**The links below are there for you to follow, as you wish--not required.**

***Harlem***

By [Langston Hughes](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/langston-hughes)

**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?*

**The following two pghs are from an article on Langston Hughes in Encyclopedia.com.**

**"What happens to a dream deferred?" That question—one of the most famous lines of poetry to issue from the pen of an American writer—captures the essence of** [**Langston Hughes**](https://www.encyclopedia.com/people/literature-and-arts/american-literature-biographies/langston-hughes)**'s 1951 work *Montage of a Dream Deferred*. In this tightly interwoven collection, the "dream deferred" is the collective dream of the** [**African Americans**](https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/united-states-and-canada/us-history/african-americans)**. Although slavery was abolished nearly a century before, black Americans in the 1940s and 1950s were still not seen as equals in the eyes of the general public nor, often, in the eyes of local and state lawmakers. While white Americans were riding a wave of post-**[**World War II**](https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/modern-europe/wars-and-battles/world-war-ii) **prosperity toward the fulfillment of their vision of the American dream, most blacks were left waiting for their opportunity to join in the country's success.**

***Montage of a Dream Deferred* is, in addition to being a statement about denied opportunities for** [**African Americans**](https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/united-states-and-canada/us-history/african-americans)**, a rich portrayal of the places and personalities that make up the** [**New York**](https://www.encyclopedia.com/places/united-states-and-canada/us-political-geography/new-york) **neighborhood of Harlem where Hughes lived. According to biographer Arnold Rampersad, from the vantage point of his Harlem home, "Hughes watched the historic evolution of African American culture from its roots in the rural South to its often tangled exfoliation in the cities of the North." More importantly, he documented this evolution for the entertainment and enlightenment of both current and future generations.”**

**Please note the assertion that the African-American culture has its roots in the rural South, not in African savannas.**

**Hansberry is most assuredly an idealist, but she is not naive or unrealistic. She knows what terrifying obstacles still face the Younger family, even after the glow of good feeling and life affirmation that immediately precede the final curtain. She knew this from personal experience, as her family moved into an all-white neighborhood when she was only eight years old.**

**The following is from Hansberry’s memoir, *To Be Young Gifted and Black:***

**“Twenty five years ago, [my father] spent a small personal fortune, his considerable talents, and many years of his life fighting, in association with NAACP attorneys, Chicago’s "restrictive covenants" in one of this nation's ugliest ghettos. That fight also required our family to occupy the disputed property in a hellishly hostile ‘white neighborhood’ in which literally howling mobs surrounded our house…**

**“My memories of this "correct" way of fighting white supremacy in America include being spat at, cursed and pummeled in the daily trek to and from school. And I also remember my desperate and courageous mother, patrolling our household all night with a loaded German Luger pistol, doggedly guarding her four children, while my father fought the respectable part of the battle in the Washington court.”**

**The legal fight went all the way to the Supreme Court (*Hansberry v Lee*), and although her father was victorious, illegal “de facto” housing segregation continued for decades in America.**

**Asagai shouts to Beneatha, “I LIVE THE ANSWER!” and proceeds to explain to her that you need to continue to pursue your path even though you don’t know how things will turn out. That speech (p.135-6) shows that he is an idealist and a realist as well. He will pursue his ideals and he may succeed, he may This is true for every one of useven be wrong, but there is a grandeur in committing your life to a purpose. This is true for every one of us: a life of purpose is the greatest gift we can give to ourselves and the world.**

**Idealists are never without dreams, and Hansberry was, in this regard, a way station on the Civil Rights railroad from Langston Hughes's "Dream Deferred" series of poems to MLK's gloriously affirmative "I Have a Dream" speech: an oration that helped rouse the nation to support civil rights for oppressed African-Americans. Social movements for change require commitment to a struggle that is alternately tedious and terrifying, and they ultimately draw their sustenance from the everyday momentous decisions of “simple” folks like the Youngers.**

**The play, which both encapsulated and anticipated so many themes of the African-American experience, has been revived many times (including one titled simply *Raisin*--a musical version) since its initial Broadway opening. In 2010,** [***Clybourne Park***](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clybourne_Park)***,*** **a very unsentimental look at what all of this could lead to, was produced and performed on Broadway; it won both the** **Pulitzer Prize and the Tony award** **for best drama.**

### [**Clybourne Park - Wikipedia**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clybourne_Park)

**The ubiquitous Sean Comb was an important financial backer of a widely acclaimed 2004 revival of the play on Broadway; a film version of this production, with Diddy in the role of Walter, is available. All this is to say that *Raisin*, like Alger and Gatsby, is in our cultural bloodstream.**

[***A Raisin in the Sun* - Rotten Tomatoes**](http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/raisin_in_the_sun/)

**Combs, BTW, has a strong connection to another one of our readings. Asked if he had read *The Great Gatsby*, he replied, “I *am* the Great Gatsby." Every summer he throws a "white party" at his Long Island mansion (not sure which egg, or what a white party is--I think it has to do with wearing white, but Diddy enormously enjoys any possible racial subtext).**

**And Bill Gates has a pgh from *Gatsby* carved into the front lawn of his mansion, the one about being "so close to his dream." If you have an eye/ear for things like this, you can see/hear that Gates-Gatz is-- for linguistic purposes--the same name.**

**There are new voices in the ongoing struggle, whose concerns are to bring the totality of the black experience in America to generations who don't want to hear. Especially, they don't want to believe, that racist and classist elements in the USA, often** **in hidden coordination with law enforcement at all levels,** has **terrorized a group of its citizens for centuries--and continues to do so. (see #Black Lives Matter, etc.)**

**I have been using the term "black" throughout our discussion--"African-American" did not come into general use until the late 1980, due to the efforts of the Rev. Jesse Jackson. Why was the term introduced? —at first, it was resisted by black people, but it gradually gained majority acceptance among them. There are still enough people around who remember what a great leap forward it was from Negro to black to insure that the latter will retain some usage, for a while. Africa is a continent, with a multiplicity of cultures, but it still may be possible to identify with it in a general sense; hence, “Afro-centrism.” Jackson’s idea was that other immigrant ethnic Americans gained a sense of pride and confidence from their identification with a country of origin; for example, Irish-American, Polish-American,**