Top of Form

Read the two texts that are included below. One is a scene from the play we have just finished, particularly the scene where Karl Lindner is telling the family that the community they are wanting to move into does not want them there. The second is a recent article from *The New York Times* exploring discrimination in housing communities in the contemporary world. After reading, you will be asked to respond to questions that synthesize the two documents.

**Text 1: Excerpt from ‘A Raisin in the Sun,’ by Lorraine Hansberry, Act 2, Scene 3**

***Note:****This is only a small excerpt from the scene when Lindner is discussing the reasoning of the Clybourne Park Improvement Association. For more context, refer back to the play.*

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!

Continue this scene *through Lindner’s speech that ends, “People can get awful worked up when they feel that their whole way of life and everything they’ve ever worked for is threatened.” You can find it in the book on pages 76 – 77.*

**Text 2: Excerpt from**‘Discrimination in Housing Against Nonwhites Persists Quietly, U.S. Study Finds,’ **by Shaila Dewan (The New York Times, June 11, 2013)**

Discrimination against blacks, Hispanics and Asians looking for housing persists in subtle forms, according to a new national study commissioned by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development. Though less likely to face overt obstacles, like being refused an appointment to see a home, minority customers were shown fewer available units than whites with similar qualifications, the study found.

They were also asked more questions about their finances, according to the study, and given fewer offers of help financing a loan.

“Although we’ve come a long way from the days of blatant, in-your-face housing injustice, discrimination still persists,” Shaun Donovan, the department’s secretary, said in a telephone conference on Tuesday unveiling the findings. “And just because it has taken on a hidden form doesn’t make it any less harmful.”

In each of the study’s 8,000 tests, one white and one minority tester of the same gender and age, posing as equally well-qualified renters or buyers, visited the same housing provider or agent. In more than half the test cases, both testers were shown the same number of apartments or homes. But in cases where one tester was shown more homes or apartments, the white tester was usually favored, leading to a higher number of units shown to whites overall.

In one test, a white customer looking for a two-bedroom apartment was shown a two-bedroom and a one-bedroom and given applications for both, while a Hispanic customer who arrived two hours later was told that nothing was available. In another, a real estate agent refused to meet with a black tester who was not prequalified for a loan, while a white tester was given an appointment without being asked if she had prequalified.

The study was the fourth of its kind since 1977, when the results showed a starker form of discrimination known as door-slamming. In 17 percent of the cases in that study, whites were offered a unit when blacks were told that none were available. In 2012, when the new study was conducted, the vast majority of testers of all races were able to at least make an appointment to see a recently advertised house or apartment.

But once they arrived, they were given fewer options. Over all, black prospective renters were presented 11 percent fewer rentals than whites, Hispanics about 12 percent fewer rentals and Asians about 10 percent fewer rentals. As prospective buyers, blacks were presented 17 percent fewer homes and Asians 15 percent fewer homes, but Hispanics were given the opportunity to see roughly the same number of homes as whites.

White testers also were more frequently offered lower rents, told that deposits and other move-in costs were negotiable, or were quoted a lower price. Taking into account fees, deposits and rents, apartments were more likely to cost whites slightly less in the first year of rental than blacks might pay. …

Even subtle discrimination like steering minorities to certain neighborhoods or failing to offer them the homes most likely to increase in value would result in substantially weaker accumulation of wealth, said John Taylor, the president and chief executive of the National Community Reinvestment Coalition, which seeks to improve housing in underserved communities.

Polling shows that many Americans think financially stable customers have the same opportunities to obtain good housing regardless of race, he added.

“A study like this,” he said, “helps you understand that there really is very different treatment occurring when it comes to things like housing and lending.”

After reading the two texts from above, let’s think about the context of the play in comparison to contemporary society. **Everyone must answer question #1**, and then you will choose ***TWO*** of the next four. Make sure to answer each one fully, as there may be multiple questions for each prompt.

1. **What strategy does Lindner use in order to persuade the Youngers to accept the association’s proposal? What is appealing about his argument? What is offensive about his suggestion? How does Walter respond to his efforts? Why do you think Walter responds as he does?**
2. What forms of housing discrimination persist today, according to a recent study discussed in the article? How would you compare a real estate agent today who doesn’t show an African-American family a house for sale in a white neighborhood with Lindner and the neighborhood association in “Raisin”? How have things changed? How have they remained the same?
3. How does the social and racial context in which housing discrimination occurs today compare with the circumstances in which the Youngers experience it? Do you think people today are still drawn to homes outside of “their own community” for similar reasons?
4. Walter Younger’s life insurance policy represents a substantial financial windfall for the Youngers. Mama’s decision to use some of that money to buy a home in Clybourne Park represents the classic realization of the American dream. Use the article on housing discrimination to consider how achieving the American dream by purchasing a home can be complicated by race. Why, according to the article, is it more difficult for some to achieve this dream? And what kinds of long-term economic effects does housing discrimination have, according to the article?
5. Do you think we all should have the right to buy a home of our own, wherever we want? What do you think should be done to ensure that right and make sure everyone has the chance to achieve their “American Dream?” You may cite information from your reading of “A Dream Unrealized for African Americans.”