن بارك تستقبل عائلة "ينجر" و بمرور الأعوام تتحول إلى منطقة يقطنها السود فقط و تتقلب الأوضاع عندما يرفض السود دخول البيض إلى منطقتهم. و على ذلك فالبحث يتناول العنصرية □ التطور الإجتماعي و التغيير الديموغرافي كما أنه يعرض للملكية الفردية التي تعطى للفرد الحق المطلق في الدفاع عن مصالحه و مصلحة المجتمع الذي يعيش فيه.

This paper attempts to investigate social evolution and

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demographic change in Lorraine Hansberry's (1930-1965) masterpiece *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959) and Bruce Norris's (1960---) *Clybourne Park* (2010), the play that won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama (2011), The Laurence Olivier Award for Best New Play (2011), the London Critics Circle Award for Best New Play (2010), and the Evening Standard Theatre Award for Best Play (2010). *Clybourne Park* features two time periods: Act I is set in 1959; whereas Act II takes place in 2009. In Act I, a white couple is moving from Clybourne Park in order to build a better future in another place. It happens to be that it is the Younger family of Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* that has bought this white couple's house. However, the white residents of Clybourne Park are discontent with the arrival of this first black family for racial reasons. In Act II the tables are turned and the place has become a gentrified black area. After the passage of fifty years, the same house is bought by a young white couple who plan to raze the house and re-structure it. Corresponding to Act I, the black residents disapprove of this action. Hence, the present study tackles issues of race, social evolution, demographic change; and explores how far property and possession would give way to the absolute right of defending one's interests and the interests of the surrounding community.

Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* portrays the dreams and hopes of the black Younger family whose members are matriarch Mama, Beneatha, her daughter, Walter, her son, Ruth, Walter's wife, and their son Travis. Each character has a dream that he/she desires to fulfill throughout the play. The members of the family are anxiously waiting for a cheque of ten thousand dollars that would uplift them from the state of poverty in which they are living. However, early in the play, Hansberry makes it clear that in spite of its poverty, it is a proud family. When Travis asks his mother to give him fifty cents and she refuses, the boy pleadingly asks to go carry groceries to earn money in order to depend on himself. Instantly, though short of money, Walter gives his son the money he needs and stares at Ruth 'with defiance'. This incident shows how proud this family is in spite of its poverty.

Walter's dream is to invest in a liquor store, but his wife does

not share him the same dream. Ruth is a down -to-earth woman:

Walter (*Straightening up from her and looking off*): That's it. There you are. Man say to his woman: I got me a dream. His woman say: Eat your eggs. (*Sadly, but gaining in power*) Man say: I got to take hold of this world, baby! And a woman will say: Eat your eggs and go to work. (*Passionately now*) Man say: I got to change my life, I'm choking to death, baby! And his woman say—(*In utter anguish as he brings his fists down on his thighs*)—Your eggs is getting cold!

(Act I, scene i, 17-18)

Walter's anger escalates to such an extent that he accuses the colored women of not standing by the side of their men and building them up:

Walter: That is just what is wrong with the colored woman in this world...Don't understand about building their men up and making'em feel like somebody. Like they can do something.

(Act I, scene i, 18)

Walter is thus insistent on realizing his dream, hoping to create a better future for himself and his family.

Turning to Beneatha, we find that her dream is different. She dreams of joining a medical school in order to be a doctor. The insurance money that Mama has inherited will help Beneatha in realizing this dream. At the same time, the realization of Walter's dream also depends on this money. And so, Walter and his sister quarrel over the priority of their dreams. Walter mocks Beneatha for the thought of becoming a doctor, and the latter satirizes his idea of investing in a liquor store. The following dialogue is relevant:

Walter: Who the hell told you you had to be a doctor? If you so crazy 'bout messing 'round with sick people---then go be a nurse like other women---or just get married and be quiet...

Beneatha: Well—you finally got it said...It took you three years but you finally got it said. Walter, give up; leave me alone---it's Mama's money.

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Walter: *He was my father, too!*

Beneatha: So what? He was mine, too—and Travis' grandfather—but the insurance money belongs to Mama. Picking on me is not going to make her give it to you to invest in any liquor stores—(*Underbreath, dropping into a chair*)—and I for one say, God bless Mama for that!

(Act I, scene i, 22)

Not only Walter and Beneatha have dreams to be realized, but also matriarch Mama has a long expected dream that she desires to be fulfilled. She remembers the time when she and Big Walter got married and she dreamt of buying “a little place out in Morgan Park”, but it never happened:

Mama:I remember just as well the day me and Big Walter moved in here. Hadn't been married but two weeks and wasn't planning on living here, no more than a year. (*She shakes her head at the dissolved dream*) We was going to set away, little by little, don't you know, and buy a little place out in Morgan Park. We had even picked out the house. (*Chuckling a little*) Looks right dumpy today. But Lord, child, you should know all the dreams I had 'bout buying that house and fixing it up and making me a little garden in the back---(*She waits and stops smiling*) And didn't none of it happen.

(Act I, scene i, 28-29)

Mama recalls that Big Walter loved his children. It is significant that he “always wanted them to have something—be something” (Act I, scene i, 29). To “have something” signifies that the children should possess something as their own property; to “be something” implies that they should assert their identity and live a self-fulfilled life. Possession and self-assertion were thus Big Walter's dream.

It can be argued that Walter and Beneatha have the same high aspirations of their father, for both seek to assert their identities and better their futures though in different ways. The feeling of deprivation is behind Walter's insistent desire to invest in a liquor store, for time is changing and the old ways are not satisfying to the rising blacks. He complains of his job and of having little in life, as

the following dialogue between him and his Mother reveals:

Walter (*Quietly*): Sometimes it's like I can see the future stretched

out in front of me—just plain as day. The future, Mama. Hanging over there at the edge of my days. Just waiting for me---a big, looming blank space—full of *nothing*. Just waiting for *me*. But it don't have to be. (*Pause. Kneeling beside her chair*). Mama ---sometimes when I'm downtown and I pass them cool, quiet-looking restaurants where them white boys are sitting back talking 'bout things...sitting there turning deals worth millions of dollars...sometimes I see guys don't look much older than me---

Mama: Son—how come you talk so much 'bout money?

Walter (*With immense passion*): Because it is life, Mama!

Mama (*Quietly*): Oh---(*Very quietly*): So now it's life. Money is life. Once upon a time freedom used to be life---now it's money. I guess the world really do change...

Walter: No---It was always money, Mama. We just didn't know about it.

(Act I, scene ii, 57-58)

To the amazement of his Mother, Walter believes that money is “life”. He daydreams of becoming a rich man who can afford to live a luxurious living. His following words to Travis are expressive:

Walter: You wouldn't understand yet, son, but your daddy's gonna make a transaction...a business transaction that's going to change our lives. [...]And I'll pull the car up on the driveway...just a plain black Chrysler, I think, with white walls---no---black tires. More elegant. Rich people don't have to be flashy.[...] And--- and I'll say, all right son---it's your seventeenth birthday, what is it you've decided?....Just tell me where you want to go to school and you'll *go*. Just tell me, what it is you want to be---and you'll *be* it....

(Act II, scene ii, 92-93)

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At the same time, he mocks Beneatha for ignoring race prejudice, as his following words addressed to her demonstrate: “Race, race, race!...Girl, I do believe you are the first person in the history of the entire human race to successfully brainwash yourself” (Act II, scene iii, 97). He believes that racial discrimination cannot be ignored. Thus, Walter believes that it is through becoming rich that his assertion of identity would be realized.

Beneatha, too, wants to assert her identity, and to express herself in one way or another. Her point of view is made clear in the following words:

Beneatha: ----People have to express themselves one way or another.

Mama: What is it you want to express?

Beneatha: (*Angrily*): Me! (*Mama and Ruth look at each other and burst into raucous laughter*) Don't worry---I don't expect you to understand.

(Act I, scene i, 32)

Although Beneatha goes out with George Murchison, she considers him shallow and will not accept to get married to him if he proposes to her:

Beneatha: As for George. Well. George looks good---he's got a beautiful car and he takes me to nice places and, as my sister-in-law says, he is probably the richest boy I will ever get to know and I even like him sometimes—but if the Youngers are sitting around waiting to see if their little Bennie is going to tie up the family with Murchisons, they are wasting their time.

(Act I, scene i, 33)

In addition, Beneatha has another point against the Murchisons, the rich colored people. To her, they are more snobbish than rich white people:

Beneatha: Oh, Mama---The Murchisons are honest-to-God-real-*live*-rich colored People, and the only people in the world who are more snobbish than rich white people are rich colored people. I thought everybody knew that. I've met Mrs. Murchison. She's a scene!

(Act I, scene i, 33-34)

Here is an attack directed towards rich blacks who assume haughtiness, and inconsideration. However, in her search for her identity, Beneatha is attracted to Joseph Asagai, the Nigerian whom she met on campus, and who, like her, does not forget his roots. The first time Asagai pays a visit to Beneatha and her family, he brings a package containing "some records and the colorful robes of a Nigerian woman"(Act I, scene ii,45) and offers it to Beneatha who, instantly, gives expression to her great delight:

Beneatha: (*Eagerly opening the package and drawing out some records and the colorful robes of a Nigerian woman*)
Oh, Asagai!...You got them for me!...How beautiful...and the records too! (*She lifts out the robes and runs to the mirror with them and holds the drapery up in front of herself*).

(Act I, scene ii, 45)

Moreover, Beneatha argues that she is "not interested in being someone's little episode in America or--- (*With feminine vengeance*)—one of them!" (Act I, scene ii, 48). She is a proud liberated young lady who searches for her African identity without any impediment. Her search for her identity and her roots has made her become ethnocentric, and against the "assimilationist junk"; as she expresses to Ruth:

Beneatha: (*Emerging grandly from the doorway so that we can see her thoroughly robed in the costume Asagai brought*) You are looking at what a well-dressed Nigerian woman wears----(*She parades for Ruth, her hair completely hidden by the headdress; she is coquettishly fanning herself with an ornate oriental fan, mistakenly more like Butterfly than any Nigerian that ever was*) Isn't it beautiful ? (*She promenades to the radio and with an arrogant flourish, turns off the good loud blues that is playing*) Enough of this assimilationist junk!

(Act II, scene i, 60)

Beneatha even makes her hair close-cropped and unstraightened to look like a Nigerian woman. Ruth and George are shocked when they see her, but she feels proud of what she has done:

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Ruth (*Touching Beneatha's hair*): Girl, you done lost your natural mind!? Look at your head!

George: What have you done to your head---I mean your hair!

Beneatha: Nothing---except cut it off.

Ruth: Now that's the truth---it's what ain't been done to it! You expect this boy to go out with you with your head all nappy like that?

Beneatha (*Looking at George*): That's up to George. If he's ashamed of his heritage---

George: Oh, don't be so proud of yourself Bennie—just because you look eccentric.

(Act II, scene i, 64)

There follows a scene that shows two different points of view of blacks regarding their identity. Beneatha is against what she calls “assimilationist Negroes”; whereas George adopts a satirical stand towards her concern with the “African past”. When Ruth asks about the meaning of “assimilationist Negroes”, --- (not knowing even how to pronounce it) ---Beneatha answers her that “It means someone who is willing to give up his own culture and submerge himself completely in the dominant, and in this case *oppressive*, culture!” (Act I, scene i, 65). George then interferes and the following dialogue takes place between him and Beneatha:

George: Oh, dear, dear, dear! Here we go! A lecture on the African past! On our Great West African Heritage! In one second we will hear all about the great Ashanti empires; the great Songhay civilizations; and the great sculpture of Bénin---and then some poetry in the Bantu--- and the whole monologue will end with the word *heritage!* (*Nastily*) Let's face it, baby, your heritage is nothing but a bunch of raggedy-assed spirituals and some grass huts!

Beneatha: GRASS HUTS! (*Ruth crosses to her and forcibly pushes her toward the bedroom*) See there...you are standing there in your splendid ignorance talking about people who were the first to smelt iron on the face of the

earth! (*Ruth is pushing her through the door*) The Ashanti were performing surgical operations when the English--- (*Ruth pulls the door to, with Beneatha on the other side, and smiles graciously at George. Beneatha opens the door and shouts the end of the sentence defiantly at George*) --- were still tattooing themselves with blue dragons! (*She goes back inside*).

(Act II, scene i, 65)

Rachelle S. Gold comments on Beneatha's attitude by stating that "ironically, the means by which Beneatha will step higher to an elevated socioeconomic status requires that she reject the views of the very people who have enabled her to attain that education" (18).

On one hand Beneatha is against the "assimilationist junk", and on the other hand, Walter satirizes assimilationist Negroes who have no dreams to better themselves. He bursts out at George: "Don't you see no stars gleaming that you can't reach out and grab? You happy? ---You contented son-of- a-bitch---you happy?Here I am a giant---surrounded by ants! Ants who can't even understand what it is the giant is talking about" (Act I, scene i, 69). Evidently then, Beneatha and Walter are searching for asserting their identities, each of them in his own way.

At this point Mama enters announcing the good news that she has bought a house in Clybourne Park:

Mama: 'Course I don't want to make it sound fancier than it is....It's just a plain little old house---but it's made good and solid---and it will be *ours*. Walter Lee---it makes a difference in a man when he can walk on floors that belong to *him*...

(Act II, scene i, 76)

When Ruth surprisingly comments that "there ain't no colored people living in Clybourne Park, Mama answers that she "just tried to find the nicest place for the least amount of money for the family" (Act II, scene i, 77). It is thus a proud black family that Hansberry is presenting in this play; each member in it is trying to fulfill his/her dream in life. The first one who has materialized her long-expected dream is Mama by buying a house and building a better future to the family. It is a great moment for the Youngers to possess a house, for, "it makes a difference in a man when he can walk on floors that

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belong to *him*”; as Mama exclaims. Possession, then, is of great significance to the Youngers. Moreover, their joy is doubled as the new house is located in Clybourne Park, the white area.

Nonetheless, this leap towards social evolution and demographic change is encountered by fears of getting bombed in Clybourne Park. Mrs. Johnson, the Youngers’ neighbor, gives expression to this fear as the following dialogue between her and Mama shows:

Johnson: [...] Clybourne Park, Lord—I bet this time next month y’all’s names will have been in the papers plenty---
(*Holding up her hands to mark off each word of the headline she can see in front of her*) “NEGROES INVADE CLYBOURNE PARK---BOMBED!”

Mama: (*She and Ruth look at the woman in amazement*)
We ain’t exactly moving out there to get bombed.

Johnson: Oh, honey---you know I’m praying to God every day that don’t nothing like that happen! But you have to think of life like it is---and these here Chicago peckerwoods is some baaaad peckerwoods.

Mama(*Wearily*): We done thought about all that Mis’ Johnson.

(Act II, scene ii, 86)

Mama is intent on social mobility regardless of fears of encountering hardships, for she desires the best to her family, and to Walter as the head of the family:

Mama: [...] I paid the man thirty-five hundred dollars down on the house. That leaves sixty-five hundred dollars. Monday morning I want you to take this money and take three thousand dollars and put it in a savings account for Beneatha’s medical schooling. The rest you put in a checking account---with your name on it. And from now on any penny that come out of it or that go in it is for you to look after. For you to decide. (*She drops her hands a little helplessly*) It ain’t much, but it’s all I got in the world and I’m putting it in your hands. I’m telling you to be the head of this family from now on like you supposed to be.

(Act II, scene ii, 90-91)

In *The Parable of the Tribes*, Andrew Bard Schmookler states that “at the frontiers of social evolution people are faced with the difficult challenge of finding their way through uncharted, unexplored territory” (10).

Exactly at this moment, the door bell rings and Beneatha opens it and gets surprised “*to see a quiet-looking middle-aged white man in a business suit holding his hat and a briefcase in his hand and consulting a small piece of paper*” (Act II, scene iii, 97). He is Mr. Karl Lindner, a representative of the Clybourne Park Improvement Association who has come to meet the Youngers in order to clarify to them that the Association has learned that Walter’s Mother has bought “a piece of residential property at—four o six Clybourne Street” and this can create “special community problems” (Act II, scene iii, 98-99). Lindner adds that the people of Clybourne Park believe that for the happiness of all concerned “Negro families are happier when they live in their *own* communities” (Act II, scene iii, 102). Stephen Grant Meyer’s following remark is relevant in this respect:

When more prosperous blacks tried to escape the squalor by moving into white districts, they met resistance from white residents. Economic fears and a self-fulfilling prophecy that African American neighbors caused property values to decline gave foundation to the resistance. (13)

It is no surprise then that Lindner offers to buy the house at a financial gain. When the Youngers refuse the offer, Lindner bluntly tells them:

Lindner: (*Looking around at the hostile faces and reaching and assembling his hat and briefcase*): Well—I don’t understand why you people are reacting this way. What do you think you are going to gain by moving into a neighborhood where you just aren’t wanted and where some elements---well--- people can get awful worked up when they feel that their whole way of life and everything they’ve ever worked for is threatened.

(Act II, scene iii, 103)

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Although the issue of racial discrimination is made very clear at this point, the Youngers have made up their minds to move to Clybourne Park. Therefore, it is hard to accept Carol B. Davis' and Alexis M. Skinner's following comment:

Along with the play's honesty and its emotional significance, the issue of integration and its implications is not fully engaged in terms of how it intersects racial oppression, but is drawn into a developing cultural dialogue about these issues and reflects the early stages of that development. (360)

However, as the Youngers are ready to move to Clybourne Park, they receive Bobo who breaks very bad news to Walter. Their friend Willy is gone after he had taken all the money of Walter and Bobo. At this point, Walter declares that he did not deposit Beneatha's money in the bank as Mama had told him to do. It is a great disaster to the family. Nonetheless, the prospect of progress and social evolution gives them the stamina to carry on and defy the unexpected unfortunate present circumstances.

Even Asagai is glad that the Youngers are moving to Clybourne Park, and considers this event as "something full of the flow of life", and as "progress". He even claims that it makes him think of Africa. (Act III, 116). However, a momentary weakness overtakes Beneatha when she learns that all the money inherited by the family is stolen by Willy in a treacherous act. There follows a scene between her and Asagai in which it is evident that she has lost trust in blacks, her own race:

Beneatha: I know that's what you think. Because you are still where I left off. You with all your talk and dreams about Africa! You still think you can patch up the world. Cure the Great Sore of Colonialism--- (*Loftily, mocking it*) with the Penicillin of Independence---!

Asagai: Yes!

Beneatha: Independence *and then what?* What about all the crooks and thieves and just plain idiots who will come into power and steal and plunder the same as before---only now they will be black and do it in the name of the new

Independence---WHAT ABOUT THEM?
(Act III, 117-118)

Beneatha is fearful that when blacks come to power, they will “steal and plunder” in the name of “the new Independence”. Consequently, she believes, there will be no real progress to blacks:

Beneatha: [...] Don't you see there isn't any real progress, Asagai, there is only one large circle that we march in, around and around, each of us with our own little picture in front of us---our own little mirage that we think is the future.

(Act III, 118)

Asagai, however, is of a different opinion. He strongly believes in progress and social evolution:

Asagai: Then isn't there something wrong in a house---in a world where all dreams, good or bad, must depend on the death of a man? I never thought to see *you* like this, Alaiyo. You! Your brother made a mistake and you are grateful to him so that now you can give up the ailing human race on account of it! You talk about what good is struggle, what good is anything! Where are we all going and why are we bothering!

(Act III, 119)

It is clear that Asagai never loses hope; he believes in social progress. Hence, he resolves to give a helping hand to the people of his village, attempting to uplift them from illiteracy, ignorance, and disease. He is certain that one day, things will change to the better, and that “sudden dramatic events” will make history leap into the future. He is fearless of black violence against him if ever his “own black countrymen” would “step out of the shadows some evening” and slit his “useless throat” (Act III, 120). It is a fearless spirit then that Asagai possesses. His belief in the good prospects that await his country through social evolution is never shaken. Thus, he encourages Beneatha to equally have the same high spirit and go with him to Africa, and never lose hope.

Paralleling Asagai's aspirations towards Africa is Ruth's internal strength that makes her believe that things have to change for the better and that they have to leave for Clybourne Park:

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Ruth: [...] I'll work...I'll work twenty hours a day in all the kitchens in Chicago ...I'll strap my baby on my back if I have to and scrub all the floors in America and wash all the sheets in America if I have to---but we got to MOVE! We got to get OUT OF HERE!

(Act III, 124)

Simultaneously, Walter has learned a lesson after the loss of the family's money:

Walter: Willy Harris don't even count. He don't even count in the big scheme of things. But, I'll say one thing for old Willy Harris...he's taught me something. He's taught me to keep my eye on what counts in this world.

(Act III, 126)

As Lindner calls again, the following confrontational dialogue takes place between him and Walter:

Walter: Well---what I mean is that we come from people who had a lot of *pride*. I mean--- we are very proud people. And that's my sister over there and she's going to be a doctor---and we are very proud---

Lindner: Well---I am sure that is very nice, but---

Walter: What I am telling you is that we called you over here to tell you that we are very proud and that this--- (*Signaling to Travis*) Travis, come here. (*Travis crosses and Walter draws him before him, facing the man*) This is my son, and he makes the sixth generation our family in this country. And we have all thought about your offer---

Lindner: Well, good... good---

Walter: And we have decided to move into our house because my father---my father---he earned it for us brick by brick. (*Mama has her eyes closed and is rocking back and forth as though she were in church, with her head nodding the Amen yes*) We don't want to make no trouble for nobody or fight no causes, and we will try to be good neighbors. And that's *all* we got to say about that. (*He looks the man absolutely in the eyes*) We don't want your money. (*He turns and walks away*)

(Act III, 132)

Walter has always thought that “money is life”, but he has finally learned that one’s pride is what counts in the world. Harry J. Elam, JR. justly contends that:

Through the personal trial of Walter Lee, Hansberry questions existing frameworks of manhood and masculinity and redefines them. In the end,

Hansberry argues that manhood can be determined not by external acquisition but by internal pride, self-definition, and self-determination. A revised conception of black manhood emerges through a confrontation of practical and symbolic import with a white man....The climatic struggle brings new understanding to Walter Lee; the actual confrontation with white hegemony works to produce a liberatory definition of masculinity.(683)

Consequently, in an act of defiance and resistance to oppressive discrimination, the Youngers have taken their decision to move to Clybourne Park, the white area, feeling proud of themselves. Carl Husemoller Nightingale points out that “African American migration may be more important as a sign of resistance than of dependence” (228).

This movement also marks a development in the characters of the Youngers. In this respect, Soyica Diggs Colbert’s following comment is significant:

Although the play only briefly references migration as relocation from one space to another, many of the characters’ dreams require social migrations. Their hopes reflect the way migration may also mean movement from one state of being to another state of being. What I call migration, then, refers to actual and desired physical and psychological movement. (23)

It is important to point out that the Youngers are aware of the challenges of social evolution; challenges that they will encounter as a result of this demographic change.

In defining ‘Demography’ Jay Weinstein states that “the science of population is known as *demography*, from the Greek root *demos* meaning ‘the people’” (57). According to Rajendra K. Sharma, “Demography studies the patterns and causes of the changes in the

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size, composition and distribution of population. It studies the birth, mortality, marriage, migration and social mobility, quantitatively” (7-8).

Turning to Bruce Norris’s *Clybourne Park*, it can be argued that Act I begins where *A Raisin in the Sun* has ended. However, as **Catey Sullivan** remarks:

Clybourne Park is an example of a powerful new classic built on the foundation of an earlier one. It would be a mistake to think that it rests in the shadow of **A Raisin in the Sun** – or that it diminishes the earlier work in any way. **Clybourne Park** stands on its own as a powerful, intriguing, gaspingly funny, and undeniably tragic contemporary masterpiece.

Act I starts with Russ and Bev, a white couple, moving, thereby leaving their house to a black family-- or rather to the Youngers-- without knowing that it is a black family who has bought their house. Russ and Bev are moving in order to create a better future for themselves. This is made clear in the following conversation between Russ and Jim:

Jim: And when ya start that Glen Meadows office?

Russ: Monday after.

Jim: How about that.

Russ: Yup.

Jim: And how’s that shaping up?

Russ: Oh, boy, now. That’s a nice setup.

Jim: I betcha.

Russ: And *spacious*, that’s the thing. And *carpeted*? And I got a look at that office they’re putting me in. Tell you what I thought to myself, I thought what the heck do ya do with all this space? *Corner* office. Windows two sides. But the space is the primary---That is just an... *extravagant* amount of space.

(Act I, 30-31)

It can be argued that the social evolution of the white couple

parallels that of the Youngers. However, to the Youngers, it signifies resistance and defiance. This will be made clearer in Act II when Clybourne Park becomes a completely gentrified black residential area by the subsequent generation of the Youngers.

Now, Karl Lindner who appeared in *A Raisin in the Sun* appears once again to inform Russ and Bev that it is a black family who has bought their house. Karl believes that change is inevitable, but it has to be change for the better. He remarks that “*fitting into* a community is really what it all comes down to” (Act I, 64). Bev

tries to reconsider Karl’s racism by saying: “If we could make them our *neighbors*,” and Karl decisively replies: “But they won’t be *your* neighbors, Bev. *You’re* the ones moving *away!*” (Act I, 67). When Bev argues that the black family “could be perfectly lovely”, Karl answers her as follows:

Karl

(*with a chuckle*)

Bev, I’m not here to solve society’s problems. I’m simply telling you what will happen, and it will happen as follows: First one family will leave, then another, and another, and each time they do, the values of these properties will decline,

(Act I, 80)

Karl’s reason for not allowing blacks to live in white communities is that the values of properties will decline.

At this point, Russ interferes and satirizes what the white “community” did to his son, denying him the right to work. Russ’s son has committed suicide because he could not endure to live in a community that hates him and disregards his needs after he had come back from war:

Russ

So here’s what I’ll do for you, Karl: Make ya ten copies of this you can hand’em out at Rotary. Or better yet. Put it in the newsletter. Rotary news: Kid comes back from Korea, goes upstairs and warps an extension cord around his neck. Talk *that* over at the lunch buffet next week.

(Act I, 91)

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Brian Scott Lipton points out that what is important to Russ and Bev, notably to Russ, is “the community's reaction to the personal tragedy that has caused the couple to hastily abandon their comfortable life”. Russ’s anger escalates to such an extent that he cannot control himself as he dashes the following words at Karl:

Russ

[...] You go ahead and tell those people what kind of house they’re moving into and see if *that* stops ’em, because I’ll tell you what, I don’t care if a hundred Ubangi tribesmen with a bone through the nose overrun this goddamn place, 'cause I’m *through with all of you*, ya motherfucking sons of bitches. *Every one of you.*

(Act I, 92)

It can be said that Russ is against his community the way Beneatha is against her race in *A Raisin in the Sun*. In both plays, it is the wrong judgment of the powerful majority that the dramatists satirize. In *A Raisin in the Sun*, Beneatha is against her race when they “steal and plunder” if ever they are in power, and in *Clybourne Park*, Russ is also against his race, or his “community”, as it has abused his son and caused his death. Both plays deal with social evolution and demographic change. Just as the Youngers have defeated their lot and moved to the white area of Clybourne Park, Russ and Bev have also triumphed over their unlucky circumstances and their broken hearts as they have decided to move away from a callous community in which they can no longer live. They will be reaching out for a better future in another place.

Act II that takes place in 2009, after the passage of fifty years. There is complete demographic change in Clybourne Park, for its residents have become gentrified blacks. In defining “Gentrification”, Alan Ehrenhalt suggests that the word was actually invented in 1963 by the British sociologist Ruth Glass to describe the ‘invasion’ of working-class urban neighborhoods by the wealthy” (233). However, Neil Smith and Michele Lefavre state that ‘gentrification’ is often referred to it as “revitalization”. They argue

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that “many abandoned and slum neighborhoods are gentrified and thereby revitalized, after a fashion” (60). In this respect, Irving Cutler adds that “ [...] Because of increasing economic opportunities, there has been a marked increase in African American home ownership and movement into good neighborhoods that were previously segregated” (171). Hence, Bart Landry’s following remark is put in question:

Upward mobility has always been considered a hallmark of life in the United States, at once a unique American ideology and a driving force behind individual motivation.... While millions of white ethnics have experienced the reality of this aspiration as successful small businessmen and professionals, there is a real question about the extent to which blacks have experienced similar successes. (22)

Hansberry’s *A Raisin in the Sun* has shown blacks as intent on social mobility, and Norris’s *Clybourne Park* deals with the effects of this social evolution and demographic change. Daniele Checci, and Valentiono Dardanoni remark that “[...] the study of social mobility is the analysis of the evolution over time of a resource distribution within a given population.” (63).

It is noteworthy that nobody really listens to the other in *Clybourne Park*. Lack of communication is clear in the following exchange of words:

	Karl
Well, Russ, if I might—	
	Russ
Nope. Nope.	
	Karl
If I could just say this:	
	Russ
No. Karl?	
	Karl
Well, if you’d let me---	
	Russ
No. No more.	

(Act I, 82)

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Karl gets much infuriated that he bursts out: "Well, I believe the constitution endows me with a *right* to speak" and Russ answers him: "Well, then you can go and do that in your own home" (Act I, 83). Ben Brantley remarks that "The people in *Clybourne Park* talk, but they don't listen.... But words remain what people hide behind, even from those closest to them".

This lack of communication is made clearer in Act II. Lena and Kevin are a black couple who call Tom because they have a problem: a young white couple has bought the same property and plan to raze the house and re-structure it, an act that is met with disapproval now by the all black residents of the area. As the neighborhood gather to discuss this problem, nobody seems to listen to the other, and phone calls interrupt their meeting. Finally, Lena catches a time to speak and explain her concerns. Lena points out that she respects her ancestors who have created a community in spite of the obstacles that met them. She proudly honors the history of her parents and all the memories:

Lena

[....] That's just a part of my *history* and my *parents'* history---and honoring the *connection* to that history---and, no one, myself included, likes having to dictate what you can or can't do with your own home, but there's just a lot of *pride*, and a lot of *memories* in these houses, and for some of us, that connection still has *value*, if that makes any sense?

(Act II, 147)

It becomes clear that Lena's Great-aunt is matriarch Mama of *A Raisin in the Sun* who bought the house fifty years ago:

Lena

She was a domestic worker.

Kevin

And, a house isn't cheap

Lena

Not *here*, anyway.

Kevin

Here at *that* time.

Lena

At *that* time---well, when *I* was growing up I really don't remember seeing a single white face in the neighborhood for pretty much my entire-----

(Act II, 162)

Lindsey, the white lady, turns to Lena and Kevin and expresses her anger for not allowing them to live as their neighbors. The following dialogue between her and Lena is illustrative:

Lindsey

Well, I want to say this: I want to say I feel angry. And I'm basically kind of hurt by the implication that's been made that, just because we want to live as your neighbors and raise a child alongside yours, that somehow, in the process of doing that, we've had our ethics called into question. Because *that* is hurtful.

Lena

(*Calmly*)

No one has questioned your *ethics* at all.

Lindsey

Well, I wish I could believe you.

Lena

No, what we're questioning is your *taste*.

(*The others rise to leave*)

(Act II, 200)

Evidently, communities change, and the tables are turned in 2009 in Clybourne Park area. The blacks are in power now. In *Black Power Ideologies : An Essay in African American Political Thought*, John T. Mc Cartney observes that the definitions of black power have common themes, and that "all imply that a certain amount of change or motion is involved in a power equation, meaning by this the ability to move from one state of affairs, "A", to another "B". All imply that "Power" involves the ability to "control" the phenomena with which one is dealing" (120). Nancy Kleniewski and Alexander R. Thomas have the following comment:

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As many commentators on American cities have noted, our city is deeply permeated with racial distinctions and preferences. The attitudes and actions of African Americans and whites, both as individuals and as part of social institutions, have shaped and will continue to shape where and how people live. (213)

Moreover, Dusty Somers points out that the pain and prejudices of humanity “often begin to break through the façade of civility when the pressure is on”.

It can be said that when human beings possess property and are in a position to be judgmental, they act in the same way regardless of their race. In *A Raisin in the Sun*, Karl Lindner wanted very much to discourage the black family from moving to the white area of Clybourne Park, and in *Clybourne Park*, when the blacks take control over the area and are in power, they disapprove of a white couple’s going against the structure of the houses of the now gentrified black area, questioning the “taste” of whites. Tambay A. Obenson remarks that “despite 50 years of social shifts, the change that all that tolerance has produced is really just on the surface, and Norris, via his play, depicts how much our attitudes toward race remain hindered by our inability to communicate honestly with one another”. In the same vein, Mark Kennedy illustrates that “Fifty years on, Norris seems to be saying, and we are no closer to closing our racial wounds”. Similarly, Bob Verini contends that *Clybourne Park* has no easy answers for the questions it raises about the historical roots and present-day dimensions of racial disharmony. But it sharpens the viewer's antennae for the obfuscation in which we timidly traffic when trying to discuss those questions”.

In addition to the above comments, it can be argued that the rudiments of social evolution and demographic change that have begun in Lorraine Hansberry’s

A Raisin in the Sun are completed in Bruce Norris’s *Clybourne Park*. In *A Raisin*, each character is trying to fulfill his/her dream which is a quest for self –definition with determination and pride; and in *Clybourne Park*, Bruce Norris has accentuated this development in the black personality. In *A Raisin*, it is the whites

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whose possession of property has given way to an absolute right of defending their interests as well as the interests of the community; and in *Clybourne Park*, the blacks react in the same way when they get gentrified and possess property. Thus, regardless of their race, human beings have the same reaction when they assume the right of defending their property. **It is human nature.**

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