

Intra-racism in Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*: A Sociological Study

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پوخته

هاورەگەزپەرستی لە دەقی شانۆیی (میووژی بەرھەتاوی) ھانزبیری: لیکۆلینەوہیەکی کۆمەلایەتییە ئەم توێژینەوہیە لیکۆلینەوہیەکە لە بابەتی ھاورەگەزپەرستی لە دەقی شانۆیی (میووژی بەرھەتاوی) نووسەری ئەفریقی-ئەمریکی لۆرەین ھانزبیری. ھاورەگەزپەرستی دەستەواژەیکە بەکار دەھێنرێت بۆ باسکردنی ئە توندوتیژیانە ئەنجام دەدرێت لەلایەن ئەندامانی یەک رەگەزەو بەرامبەر بەیەکنەر کە خۆیان لە بنچینەدا لەلایەن کەسانی تر یاخود کۆمەلایکی ترەو چەوسیندراونەتەوہ. لەم دەقەدا، نوسەر جەخت دەخاتە سەر ژيانی خیزانیککی رەشپێستی ئەمریکی کە لە پینچ کەس پیکھاتووہ کە بونەتە قوریانی رەگەزپەرستی و ھاورەگەزپەرستی. ھەستی خۆ بەکەم زانین کیشەکانی نیوانیان قولدەکاتەوہو ھەریەکەیان بە شیوازی خۆی دەیەوێت لەوبارودۆخە رزگاری بییت. ماما و روپ دەیانەوێت خانویەکیان ھەبییت، والتەر دەیەوێت کۆگایەکی مەی فرۆشتن بکاتەوہ و دەوڵەمەند بییت و بیینپاش دەیەوێت بییت بە پزیشک. توێژەر کارلەسەر پەیوہندی نیوان ئەندامانی ئەم خیزانە دەکاتەوہ کاتیک رووبەر ووی یەکنردەبنەوہ. ئامانج لەم توێژینەوہیە دەرخیستی ھاورەگەزپەرستیە کە چۆن رەشپێستەکان لەناو کۆمەلەکە خۆیاندا لە چەوسینراوہو دەبن بە چەوسینەر و بۆ ئەم مەبەستەش بنەماکانی ریبازی رەخنە کۆمەلایەتی پەیرەودەکرێت، بە تاییەت ئەوہی پەیوہندی بە رەگەز و دەسەلات و سەرکوتکردنەوہ ھەیە .

الخلاصة

العنصرية الداخلية في مسرحية "الزبيب في الشمس" للكاتب هانسبيري: دراسة الاجتماعية يدرس هذا البحث العنصرية الداخلية في "الزبيب في الشمس"، وهي مسرحية للكاتب الأمريكية الأفريقية لورين هانسبيري. العنصرية الداخلية هو مصطلح يستخدم للحديث عن العنف الذي يتم بين أعضاء نفس المجموعة الذين هم أنفسهم مضطهدين من قبل الآخرين أو مجموعة أخرى. تركز هانسبيري على حياة عائلة سوداء تتكون من خمسة أفراد من ضحايا العنصرية والعنصرية الداخلية. الشعور بالنقص يزيد من التوتر بين "والترز" وكل واحد يحاول الهروب منه بطريقة الخاصة. فعلى سبيل المثال يحاول كل من روث وماما الحصول على منزل، و والتر يحاول ذلك من خلال الدخول في الأعمال التجارية وفتح متجر الخمر بينما تحاول بينيما القيام بهذا الأمر من خلال أن تصبح طبيبة. يدرس الباحث العلاقة بين الشخصيات و كيف يواجهون بعضهم البعض عندما يتحدث بعضهم الى الآخر. الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو إظهار كيف أن السود أصبحوا ظالمين في مجتمعاتهم المحلية ولتحقيق أهداف البحث تطبق مبادئ النظرية الاجتماعية النقدية، وخاصة فيما يتعلق بالجنس والقوة والقمع.

Abstract

This paper studies intra-racism in *A Raisin in the Sun*, a play by the African-American playwright Lorraine Hansberry. Intra-racism or internalized racism is a term used to talk about the violence which is performed among the members of the same group who are themselves oppressed by others or another group. Hansberry focuses on the life of a black family which consists of five members who are victims of both racism and intra-racism. Sense of inferiority increases the tensions among The Walters, and each one tries to escape it in their own way; Ruth and Mama by having a house, Walter by going into business and opening a liquor store and Beneatha by becoming a doctor. The researcher studies the relationship between the characters and how they face each other when engaged in conversations. The aim of the paper is to show how people of colour become oppressors in their own communities and to achieve the aims of the research, the tenets of critical social theory are applied, and especially what is related to gender, power and oppression.

Keywords: racism, intra-racism, inferiority, gender, sociological criticism

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• Introduction

A Raisin in the Sun was written in 1959 by the African-American playwright Lorraine Hansberry, during a period when the hate groups such as The Ku Klux Klan were still active and sought white supremacy and white nationalism. Regarding *A Raisin in the Sun*, Hatch notes that “if you’re going to deal with race, class, and gender, Lorraine Hansberry has dealt with all three of them simultaneously” (Elam and Krasner 2001:338). This view summarizes the themes and topics which can be detected in the play, and are combined and studied in this paper under another term ‘intra-racism. Pyke defines intra-racism as the “the internalization of racial oppression among the racially subordinated” (Pyke, 2010:551). This definition focuses on the oppressions performed by the oppressed people either on themselves such as low self-esteem and self-hatred and/or on people from their own race.

Colourism is not absent in the play, but Hansberry here lets the blacks speak their heart in the absence of a white master. Wilkerson argues “set on Chicago's South Side in the 1950s, *A Raisin in the Sun* reveals the private life of a working-class black family in all its frustrations, humor, and pathos” (Wilkerson, 1999:140). What happens in the play is a realistic representation of the lives of the African Americans in the 1950s. Schroeder writes, “Developing out of the pioneering work of Henrik Ibsen, realism was soon codified into a set of stage conventions that are still in use today. Most often the action takes place in a domestic setting, such as a drawing room or kitchen” (Schroeder, 1999:32). Almost all the American playwrights of the 20th century have realism as subject matter and style in their soul. The writers circulate in a world called American society; therefore, it is not strange to find Eugene O’Neil talk about racism in the 1920s and Hansberry in the 1950s, and Suzan-Lori Parks in the 1990s.

A distinguishing feature of this text is that the protagonist and the antagonists are all blacks and it screens how they disgustingly treat with one another. There is no white boss to sexually abuse the black women or to maltreat the black men; the blacks verbally and physically attack each other. Walter as the only grown son of the family stands against his wife, sister and mother; and Mama, the mother, faces her children to achieve the dreams of her dead husband and to limit freedom of expression in her home.

The play starts in the Younger’s apartment in the Southside of Chicago. Big Walter, the father, died before the play begins and the family is expecting insurance money from his death; the tensions between the characters rise after they receive the money because each member of the family wants to use the money to fulfill his or her dreams. The different aims which are the source of discordance in the play are presented through a network of images, symbols, parallels and most significantly a language which bridges all these elements.



Walter is not opposed only by his mother's static views about life but also by his sister's ambitions and his wife's heartfelt desire for having a house. Beneatha, Walter's sister, has also got dreams and she wants to prove her existence in the society, but the problem is that both of them need the money. As an educated lady, she does not want to yield to her brother's imaginations. Abbotson states that "Whether Walter is the central character of the play is debatable. Though his growth toward manhood is important, so too is Beneatha's search for selfhood. In a way, privileging Walter's development over Beneatha's is an acceptance of the very male supremacy Hansberry questions" (Abbotson, 2005:123). This comment clarifies that Beneatha's concerns are also significant as Walter's, but the critics focus attention on Walter's development because of their gender, and this is one of the issues which Hansberry wants to tackle, equality between men and women or more specifically 'Feminism'. Even Mama expects much from Walter than from Beneatha. She needs him to become the head of the family, as he is supposed to be, and she entrusts him the rest of the money. She asks him even to put Beneatha's share in a deposit account for her medical schooling, but she did not give it to Beneatha herself.

The play hints at several themes and intra-racism is the dominant and it is expressed in various ways. For instance, when Walter wants to become a businessman, his mother says "*Son—I come from five generations of people who was slaves and sharecroppers*" (143). Walter believes that blacks like the whites can become business people, but it is not easy for Mama to understand or accept such ideas because in her family no one could exceed the limits of the working-class people. Mama only sees and understands this: Walter has got a job, he is a chauffeur, and he has a wife and a child. Mama thinks that it is enough and Walter should feel satisfied with what he has. Again she stands against her daughter, Beneatha, when she denies the existence of God (Act 1, Scene 1) and even she slaps her and compels her to confess the existence of God though she encourages her to pursue her dreams and become a doctor.

In this paper, the focus will be on discordance between the members of a family and how their relationships are affected by the principles and conventions of the modern society. Beside the Youngers, there are some other characters in the play that represent various social groups, but the disagreement between the members of the Younger family will be analyzed because the main concern of the research is the internalized racism. To understand the relationship between the family members, the research will be divided into some subheads to display disintegration between the members of a single family (The Youngers) which consists of Mama (mother), Walter (son), Beneatha (daughter), Ruth (Walter's wife) and Travis (Walter's son).

Each of the main characters is analysed according to the basic tenets of social theory including ideology, modality and background. The struggle between Mama and her daughter Beneatha is over religious belief; Walter's conflict with his family is due to modality, individual qualities. He believes that he is the man and he can always make the right decision and he is superior; Walter's inner struggle and collision with the outer world is related to his background as a black man. He feels inferior and to get rid of this shame he wants to uplift his social status.

- **Male-Female Intra-Racism (Walter vs. Ruth)**

Walter and Ruth construct a traditional family with Travis as their only son. Walter is still living with his mother and sister and because of the difficulty of life in that capitalist society, he is not the only breadwinner in the family; his wife and his mother also participate in earning the family's living. Consequently, Walter feels inferior as he could not take the responsibility of his family alone. To regain his pride and dignity, he wants to open a liquor store to make more money through this business. His only hope to achieve this dream is to use the insurance money his mother receives after the death of his father, but his mother, Mama, rejects the idea; therefore he urges his wife to persuade Mama to give him the money. The conflict between Walter and Ruth arises here; Ruth refuses to ask Mama to give Walter the money because she likes Mama's idea to buy a house for the family.

Walter and Ruth will engage in two private conversations; one of them is in Act I, Scene I and the other is in Act II, Scene I. The first encounter shows how the problems between them emerge. In the second interaction, the disintegration between them reaches climax when Walter performs some aggressive verbal attacks. After realizing that he was very rude to her, Walter calms down as he feels that he committed an offence by using abusive terms. This change in his mood narrows the distance between Walter and Ruth and results in reconciliation. They tone down the conversation in order to understand each other and to end the disputes between them.

Time is early Friday morning and Ruth and Walter meet in the kitchen area of the Younger's apartment. It is just one day before the arrival of the check, the money which is the main source of the conflicts between the Youngers. They all know the check will come on Saturday, but at the very beginning of the play Walter asks Ruth whether "*the check is coming today?*". The conversation occurs in Act One, Scene One; pp. 34-35, and of course in tensions as they do not use any phatic expressions like "Good morning". He asks this question to drag Ruth into a conversation in order to persuade her to ask Mama to give him the money, but she refuses "*(Softly) Walter, that ain't none of our money*". The word "softly" shows that Ruth does not want to get into troubles with her husband.

Eemeren and Grootendorst state:

If the listener does not accept what has been said, he can indicate the necessity of problemization by expressing his doubts or issuing refutations, and the speaker (assuming that he wishes to stand by his words) will attempt to justify or defend what he has said, so that in principle a problemizing dialogue develops (1983:24).

Van Eemeren and Grootendorst clarify that if the addresser cannot satisfy the addressee, when his turn comes, the addressee opposes the addresser and Walter does this and the stage direction obviously shows this (*Not listening at all or even looking at her*). Walter does not like Ruth's justification and thus he ignores her opinion and tries to attract her attention to the reality of the situation to emotionally affect her "*...I'm thirty-five years old; I been married eleven years and I got a boy who sleeps in the living room—(Very, very quietly)—and all I got to give him is stories about how rich white people live...*". Ruth cannot deny the truth of her husband's speech, but she believes that going into business by using Mama's money is not a sound solution; therefore, she tries to change the topic (Eat your eggs, Walter) but she fails. When Walter realizes that Ruth shied away from the topic, he gets upset and shouts "*Slams the table and jumps up—DAMN MY EGGS—DAMN ALL THE EGGS THAT EVER WAS*" (34).

When Walter knows that speaking with Ruth is useless, he exploits power relation; Ruth is his wife and she must agree with him because he is the head of the family and he knows what is good for the family, not Ruth. She utilizes another strategy to calm down Walter and to escape the argument "*Then go to work*", but this move increases the tensions as he severely criticizes her for her indifference "*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 they somebody. Like they can do something*". The phrase (colored woman) is a clear example of internalized racism because Walter both as a husband and as a black man underestimates the role of black women in the family affairs while Ruth works as a servant to help her family. His speech hurts her and thus she performs a counter attack albeit indirectly "*Drily, but to hurt, There are colored men who do things*". She implies that the fault is in Walter himself because he just speaks without carrying out real actions and there are black families who live better.

Schnurr et al. write:

Previous research has illustrated that there is a close connection between politeness and power (e.g. Holmes and Stubbe 2003b; Watts 2003), so that while adhering to politeness norms people may at the same time reinforce existing power relations. Challenges to the norms of accepted and



appropriate behavior, on the other hand, often constitute attempts to contest and subvert existing power relations (2008:211).

Schnurr et al.'s comment clarifies that people need to respect or adhere to the politeness principles so that they can secure their relation. In other words, if the interlocutors do not pay attention to each other's public self-image (face) in an interaction, the distance between them gets wider and the strings which tie them together become weaker and weaker. This is what exactly happens between Walter and Ruth

It seems that Walter understood the implicature and he regards her speech as an infringement on his male supremacy, and thus he performs another verbal attack more rudely and vehemently "*Mumbling, We one group of men tied to a race of women with small minds*". In this conversation, Ruth takes her turns to persuade her husband to stop dreaming and pay attention to his current work, but her advice is answered rudely and Walter accuses all black women for lack of cooperating with their men and he insults them several times.

Ruth's attempts to control the situation and to prevent possible clashes with her husband all failed because of Walter's adamant behavior and the use of a rough language. Though Ruth sometimes reacts especially when she utters that there are black men who are financially successful, she wants to preserve the family ties. Walter is black, but he undermines women of his race. Walter indicates that women of color have no concern for their families by nature. Ruth attempts to escape Walter's grossly offensive speech acts by noting that it is not her fault that she was born black "*Well, being a colored woman, I guess I can't help myself none*". Ruth achieves this perlocutionary effect at the end of the discussion and Walter moves the turn-taking system to closure by lowering his voice "*Mumbling*" to utter his last speech in which he indistinctly expresses his discontent with his marriage. Walter's inexplicit comment and Beneatha's (Walter's sister) entrance into the kitchen area closes the interaction.

- **Male-Female Intra-Racism (Walter vs. Beneatha)**

Walter is the elder brother of Beneatha and the relationship between them is bad since they have got incongruous dreams. Walter wants to become a businessman and Beneatha wants to become a doctor and both of them need the insurance money. Walter believes that Beneatha's dream obstructs his attempts to open the liquor store and thus he tries to compel her to give up her aim, but Beneatha insists on going to medical college; hence conflicts emerge between them. The brother and sister clash with each other in several interactions and some of their utterances in Act I, Scene 1; P. 36, 37 and 38 will be analyzed to examine intra-racism and also to explain how Walter imposes his power and devalues Black Women.

After discussing the issue of the money with his wife, now Walter wants to know his sister's opinion regarding his plan and thus he asks her some questions about her decision to go to medical school only to drag her into a conversation. After some exchanges, he states "*You know the check is coming tomorrow*" (36). Beneatha directly grasps his intention since everybody in the house knows and hence she utters a statement which he dislikes "*That money belongs to Mama, Walter....*" (ibid). She roughly expresses her opinion and attempts to close the conversation emphasizing that only Mama has the right to decide how to use the money.

Beneatha's opinion is compatible with Ruth's regarding Mama's legal right to the possession of the money but against Walter's. He (*bitterly*) protests against her opinion and deploys ironies (*fine!*) to imply that her behavior is mean and (*nice girl*) to describe her as a disgusting and selfish person. His insulting utterances hurt her very much; she clearly sees how her brother tries to impose his power only because he is a man and he has done a lot for his family "*Me and Ruth done made some sacrifices for you—why can't you do something for the family?*" (37). His remarks make her feel that her schooling and even her existence are burdens on her family and thus she utters "*What do you want from me, Brother—that I quit school or just drop dead, which?*" (ibid.). Beneatha gives Walter two choices (quit schooldrop dead) because only in these cases he can get rid of this



obstacle (his sister). Walter gets into trouble with his family members and forces power relation to bury other's dreams only to get his goals.

Walter's strategy to persuade his wife and sister to back his plan fails because they cannot endure all the pressures, and it happened in history that even slaves in one way or another refused to submit to all the demands of their masters.

Brown states:

Among the most troublesome kinds of problems that arise in negotiation are the intangible issues related to loss of face. In some instances, protecting against loss of face becomes so central an issue that it swamps the importance of the tangible issues at stake and generates intense conflicts that can impede progress toward agreement and increase substantially the costs of conflict resolution (1977: 275).

According to Brown the face threatening acts (FTAs) carried out by both sides generate conflicts between them and thus the hope of understanding will be decreased. Walter and Beneatha fight; therefore, performing FTAs or producing impolite speech acts cannot be avoided, though Beneatha avoids using abusive phrases.

Walter's efforts to obtain his sister's consent fail; therefore, he intensifies his attacks, and internalized racism becomes wider when he says "*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 ...*" (38). Walter's utterance is a hypophora. He raises a question and immediately answers it. He uses this rhetorical strategy to insult Beneatha with his chauvinistic remarks about the role of women and their abilities in the society (be a nurse...or get married). He indicates that women are inept to practice medicine, and during his argument with his wife (Act II, Scene I), he attacks black women "*..... 'Cause we all tied up in a race of people that don't know how to do nothing but moan, pray and have babies!*" (87).

Walter's continuous contemptuous and rude impression toward black women widens the gap between him and his family. Ruth does not fend off the insult explicitly, but Beneatha is educated and stands against his offenses. Beneatha feels indignantly aggrieved at what he said; hence, she indirectly blames him for his attitude saying "*... it took you three years but you finally got it said*" (38), and sharply asks him to end the dispute "*leave me alone—it's Mama's money*" (ibid.). Her response provokes gender issues. The disputes between Walter and the female members of the household surpass the limits of a single family; it rather becomes a gender conflict. Walter is the only son of the family and he believes that he has the right to replace his father and own the sum "*He was my father, too!*". He wants to persuade Beneatha to acknowledge his male supremacy, but he is unsuccessful because his justification to get the money is proved to be weak when Beneatha states that there are some other people in the house who enjoy the same relative power with Big Walter "*He was mine, too—and Travis' grandfather*". Beneatha's statement is against Walter's dominance and his business plan, especially when she states "*God bless Mama for that!*". Beneatha's utterance exhibits that Mama never gives Walter the money to invest in a liquor store because this kind of business is not compatible with her religious beliefs.

Beneatha will not give her dreams and thus she makes great efforts to compel her brother to stop fighting her and to end the controversy because she is sure that it reaches nowhere. Being disappointed by lack of family support, Walter extends the discordance between him and his family members as he explicitly expresses his resentment and disgust toward black women "*The world's most backward race of people, and that's a fact*" (38). Although he is black and living with three black women in the house (his wife, mother and sister), he berates women of color for being ignorant so that they can realize that they know nothing about this world and the necessities of that capitalistic society.



- **Female-Female Intra-Racism (Mama vs. Beneatha)**

The parent-child relationship in *A Raisin in the Sun* is in a censorious condition and the main reason is the differences between how each generation sees the world. The main conflict between Mama and her daughter, Beneatha, is ideological. As a young educated girl, Beneatha wishes to have the freedom of choice and freedom of speech without following the social or conventional rules, but it is not easy in a house which is headed by a classical mother who still goes to church every Sunday. Beneatha tries to avoid discussing serious issues with her mother because, as she says, they do not understand the things she talks about “*Don’t worry—I don’t expect you to understand*” (48). But this time dispute erupts between them since it is a battle between secularism and piety.

In Act I, Scene I, Mama, Ruth and Beneatha engage in a conversation about Beneatha’s dating with George, a rich black boy. Mama and Ruth believe that it is good if they get married, but she rejects this idea since he is “shallow”, not serious about anything and his arrogant family never allows their son to take in marriage a girl from a poor family. The discussion between Beneatha and Mama focuses on marriage, but it extends to religion. Lack of understanding and courteous regard to social conventions results in distances between the mother and her daughter. Beneatha has decided to become a doctor and she gives priority to this not to marriage, and she is supported by her mother. Even Mama has spared a share of the insurance money for her daughter’s college.

As a believer, Mama prays for this “*Course you going to be a doctor, honey, God willing*” (50). The phrase ‘God willing’ agitates Beneatha and she rudely responds to the prayer “God hasn’t got a thing to do with it” (ibid.). Mama’s motherly instinct and love are unnecessarily and harshly turned down; yet she does not want to generate a conflict; therefore, in her next turn, she calls her name “*Beneatha—*” and then continues “that just wasn’t necessary” implying that she dislikes her manner of speaking, and her view regarding God and sacred entities was unnecessary since she has no certain aim when she mentioned the name of God. Beneatha interprets this as a rejection of her ideas and thus she rejects imposition of other views “*Well—neither is God. I get sick of hearing about God*”.

Beneatha’s constant disrespect to religion enrages Mama. This time she raises her voice “*Beneatha!*”. The exclamation mark shows that Mama strongly commands her to stop speaking about God like that. In her previous utterance, Mama used an em dash after Beneatha’s name to persuade her to show respect to God, but when she knows that Beneatha does not listen, she deploys a more stronger form “!” to oblige her not to speak blasphemy. Beneatha shows no regard for God’s role in human life “*I mean it! I’m just tired of hearing about God all the time. What has He got to do with anything? Does he pay tuition?*” (ibid.). When Beneatha stubbornly wipes out the role of God on earth, her mother tries to control the situation and thus she changes the mood of the argument to a threat “*You ’bout get your fresh little jaw slapped!*” (51).

Mama uses this strategy to end the wrangle, but she fails because Beneatha declines to submit to her mother’s rule “*Why? Why can’t I say what I want to around here, like everybody else?*” (ibid.). The form of the utterance is an interrogative but functions as a complaint, and the phrase ‘like everybody else’ clarifies that she was deprived of freedom of thought by Mama and this is intra-racism, and Mama’s response to the question “*It don’t sound nice for a young girl to say things like that....*” proves this. Beneatha thinks that she can freely speak about any issue she wants, but Mama has faith that the old values (religious and social norms) should always be honored.

Beneatha uselessly explains that Mama’s religious and social conventions are incompatible with today’s needs and developments “*...It’s all a matter of ideas, and God is just one idea I don’t accept. It’s not important....*” (ibid.); nevertheless, nothing will shake Mama’s profound religious doctrine. Beneatha’s spirit of disobedience to God agitates Mama and she “slaps Beneatha across the face”. Mama avails physical violence to tame Beneatha and it is followed by a moment of silence which marks the end of the argument. Beside physical power, Mama also manipulates



relative power to compel Beneatha to acknowledge the existence of God “*Now—you say after me, in my mother’s house there is still God*”. Beneatha yields to her mother’s wish and repeats the instructions as a solemn declaration.

Mama is happy with her success but not with the physical violence; and thus, to reduce the effect of her action, she utters “*There are some ideas we ain’t going to have in this house. Not long as I am at the head of this family*”. Beneatha realizes that such argument with her mother will bear no fruit; therefore, she agrees not to violate the rules (Yes, ma’am). Mama’s phrases “in my mother’s house” and “Not long as I am at the head of this family” exhibit that Mama is a powerful woman and she wants to run the affairs of her family as she wants and Walter confirms at the end of Act II, Scene I as he tells her, “*You the head of this family. You run our lives like you want to*” (95).

- **Female-Male Intra-Racism (Mama vs. Walter)**

The conflict between Mama and Walter is another aspect of parent-child relationship. Their viewpoints toward life in the capitalistic society of America are different. Walter believes that being rich is above everything, and money counts in a capitalistic society; it makes no difference how one gets it. This notion urges him to set a plan to go into business by investing in a liquor store. To achieve his purpose, he needs money and his only hope is the insurance money. Contrary to Walter’s view about life and dignity, Mama thinks that “freedom is life” and one’s pride and value are measured by freedom not money, and she finds liberty in possessing a piece of land, a house, which was also her husband’s dream. These ideas are the basic reasons behind the conflicts between Mama and Walter.

Time is Saturday morning, and the Youngers are preparing for a new day, a day which seems to be different from the past days, months and years because they are expecting a mailman to knock the door at any moment and brings the piece of paper which may change their lives. The clock strikes ten twenty and the doorbell rang. It is the mailman. Travis, Walter’s only son, goes down to receive the mail and returns dancing happily. Mama has received the check, ten thousand dollars! A sum the family has never seen before. Walter rushes into the house without saying anything and directly asks whether the check has come or not. His behavior is regarded as impolite by Mama “*Can’t you give people a Christian greeting before you start asking about money?*” (P. 70). She implies that ignoring the simple phatic communion just to talk about money is neither religious nor social, but he refrains from the criticism.

Simpson states:

In general, phatic communion is taken to mean the kind of ritualistic linguistic behaviour which characterizes the beginnings and endings of conversations. This normally includes the formulaic gambits of greeting and parting (for example, ‘Hello’, ‘Good morning’), along with a set of stereotypical remarks concerning the weather (1989: 42).

According to Simpson, when someone wants to start a conversation, he or she needs to use some expressions to mark the intentions. He also explains that Malinowski actually coined the term ‘phatic communion’ in the 1920s and defined it as “a type of speech in which ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words” (Ibid). Malinowski’s definition clarifies that by using such tokens like “Hello”, “Good morning” and some others, the speaker carries out a social function which becomes a bridge between the two participants to unite in a communication. Speakers will not or cannot follow this system every time and the feedbacks they receive may be unfavorable. This happens between Walter and Mama here.

The most important thing for Walter is the check and thus he takes out the papers related to the liquor store and shows them to his mother, but Mama gives priority to Ruth’s pregnancy and her plan to abort the baby. She intends to talk over this problem with her son “*Son—I think you ought to talk to your wife...*” (ibid.), but he has no time for what his wife may say since his business plan occupies his mind and he just thinks of this, nothing else “*I can talk to her later—Mama, look—*”.



Mama gets upset at his indifference to his wife; hence, she raises her voice “*Son—*” to stop Walter. Mama used the same force when she tried to stop her daughter, Beneatha.

Walter considers this as an assault on his manhood; therefore, he shouts as a counterattack “*WILL SOMEBODY PLEASE LISTEN TO ME TODAY!*” (70). This reaction damages Mama’s face as the head of the family and worsens the situation because it has different connotations. For instance, the entire utterance is capitalized which marks that Walter shouts and Mama’s “*I don’t ’low no yellin’*” proves this; the utterance is formed as a question but ends with exclamation point (!); it means that he makes a strong demand and finally he deploys ‘please’ in the middle of the sentence and it indicates Walter’s desperate need for his family’s cooperation and this turns the utterance to be begging rather than ordering. Whether it is a request or demand or begging, Mama regards it as an impolite behavior; hence, to rescue her face and regain power, she wrathfully expresses her determination to neither give him the money nor to look at the papers related to the liquor store “*I don’t ’low no yellin’ in this house, Walter Lee, and you know it—.....And there ain’t going to be no investing in no liquor stores*” (70). Walter becomes disappointed since he knows that persuading his mother to give him the money is impossible and thus he goes out.

Conclusions

This research looks at racism from a different angle; racism inside a single family and among the people of the same race which is called intra-racism or internalized racism. The analysis of the characters based on their background, ideology and modality shows that the conflict between them is related to creating one’s personality and freedom of thought. Modern man, in a capitalistic society, needs money to achieve his/her dreams, as Walter says, rather than freedom, as Mama emphasizes, and when obtaining the sum becomes impossible, then the internal disputes burst.

Walter exerts power over his wife, Ruth, and his sister Beneatha, since he is a man and thus they should listen to him, but when he does not achieve his aim, he uses abusive language against them calling them mindless race that suits only to give birth and cry. His individual qualities deepen the conflicts since he believes that his mind works better, and he directs the gender discrimination toward them to show his superiority.

Another aspect of the prejudice is related to the parent’s relationship with their children. There is no doubt that Mama loves her children, but she still wants to remain the head of the family. She refuses her son’s project to invest in a liquor store and she buys a house in a white neighborhood where they may face lots of troubles. She believes that the black people can never elevate their social status and they are born to serve not to be served. This dogmatic view harasses Walter because condemning the blacks to always take low jobs is discrimination but this time performed by a black woman against her son. Mama is egocentric, and everybody in the house must listen to her; if she says being a chauffeur is a good job for Walter, it means that it is good and he must not complain, and if she tells Beneatha to oppose her belief and acknowledge the existence of God, she must obey because she is the head of the family and they should agree to her rules. This superiority of Mama undermines Walter’s masculinity and Beneatha’s freedom of choice.

All in all, Lorraine Hansberry tells her readers that discrimination does not necessarily mean that there should be always a white boss who persecutes a black slave or a group or class oppresses another class, but discrimination is apt to happen among the members of one family if their dreams vary, and they have low esteem for each other’s concerns and wishes. The family members are tied by blood but they become strangers when their aims collide with each other and thus intra-racism is inevitable.

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