

## Introduction

One issue I care about, that is also a prevalent theme in Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* is identity. I am both fascinated by and motivated to improve the ways in which identity is formed within our society, which is not always conducive to personal growth. Much of Hansberry's work was influenced by her real life experiences. Growing up during movements like the Harlem Renaissance and the Civil Rights Movement, Hansberry had first-hand experience with class disparities, racism, and gender discrimination (Reed 104). These factors acted as identity constraints for African Americans of the 1960's. Just the label of "black" during the Civil Rights movement masked and outweighed many other significant traits and characteristics of African Americans. During that time African American men and women were defined by a select number of identifiers and were resultantly unable to venture outside their labels and define themselves on their own terms. *A Raisin in the Sun* was revolutionary because it tackled America's most prominent social justice issues, such as this, in a single script (Cooper 59). Set in 1950's Chicago, the play is about a family's conflicting aspirations and the obstacles the family members face in their quest for a better life. One critic states, "It is a play about distress, futility, and tragedy, but also about hope and pride and what kind of conviction and commitment it takes to bring hope out of hopelessness, courage out of fear, and idealism out of fatalism" (Cooper 59). I believe that the Younger family's perseverance and ability to overcome their disparities is due in large part to the family member's eventual self-discovery. We see Walter and Beneatha, two of the focal characters of my exhibit, learn to set goals according to their own values instead of settling for opportunities they think they deserve based on societies views of their class, race, and gender (Cooper 60). Through primary examination of "A Raising in the Sun" and additional information on the history of black America, I will make connections between the play and the present and draw common themes of identity. Lastly, in this proposal, I will further explain these aforementioned points and my plans for my exhibit by including a statement of my purpose, the objective of my project, a plan of action, and an annotated bibliography of my secondary sources.