

Name _____ Date _____

Lorraine Hansberry

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. b'

Born in Chicago in 1930, Lorraine Hansberry grew up surrounded by Black achievement and activism. Her mother was a schoolteacher, while her father was a successful real estate broker and the founder of Lake Street Bank, one of the city's first banks for Black customers. Her uncle William Leo Hansberry was a **notable** of African Studies at the prestigious Howard University, a historically Black institution in Washington, DC. Both of her parents were involved in civil rights organizing, and they often hosted Black luminaries who were visiting Chicago. Sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois, singer Paul Robeson, jazz pianist Duke Ellington, poet Langston Hughes, and Olympic track star Jesse Owens all passed through the doors of the Hansberry home. And in 1959, Hansberry herself made history as the first Black woman to have a play **produced** on Broadway.

\n'

Notes

2. b'

Even well-connected, middle-class Black families like the Hansberrys were not insulated from the racial **discrimination** of the mid-20th century. Northern cities like Chicago did not have the same harsh, race-based laws as the Jim Crow South. However, **segregation** was enforced in other ways, primarily through the housing market. In Chicago and across the country, city planners and real estate brokers often used discriminatory legal agreements called restrictive covenants. These agreements ensured that homes in designated White neighborhoods could not be sold to Black buyers. Most banks also refused to lend money to Black buyers or those seeking to buy in predominantly Black areas. As a result of these restrictions, the majority of Chicago's Black population ended up confined to a small portion of a single section of the city: the historically underserved South Side. Even today, many South Side residents continue to lack access to quality health care, education, food, and other important resources.

\n'

3. b'

In 1937, Hansberry's parents decided to challenge Chicago's discriminatory housing policies. The family moved from the city's South Side to a home they had secretly bought in an all-White area. Their new neighbors were furious. A racist mob led a **demonstration** outside the house, and a young Lorraine was nearly hit by a brick that was thrown through a window. Soon after, another homeowner filed a lawsuit to void the sale, citing the neighborhood's racially restrictive covenant. The case made its way to the Supreme Court of Illinois, which upheld the legality of the covenant and forced the Hansberrys to leave their home. Hansberry's parents filed their own suit in response. In 1940, the US Supreme Court ruled in their favor, opening 30 additional blocks of Chicago's South Side to Black homebuyers. Because the case was decided on a legal technicality, it did not outlaw racially restrictive covenants entirely. But Hansberry v. Lee was an important step toward the end of legal housing discrimination in the US.

\n'

Notes

Notes