

# Lorraine Hansberry



Born: May 19, 1930,  
Chicago, IL;  
Died: January 12, 1965,  
New York City

**Lorraine Hansberry** is the first African American woman to have her play performed on Broadway. The play *A Raisin in the Sun* highlights the lives of African Americans living under racial segregation in Chicago. The plot reflects the story of Hansberry's family who struggled against segregation, challenging a restrictive covenant which eventually resulted in the Supreme Court case *Hansberry vs. Lee*. The title was taken from a line in the poem *Harlem* by Langston Hughes. The line reads: "What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?" At age twenty-nine Hansberry won the New York Drama Critic's Circle Award, making her the first African American woman dramatist, the fifth woman and the youngest to do so. She worked at a Pan-Africanist newspaper called *Freedom*, writing about the African struggle for liberation. She was a lesbian and wrote about sexual freedom of choice.