

## *Clybourne Park*

By Yessaira Pagan-Colon

Bruce Norris' play, *Clybourne Park* serves as a continuation of Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*. Norris' play is quite ironic when it approaches the topic of racial inequality. In *Clybourne Park* a familiar character from Hansberry's play is introduced, Mr. Lindner. The premise of Act I features Bev and Russ, who were the previous homeowners of the house the Youngers had purchased. After some other supporting characters are introduced, an argument breaks out concerning the Younger family and how the presence of "colored people" in their community would not be in the best interest of the residents at Clybourne Park. This section is quite ironic because Mr. Lindner took pride in saying Clybourne Park was a "progressive" community but felt that bringing in the Younger family was crossing the line. In this Act, the only people that were truly progressive were Bev and Russ. Mr. Lindner was willing to go as far as revealing to the Younger family why the house was so cheap, which was because Bev and Russ' son had taken his life in the home.

In Act II, the scene opens with the same house 50 years later, in 2009. By now, Clybourne Park were a predominantly black community, and the potential homeowners, Lindsay and Steve were thinking of renovating the home as well. In Act II it is apparent that the roles have switched between the community members and how they felt. The character that had taken Lindner's place was named Lena. The setting is presented as the couple and some other supporting characters going through certain policies before they break any ground. Then the audience has a sense of déjà vu when a similar argument breaks out over the same issue of the neighborhood not wanting a certain type of people in their community. This is a profound moment in the play because this is exactly what the Younger family had experienced. Although Lena wasn't willing to bribe them out of buying the house, she made it a point to tell them about the fate of Bev and Russ' son and made sure they felt uncomfortable about buying the house in a neighborhood they were not welcomed into.

Norris' play serves as a response to Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* because the message is that nothing has really changed. Instead of dealing with the issues concerning racial inequality, the residents of Clybourne Park are stuck in the past. The same emotion is shown through the residents in the neighborhood back in the 1950's and in 2009, and that emotion was fear. Each community feared that the other would take over and destroy the utopia that they had. This fear is what kept them apart without leaving room for the possibility that they could meld together and truly represent America as a melting pot.