



UW ODYSSEY PROJECT'S MAGICAL NIGHT AT THE PLAY



A RAISIN IN THE SUN
AMERICAN PLAYERS THEATRE
SEPTEMBER 2022



I'm still on a natural high from this well-planned event. Everything was great, from my cab ride to the Badger Bus driver's excellent customer service to all of us (Odyssey Staff Members, Alumni, New Students, and Guests) who attended. The ride was so much fun, laughing and getting to know everyone on Bus 255.

I didn't know what to expect upon arrival. I was blown away from the time we stepped off the bus. I enjoyed laughing with Emily's dad—what an amazing man! Emily is so blessed. I enjoyed the luncheon and fellowshipping with everyone. The food was different but greatly appreciated. We listened and laughed with Gavin Lawrence, the actor who played Walter.



We had great weather. On the hike up the hill to the theatre, we met others from Milwaukee and other cities. Then the theatre, beautiful!!! It took my breath away.

Then the play: outstanding performances from all the actors. The play reminded of my strong grandma in the sixties, holding the family together with love, understanding, and her belief in God. Looking at the stage set brought back the memories of my household, from the old ice box with the Schlitz beer to my brother sleeping on the living room couch, before we moved into a three-bedroom house.



My favorite scene was Beneatha with her natural hair dancing in African attire.

Every time I watch the movie, now the play, brings me to tears, my life story before my eyes. My grandmother was the strong family matriarch, holding her family together.

Then on the walk back down the hill, we met so many people who were excited to meet UW Odyssey. We represented Madison. Thanks to Union Cab for their promptness on our return rides home.

Thanks to all the sponsors who made our outing a success. Thanks to Emily for her love for the Odyssey Project and Char for her diligence to us. I can't wait for the next outing. **(Roslyn Phillips)**



Thank you for giving me this opportunity to enjoy the play. It was a great experience of learning for me. Usually my little nine-year-old son doesn't have the patience to stay that long in just one place, but I was surprised how focused he was during the whole play of *A Raisin in the Sun* and how much he was commenting about the scenes happening at that moment.

For me, I got touched by Mama--how strong she stood in there holding her family united, respecting the family values including the values of her community. I liked how realistic the scenes were, especially because it reminded me of the presence of racism that existed in the indigenous community where I come from in Ecuador. Thank you. **(Aida Inuca)**

Last night was a wonderful experience seeing *A Raisin in the Sun*. I brought my friend, and she had never heard of plays or movies. Afterwards she was so impressed.

I'm going to remember this perfect cool night watching *A Raisin in the Sun*. The actors did an amazing job. You felt each character's emotions. The whole night was perfect! **(Michelle McKoy)**



Thank you! My kids and I appreciated the meeting before the play and also the photo. Gavin Lawrence, you are a beautiful and talented man! My daughter, Saniya, wants to write plays and also perform in plays after watching this amazing performance of *A Raisin in the Sun*. I am forever GRATEFUL, young man! (**Sarah Galinski**)



I would like to say thank you to the donors!!!! Years from now I will remember the audience and witnessing the different cultures coming together in one space. It is fair to say that I enjoy witnessing the future come together before my eyes, before its time. Emily, I saw you and your father seated across the way, and I was IMMEDIATELY “at home.” Thank you, Odyssey staff, volunteers, and donors for putting this together. (**LaTrease Hibbler**)

The first reason I wanted to attend the play was because I remembered the theater from when I went to high school on a field trip. I’ve always wanted to go back so I jumped at the opportunity. Once we got there, the picnic setting for lunch was very nice and relaxing. I enjoyed the different options available for the sandwiches and snacks that we ate. My least favorite part was the big hill we had to walk up in order to get to the theater. Thank goodness for the shuttles that were made available.

I enjoyed the opportunity we had to ask the actor that played Walter some questions, and how he went into depth about his experience as an actor of color being employed in a predominantly white community. I appreciated him being open about his experiences and willing to share them with us. Some of his experiences he was able to correlate to the play in a modern-day way, which I felt saddened by.

Overall, the play was amazing and the actors were phenomenal! I’m glad I signed up for the adventure. It was a great end to a very difficult week that I had, and I’m truly grateful to Odyssey, the donors, and all that made this event possible. Thank you so much. (**Jochebed Jones**)

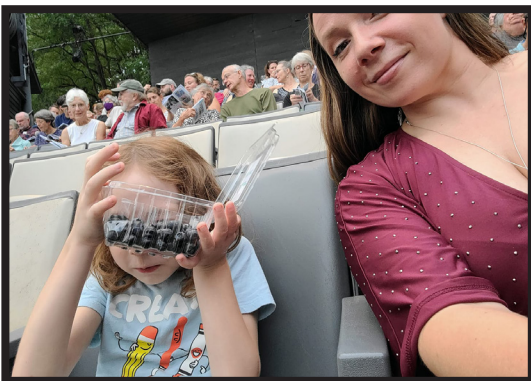
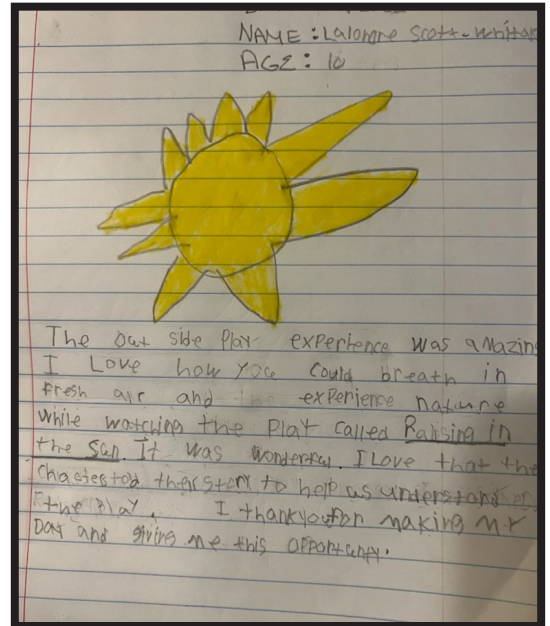




The *Raisin in the Sun* play at APT was spectacular. Gavin Lawrence and the rest of the cast provided me with a new vision of the play that will last a lifetime. A memorable moment is when Walter united the family by standing up to Mr. Lindner. Also, the staff of APT provided the UW-Odyssey Project with service that was impeccable!
(Char Braxton)



The outside play experience was amazing. I love how you could breathe in fresh air and experience nature while watching the play called *Raisin in the Sun*. It was wonderful. I love that the character [Gavin Lawrence] told their story to help us understand the play. I thank you for making my day and giving me this opportunity. (Lalondre 'Dre' Scott-Whittaker, age 10)



Oliver, who is my son and six, went with me to the play. He did so well sitting for three hours plus the drive. I was so grateful to see it myself, but it was something else to take my young son. Thank you to the donors for such a gracious and lasting gift. (Jamie Lovely)



Thank you so much for making this experience possible for my family. In my home country, Mexico, I never went to the theater, so I never experienced something so magical and extraordinary like this before. Thank you for allowing us to see ourselves in the actors. It was different times but still the same housing struggles for the poor.

Let me share my story so you can understand why tears ran through my cheeks during the performance. I have never owned a home, we have always rented, and for a period of my life, I lived in a house made of cardboard. I also had the opportunity to rent a home for six years here in Madison with the chance of owning it. There we were, a Mexican family in a white neighborhood, with neighbors telling us they will be watching us, and if they see something suspicious, they will call the police right away.



After a while and many efforts, we made the neighbors like us; we gained their love and respect. When we thought we could finally buy the house and call it our home, we got a letter saying we had 12 days to move out. The house was in a foreclosure. The owner of the house lied to us. So here we are still renting, seeking for the dream of one day having a place we can own and call it home.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share the stories of our people in a beautiful environment and gorgeous theater as it is at the American Players Theatre. Thank you for making the magic happen. **(Marisol Gonzalez)**



This was truly my first time going to a play. The first time I went to a play years ago, I didn't speak English so I really did not enjoy the experience or the importance the play had to offer. This time, though, the play brought tears in my eyes. I was connecting



with the story of this struggling family and my family growing up. Deep in my heart there was a lot of sadness but, more importantly, I learned the struggles of others and this can't be ignored.

On the bright side, being at the play pushed me in wanting to learn more about the history of us, the minority, here in the USA, and it also pushed me to educate myself and try even harder with my education. My dream is to give back to the community, do something for the struggling families in today's society.

My daughter was with me, and I enjoyed watching her getting educated as she watched the play. I can tell she enjoyed it as much I did, and that made my day. On our way back home, we both expressed our opinions on the play and how the play made us feel deep inside of us. We both agreed that it was a very well executed play and that the actors were amazing.

Thank you so much for working tirelessly to give us this wonderful opportunity to learn and be our own witness of our personal growth. Thank you to all of you who provided the tickets for getting us out of our comfort zones and for giving us this once in a lifetime opportunity. Your act of kindness is what makes me want to give back to the community.

I personally loved the play and it will be in my memory for the rest of my life. Thank you so much! **(Saul Naxi)**

First of all, thank you very much for the opportunity to give me this space to be part of witnessing this work that touched my memories of my life but especially of my childhood. My father emigrated to the USA when I was four years old with the intention of giving us a better life, so it was my mother who carried the great weight of parenting. The example of my mother's strength and resilience accompanies me in my journey. Thank you.

(Maricela Martinez Munguia)



Being given an opportunity for tickets to go see the play *A Raisin in the Sun* was phenomenal. We had a chance to meet and greet with one of the actors, whom other characters in the play called Brother. That was nice. His personality definitely didn't fit the character, but he did warn us about how his role was not likable.

One of the main things I took from the play was that even back then, family was important. No matter what, you represent your family when you walk out the door to go to school every day. You represent your family as a whole, so even if you think you're doing things on your own and making choices for yourself, you're really making choices for your family. A lot of your choices are to better your family. Family is Love! Thank you for letting me experience the play.
(Lavinia Miller)



Beautiful rustic scene with glowing bushes on the paths leading the way!
Magical blue looking tree behind the stage when the light hit it
Hearing the smooth background music before the play and during the intermission.
How the women back then submitted to the man but were really the protectors of the family.
How the family stuck together. **(Amanda Willis)**





I was inspired by the story when I first read it in my late twenties, but seeing this play live moved me to tears at some parts. The cast really brought this story to life. I am very glad that I was able to attend this play with my sisters and Odyssey family. **(Mya Whitson)**

It was my first time seeing a theater play. I really enjoyed it. It brought back memories from my childhood—how we used to be before this generation changed things. I will remember the good times but know that the hard times shall pass away and as a family to always stick together.

I would like to say thank you to Gavin Lawrence and the cast for an awesome play and for their hard work and dedication. **(Curtrice Foster)**



The play *A Raisin in the Sun* was incredible! It made me laugh, it made me ponder, it made me pause and question many whys and why nots. The play made me sad and almost brought me to tears, so much so that I almost had to get up and not watch painful parts that mirrored my life and my stories of being a black man—sometimes working so hard so long with so little return on all of your life's work, you feel it will be the cause of an early death of heart, mind, spirit and soul. The characters of the mother (Lena Younger), sister (Bennie), and Walter's wife (Ruth) were all strong spirited black women like the black women in my family that raised me. Walter Lee, the adult black male son, brother, and father, brought the play to life for me. I've seen the movie many times and we covered it in Odyssey class, but it seemed to me they updated a timeless classic that is even more relevant today than it was when it first appeared on Broadway. I lived a lot of Walter's life experiences, his disappointments, lamentations, his dreams of just providing and achieving the American dream for himself and his family, which is defined by the affordability of home ownership and quality of personal and family life.



The play was beautifully written, poignant, and uplifting. It mirrored so many lives of so many black and brown families. This play mirrors a lot of families and a lot of black boys and men like me. The play displayed the personal emotional tragedies that black men have endured for centuries. Not being able to be that provider, protector, and role model, society chips away our hearts, minds, and souls and dismembers emotional parts of us, to the point of many things like crime, addiction, abandonment, feelings of inadequacy, anger, desperation, and more. But we are and have been resilient, so most of us lift ourselves up and snatch back our resolve and jump back into existing, then living because we're resilient and we have people who really love us that need us to be there, no matter what.



For me the play is timeless, its struggles are real, the family values are real. I loved *A Raisin in the Sun*. I'm going to see it again in a couple of weeks with my daughter's daughter-in-law, granddaughter, and my 13-year-old grandson who came with me this time. I had most of them reread or watch the movie because of its relevance to our family's triumphs and tragedies.
(Bruce Moore)

I attended the showing of *A Raisin in The Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry in Spring Green, Wisconsin, with my niece Lavinia Miller (aka Laylay) on September 18th, 2022. My niece Laylay is a student in the UW-Madison's Odyssey Program 2022/2023 cohort. Lavinia invited me to come with her to see this live magnificent play. I have seen this play live numerous times on different occasions and different cities with different people. However, this time it was special because Laylay asked me to come with her so that we could spend some quality auntie/mother/niece/daughter time (I am Laylay's aunt and a mother figure to her) doing something cultural, enlightening, and fun that would enhance our relationship. We have had many outings before, but it has been a while since we've been together at this type of event.

Some of my favorite characters in this play are Mama Lena Younger and her daughter, Beneatha. Mama Lena represented the old ways in terms of how her generation struggled with racism in the Jim Crow era. Inspired by her children, Mama Lena listened and could relate to her children's stories about their struggles. Beneatha Younger was also appealing because she represented the coming of the future of the "Black American" and the "baby boomer" era. Even though Mama Lena and Beneatha were years apart, they had so much in common and faced similar challenges as Black women in the fifties.

The image of birth and rebirth also was a reoccurring theme in this play: the struggle with Ruth having to decide to want an abortion or to go along with a questionable husband, his drinking, opportunistic outlook for the future of the family by dreaming of buying a liquor store with his Mama's inheritance life insurance check because of his dead father. Ruth, also a strong black woman character, was able to pull herself up. Thinking hard about her future, she decided not to terminate her pregnancy and to choose life.

The irony of the entirety of this play *A Raisin in the Sun* shows that when things appear weary, seem hopeless, leaving one in despair – hope finds itself growing again within the branches and roots of a tree or pregnancy – that dried up raisins can also explode and become something

beautiful. Mama Lena's lovely little plant stunningly illustrates this—that no matter what situations we find ourselves in, no matter where we are planted, if we are watered, we will still grow – and explode beautifully. Amazingly, many black mothers, aunts, nieces, and daughters today possess this maternal nature that comes from within. No matter the cause of the struggle, as we go through – we get through and become that raisin in the sun!

My role to Laylay is to always be her water, that she be watered and that she will bloom no matter how difficult things and situations may become. My niece will continue to grow positively in all her ways, wants, and desires.

(Tina Jones Savadogo)





I am so appreciative to have had the opportunity to attend *A Raisin in the Sun* with my 90-year-old mother, current UW Odyssey students, teachers, and other alumni from several years. The pre-play lunch and conversation with the lead actor was very nice. To hear his own personal journey was great. When he told us that HE was thankful to US for being there, it was surprising.

I love this play, and when I think that it was performed on Broadway in 1959, it leaves me in awe at how relevant this story is and STILL applicable in 2022. Thanks again to ALL donors who helped sponsored this trip. I know it takes a lot, and I really appreciate it. I know there are a lot of things we never know about that happen “behind the scenes” so, again, THANK YOU. **(Mary Wells)**

A Raisin in the Sun was a fantastic play. I was very fortunate to be able to attend it as a gift. The actors were fantastic in every way. I would go see it again and again. Thank you, Professor Emily, for all you do. **(Valeria Gordon)**



Thanks to American Players Theatre, American Family Insurance, Dane Arts, and all the donors who helped make this magical trip possible!