



Emanuel School

# BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Wednesday 15th October 2024

## A RAISIN IN THE SUN

Mr E Elliot

In 1951, Langston Hughes wrote a poem called Harlem, and in it, he asked a series of questions:

What happens to a dream deferred?/ Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?

Enter Lorraine Hansberry.

She was born on May 19th, 1930, in Chicago, U.S.A. Growing up on the south side of Chicago, a well-known poor neighbourhood, was difficult, especially for people of colour. A pivotal moment for Hansberry occurred when she was eight: her father, a man who was a real-estate broker and member of the early Civil Rights movement, moved their family to a predominantly white area of Chicago. Their new neighbours banded together to get rid of the Hansberrys – they were unsuccessful. This type of racism was incredibly common, but still, it left a mark on Hansberry that would inspire her most important piece of writing later in her life.

After graduating high school in 1944, Hansberry attended the University of Madison, Wisconsin and was active in the fight for Civil Rights and fair labour laws. Eventually, she moved to New York City, where she wrote for the newspaper Freedom, lending her pen to many significant issues.

In 1951, Hansberry would have read 'Harlem',

by Langston Hughes, and over the next six years, Hughes' ideas about the death of dreams would percolate in her mind until in 1957, she penned her Magnum Opus, A Raisin in the Sun.

To understand A Raisin in the Sun, one must meet the Youngers, a black family living on the south-side of Chicago: There is Mama, the matriarch and survivor of post-Civil War America; Walter, Mama's oldest, a man in his 30s who is a chauffeur for wealthy white clients and restless for a better life; Beneatha, Mama's youngest, a woman in her 20s who aspires to study medicine; Ruth, Walter's wife, a woman who takes care of the apartment and struggles with her husband's stubbornness and their son Little Walter, who is just a kid trying to make sense of the complicated world of the 1950s as a young black man.

The conflict in the play is simple: Mr Younger passes away before the play starts and leaves the family with \$10,000. In those days, this was a lot of money! And it could mean a whole new life for the Youngers. Each of the adults wants to use the money in different ways: Mama (and Ruth) want to move to a nicer neighbourhood for a better life, Beneatha wants to use it for medical school and Walter wants to use it in a get-rich-quick-scheme of investing in a liquor store.

As the arguments escalate, Mama puts a down payment on a house in a 'nice', white neighbourhood. A member of the 'neighbourhood improvement association'

visits to discourage the Youngers from moving in and even offers them money not to. Mama declines, even as Walter is doing something that could ruin the legacy of his father's inheritance...

This English teacher will not spoil the rest of the plot for a simple reason – he would like you to read or watch it. It would be worth checking with parents beforehand as it does have mature themes like racist language and discussions of abortion.

One of the reasons Hansberry's work was so important was that she was the first black woman to write a play that would run on Broadway. While many thought she would fail, she most certainly did not as the play received widespread acclaim. A Raisin in the Sun was made into a hit film in 1961 featuring another pioneer of black art, Sidney Poitier. Though it is quite dated, it is well worth a watch. Other memorable versions include the 1989 film starring Danny Glover – this one is on YouTube.

For the theatre lovers among you, A Raisin in the Sun opened at the Lyric Theatre in Hammersmith on the 8th of October. Tickets are going fast, for this remarkable modern retelling of a classic tale.

Hansberry died tragically in 1965 of cancer – she would not write another play. While her life was cut short, her work has endured over the years, asking questions about the black experience and the dreams that come with it. Although she was not 'out' due to fear of ostracization, Hansberry was a lesbian who, near the end of her life, wrote a number of letters supporting the fight for gay and lesbian rights. One can only wonder how her voice, having already pushed forward the pendulum of progress on civil rights, could have aided the fight for equal treatment of all regardless of their sexual orientation.



## EVOLUTION OF CREOLE LANGUAGES

Samuel (IICA)

The term creole is derived from the Latin *criar*, “to bring up,” in itself based on *creāre*, “to create,” the term first being recorded in English in the late 1600s. In the Caribbean, the term broadly refers to all the people, whatever their class or ancestry — African, East Asian, European, Indian — who are part of the culture of the Caribbean. In today's society, creole can be used to define much more than just a language, but entire cultures. Creole languages developed in the Caribbean plantations, due to enslaved peoples with different cultures and languages, completely unintelligible to each other, mixing. These languages in turn came into contact with European languages. This created a simplified means of linguistic communication, in order to communicate simply during work. Over time, these location specific dialects naturally became richer with shared cultural elements,

becoming familiar and personal languages that characterise the struggle against slavery, and the synthesis of a new culture in unfamiliar settings.

The main colonies where creole languages developed were along the Atlantic and Indian ocean coasts. Some variations of creole are based on French, including Louisiana, Haitian and Mauritian Creole. English influenced creole languages include Nigerian and Hawaiian, as well as Jamaican Patois. Many are spoken to this day, whilst creole languages shaped by Dutch colonisation, on Java and the Dutch West Indies, are rapidly declining in speaker numbers due to a generation shift in these cultures.

Haitian Creole, the official language of Haiti, is widely credited as the world's most spoken creole language, with around 10 to 12 million speakers scattered across Haiti, the Bahamas, Cuba, Dominican Republic and the US. It is also thought to be one of the oldest, originating in the

sugarcane plantations of the 17th century French colony. Haitian Creole is said to have the most similarities to traditional African languages, due to an unusually large ratio of Africans to Europeans on the island, at nearly 16:1 in 1789. Whilst most other creoles in the Western hemisphere are spoken casually, Haitian Creole has widespread use in many business and government settings on the island.

Other creole languages risk disappearing altogether, such as Louisiana Creole, with fewer than 10,000 speakers, almost all of whom speak it as a secondary tongue. Louisiana Creole is especially rich due to the land of its birth being exchanged constantly between the French, Spanish and Americans, bringing in enslaved peoples from all over the globe. This introduced the influence from the Philippines along with other linguistically diverse African nations such as Ghana and Guinea. One unique feature of Louisiana Creole is reduplication, where a word

is repeated, usually three times, for emphasis. The concept is similar to how extra stress is put on a word or syllable for emphasis in English, for example: ‘to bras li zhiska li vini zhon zhon!’ or ‘you mix it until it becomes yellow yellow yellow!’ Speakers of Louisiana Creole have contributed significantly to the state's culture, with some of the richest cuisine in the US, ranging from Crawfish Étouffée to Jambalaya as well as the Mardi Gras festival in New Orleans, one of the liveliest on Earth!

In all, the 100 or so creole languages across the globe demonstrate the enormous cultural and linguistic shadow of slavery over today's society. The horrors of enslavement have been triumphed by the birth of beautiful new languages, and meant millions of people of African heritage from vastly different areas are able to share an eclectic part of black history, surviving and flourishing emphatically throughout the centuries.

## MUYEYE: FROM REFUGEE TO ENGLAND CRICKET'S NEXT BIG THING

Mr S Turner

It has been a difficult couple of years for cricket's association with diversity and inclusion in this country. For example, last week (as I write this) Essex County Cricket Club were found guilty of ‘systemic’ racism and received a fine of £50,000, with a further £50,000 suspended for two years. However, arguably, they received a much harsher fine of 12 championship points because one of their players was found to be using a bat that was too wide. I am not sure that's sending the right message.

However, the brilliant game that I adore also continues to throw up good news stories that champion individuals who face challenges, this time in the shape of a young asylum seeker

from Zimbabwe, Tawanda Muyeye.

This year has been Muyeye's ‘break-out’ season for his county side Kent. It has included a career best double hundred and being picked up by the The Oval Invincibles in The Hundred draft. His story began in Harare, Zimbabwe where he was recognised early as a national prospect in both cricket and rugby. An elegant batsman and wily off spin bowler he was named in the Under 19 World Cup squad in 2018 at the age of just 15. However, he was never able to make it to that World Cup as he left his home to travel to the UK as a refugee.

His mother is a vocal critic of human rights violations and supporter of the Movement for Democratic Change, a coalition party in Zimbabwe that was formed in opposition to the oppressive regime in Zimbabwe. In the past 20 years the ruling party has stripped

thousands of people violently of their land ownership rights leading to a collapse in agriculture, spiralling inflation and poverty that now means the country is one of the poorest and least productive in the world.

Muyeye's mother feared for her youngest son so brought him to safety in the UK, whilst his brother, who is six years older, escaped to neighbouring South Africa. His father remains in Zimbabwe hoping to preserve their property.

With very little to support himself, Muyeye hoped that cricket would be his saviour. He wrote to Eastbourne College, a boarding school on the south coast, asking to try out for a sixth form sports scholarship. One year later, he had scored over 1100 runs for the school, including 56 sixes and was named Wisden School Cricketer of the Year. In 2021 he was

granted the right to remain by the Home Office and signed his first professional contract with Kent.

I suspect there have been other refugees who have played for England, but there cannot have been many, and certainly not recently. Watch this space... he might just be England's next big thing!



*Muyeye on his way to 150 against Northamptonshire for Kent.*



## BLACK CHARACTER REPRESENTATION IN TEEN HORROR FICTION

Mr T Jones

Over the summer, our Senior Librarian Mr Tony Jones published 'The YA Horror 400', a huge almanac of everything you will ever need to know about teen horror fiction. It is available both as a paperback and Kindle from Amazon. We have included below, for our Black History Month Bulletins, an extract from Tony's 'Top Tip' section on Black horror fiction.

At first glance, you might wonder whether this section is genuinely necessary? I am regularly surprised by the number of school librarians who comment that they never read horror and use my online reviews as their first port of call to develop their genre stock. So, if a librarian knows little about Young Adult (YA) horror, then chances are they are going to know even less about diversity and representation within the pages of these books. Nevertheless, we are all keen to avoid buying titles featuring exclusively White characters. Annual events such as Black History Month are great but it

is equally important that book reviews of new fiction shine a light on titles which feature characters of colour. Thankfully these days Black representation has improved greatly, and the days of only having Black characters in stories about racism or gangsters are long gone. Middle Grade fiction probably has stronger representation than YA, but the older age category is improving all the time and the days in which every child can find themselves represented within the pages of a book, are not too far away.

*The list below includes some terrific books and I would like to shine a light on five:*

My first Top Tip is **Ryan Douglass's** highly engaging *The Taking of Jake Livingstone*, which stars a teenage Black boy who sees dead people, and as the school he attends is predominately White the story does have a racial angle which does not dominate the narrative. Jake is also gay, which gives the plot another significant area to explore alongside the supernatural developments.

**Tomi Oyemakinde's** *The Changing Man* also features a Black character in a predominately

White school, this time a UK boarding school where scholarship girl Ife is sucked into a mystery connected to the disappearance of another pupil and the secrets surrounding it. **Jessica Lewis's** *Monstrous* stars a Black girl heading to college with a track scholarship, but in the early stages her leg is broken in a ritual sacrifice to a giant snake! It might sound dumb, but it is also very funny with the relationship between Latavia and the snake being a particular highlight. Latavia also has a serious attitude and dishes out revenge in spades.

If you have ever read Stephen King's *Carrie* (1974), or seen the film, you know how things play out and in my next Top Tip, **Tiffany D. Jackson's** *The Weight of Blood* gives the King classic a serious shakeup. Tiffany takes the bones of the King masterpiece and transfers it to an American town which still has deeply unpleasant racist tendencies, with the equivalent 'Carrie' character hiding the fact that she is biracial but outed early in the novel. As she is bullied, her other abilities begin to manifest, and we all know how things will play out.

Finally, **Justina Ireland's** *Dread Nation* knocked me out with her alternative history of Civil War America, where slavery still exists and Black teenagers are used as the first line of defence against the undead. The world-building in this novel is unmatched and Justina leaves no stone unturned in presenting a version of America in which the Battle of Gettysburg was abandoned and not won by the North.

*These are all teen reads and are aimed at Year 8 or 9 and above, depending on ability.*

Kalynn Bayron - *You're Not Supposed to Die Tonight* (2023)

\***Ryan Douglass** - *The Taking of Jake Livingstone* (2021)

Akwaeke Emezi - *Pet* (2019)  
Femi Fadugba - *The Upper World* (2021)  
Lamar Giles - *The Getaway* (2022)  
Daka Hermon - *Hide and Seeker* (2020)  
Daka Hermon - *Nightmare King* (2023)  
\***Justina Ireland** - *Dread Nation* (2018)  
Tiffany D. Jackson - *White Smoke* (2021)  
\***Tiffany D. Jackson** - *The Weight of Blood* (2022)  
Britney S. Lewis - *The Dark Place* (2023)  
Jessica Lewis - *Bad Witch Burning* (2021)  
\***Jessica Lewis** - *Monstrous* (2023)  
Lily Meade - *The Shadow Sister* (2023)  
\***Tomi Oyemakinde** - *The Changing Man* (2023)  
Liselle Sambury - *Delicious Monsters* (2023)  
Vincent Tirado - *Burn Down, Rise Up* (2022)  
Vincent Tirado - *We Don't Swim Here* (2023)  
Kali Wallace - *Shallow Graves* (2016)  
Mary Watson - *Blood to Poison* (2022)

