

## **A Time for Burning – The Watts Riots – A Raisin in the Sun**

This 56 minute documentary, [A Time for Burning](#) takes place in 1966, after the 1965 Watts Riots.

Watch the documentary then discuss the following questions. You may have more questions, but this is a place to start.

1. Based on the conversations, attitudes and outcomes in the documentary what kind of impact did the riots have on this community? Consider the many ways a community might be impacted: physical property, physical harm, emotional/psychology harm/fear.
2. Did the riots inspire them to ask themselves what they could do to help resolve some of the racial conflict?
3. How far were they willing to go to make a difference?
4. Did they really want change?
5. What were some of the things that got in the way?
6. From the conversations the participants had - what forms of systemic racism are you able to identify?

Lorraine Hansberry wrote a play titled: A Raisin in the Sun, 1959

In act ii: scene iii, Mr. Lindner, a white man is elected to come talk to the black family. In the scene Mr. Lindner is speaking with, Walter – the adult black man, Ruth his wife and Beneatha his sister who plan to move to Clybourne Park, a white neighborhood.

Read the excerpt from act ii: scene iii from A Raisin in the Sun and discuss some of the following questions.

1. Do you think Mr. Lindner is racist? Why / why not?
2. Is the neighborhood he represents racist?
3. Are the sentiments in this scene mirrored in the documentary in any way?

## Act ii scene iii, (excerpt) A Raisin in the Sun

MAN: (Regarding WALTER, and sitting) Well—My name is Karl Lindner ...

WALTER: (Stretching out his hand) Walter Younger. This is my wife—(RUTH nods politely)—and my sister.

LINDNER: How do you do.

WALTER: (Amiably, as he sits himself easily on a chair, leaning forward on his knees with interest and looking expectantly into the newcomer's face) What can we do for you, Mr. Lindner!

LINDNER: (Some minor shuffling of the hat and briefcase on his knees) Well—I am a representative of the Clybourne Park Improvement Association—

WALTER: (Pointing) Why don't you sit your things on the floor?

LINDNER: Oh—yes. Thank you. (He slides the briefcase and hat under the chair) And as I was saying—I am from the Clybourne Park Improvement Association and we have had it brought to our attention at the last meeting that you people—or at least your mother—has bought a piece of residential property at—(He digs for the slip of paper again)—four o six Clybourne Street ...

WALTER: That's right. Care for something to drink? (Ruth, get Mr. Lindner a beer).

LINDNER: (Upset for some reason) Oh—no, really. I mean thank you very much, but no thank you.

RUTH: (Innocently) Some coffee? LINDNER Thank you, nothing at all.

(BENEATHA is watching the man carefully)

LINDNER: Well, I don't know how much you folks know about our organization. (He is a gentle man; thoughtful and somewhat labored in his manner) It is one of these community organizations set up to look after—oh, you know, things like block upkeep and special projects and we also have what we call our New Neighbors Orientation Committee ...

BENEATHA: (Drily) Yes—and what do they do?

LINDNER: (Turning a little to her and then returning the main force to WALTER) Well—it's what you might call a sort of welcoming committee, I guess. I mean they, we—I'm the chairman of the committee—go around and see the new people who move into the neighborhood and sort of give them the lowdown on the way we do things out in Clybourne Park.

BENEATHA: (With appreciation of the two meanings, which escape RUTH and WALTER) Un-huh.

LINDNER: And we also have the category of what the association calls—(He looks elsewhere)—uh—special community problems ...

BENEATHA: Yes—and what are some of those?

WALTER: Girl, let the man talk.

LINDNER: (With understated relief) Thank you. I would sort of like to explain this thing in my own way. I mean I want to explain to you in a certain way.

WALTER: Go ahead.

LINDNER: Yes. Well. I'm going to try to get right to the point. I'm sure we'll all appreciate that in the long run.

BENEATHA: Yes.

WALTER: Be still now!

LINDNER: Well—

RUTH: (Still innocently) Would you like another chair—you don't look comfortable.

LINDNER: (More frustrated than annoyed) No, thank you very much. Please. Well—to get right to the point I—(A great breath, and he is off at last) I am sure you people must be aware of some of the incidents which have happened in various parts of the city when colored people have moved into certain areas—(BENEATHA exhales heavily and starts tossing a piece of fruit up and down in the air) Well—because we have what I think is going to be a unique type of organization in American community life—not only do we deplore that kind of thing—but we are trying to do something about it. (BENEATHA stops tossing and turns with a new and quizzical interest to the man) We feel— (gaining confidence in his mission because of the interest in the faces of the people he is talking to)—we feel that most of the trouble in this world, when you come right down to it—(He hits his knee for emphasis)—most of the trouble exists because people just don't sit down and talk to each other.

RUTH: (Nodding as she might in church, pleased with the remark) You can say that again, mister.

LINDNER: (More encouraged by such affirmation) That we don't try hard enough in this world to understand the other fellow's problem. The other guy's point of view.

RUTH: Now that's right.

(BENEATHA and WALTER merely watch and listen with genuine interest)

LINDNER: Yes—that's the way we feel out in Clybourne Park. And that's why I was elected to come here this afternoon and talk to you people. Friendly like, you know, the way people should talk to each other and see if we couldn't find some way to work this thing out. As I say, the whole business is a matter of caring about the other fellow. Anybody can see that you are a nice family of folks, hard-working and honest I'm sure. (BENEATHA frowns slightly, quizzically, her head tilted regarding him) Today everybody knows what it means to be on the outside of something. And of course, there is always somebody who is out to take advantage of people who don't always understand.

WALTER: What do you mean?

LINDNER: Well—you see our community is made up of people who've worked hard as the dickens for years to build up that little community. They're not rich and fancy people; just hard-working, honest people who don't really have much but those little homes and a dream of the kind of community they want to raise their children in. Now, I don't say we are perfect and there is a lot wrong in some of the things they want. But you've got to admit that a man, right or wrong, has the right to want to have the neighborhood he lives in a certain kind of way. And at the moment the overwhelming majority of our people out there feel that people get along better, take more of a common interest in the life of the community, when they share a common background. I want you to believe me when I tell you that race prejudice simply doesn't enter into it. It is a matter of the people of Clybourne Park believing, rightly or wrongly, as I say, that for the happiness of all concerned that our Negro families are happier when they live in their own communities.

BENEATHA: (With a grand and bitter gesture) This, friends, is the Welcoming Committee!

WALTER: (Dumbfounded, looking at LINDNER) IS this what you came marching all the way over here to tell us?

LINDNER: Well, now we've been having a fine conversation. I hope you'll hear me all the way through.

WALTER: (Tightly) Go ahead, man.

LINDNER: You see—in the face of all the things I have said, we are prepared to make your family a very generous offer ...

BENEATHA: Thirty pieces and not a coin less!

WALTER: Yeah?

LINDNER: (Putting on his glasses and drawing a form out of the briefcase) Our association is prepared, through the collective effort of our people, to buy the house from you at a financial gain to your family.

RUTH: Lord have mercy, ain't this the living gall!

WALTER; All right, you through?

LINDNER: Well, I want to give you the exact terms of the financial arrangement—

WALTER: We don't want to hear no exact terms of no arrangements. I want to know if you got any more to tell us 'bout getting together?

LINDNER: (Taking off his glasses) Well—I don't suppose that you feel ...

WALTER: Never mind how I feel—you got any more to say 'bout how people ought to sit down and talk to each other? ... Get out of my house, man.

(He turns his back and walks to the door)

LINDNER: (Looking around at the hostile faces and reaching and assembling his hat and briefcase) Well—I don't understand why you people are reacting this way. What do you think you are going to gain by moving into a neighborhood where you just aren't wanted and where some elements—well—people can get awful worked up when they feel that their whole way of life and everything they've ever worked for is threatened.

WALTER: Get out.

LINDNER: (At the door, holding a small card) Well—I'm sorry it went like this.

WALTER: Get out.

LINDNER: (Almost sadly regarding WALTER) YOU just can't force people to change their hearts, son.

(He turns and put his card on a table and exits. WALTER pushes the door to with stinging hatred, and stands looking at it. RUTH just sits and BENEATHA just stands. They say nothing. MAMA and TRAVIS enter)

MAMA: Well—this all the packing got done since I left out of here this morning. I testify before God that my children got all the energy of the dead! What time the moving men due?

BENEATHA: Four o'clock. You had a caller, Mama. (She is smiling, teasingly)

MAMA: Sure enough—who?

BENEATHA: (Her arms folded saucily) The Welcoming Committee.

(WALTER and RUTH giggle) MAMA: (Innocently) Who?

BENEATHA: The Welcoming Committee. They said they're sure going to be glad to see you when you get there.

WALTER: (Devilishly) Yeah, they said they can't hardly wait to see your face.

(Laughter)

MAMA: (Sensing their facetiousness) What's the matter with you all?

WALTER: Ain't nothing the matter with us. We just telling you 'bout the gentleman who came to see you this afternoon. From the Clybourne Park Improvement Association.

MAMA: What he want?

RUTH: (In the same mood as BENEATHA and WALTER) TO welcome you, honey.

WALTER: He said they can't hardly wait. He said the one thing they don't have, that they just dying to have out there is a fine family of fine colored people! (To RUTH and BENEATHA) Ain't that right!

RUTH: (Mockingly) Yeah! He left his card— BENEATHA (Handing card to MAMA) In case.

(MAMA reads and throws it on the floor—understanding and looking off as she draws her chair up to the table on which she has put her plant and some sticks and some cord)

MAMA: Father, give us strength. (Knowingly—and without fun) Did he threaten us?

BENEATHA: Oh—Mama—they don't do it like that any more. He talked Brotherhood. He said everybody ought to learn how to sit down and hate each other with good Christian fellowship.