

Combs stars in TV adaptation of classic 'Raisin'

By Kam Williams
Sentinel-Voice

Lorraine Hansberry's (1930-1965) "A Raisin in the Sun" was the first play written by a Black woman ever to open on Broadway. It takes its title from the opening line in "Harlem," "a poem by Langston Hughes which poses the question "What happens to a dream deferred?"

The original theatrical production debuted on March 11, 1959, and starred Sidney Poitier and Ruby Dee. Its semi-autobiographical storyline was loosely based on real-life events that unfolded in Hansberry's own family back in the 1930s. At the time, her parents had been met with pure hatred after purchasing a home in a lily-white, Chicago enclave.

In her memoir, "To Be Young, Gifted and Black," she recounted how her dad, determined to integrate, ended up spending a small fortune in legal fees trying to remain there, despite the fact that, on a daily basis, "hellishly-hostile... howling mobs surrounded our house.. My memories of this 'correct way' of fighting White supremacy in America include being spat at, cursed and pummeled in the daily trek to and from school."

Hansberry also describes her "desperate and courageous mother" staying up all night with a loaded gun, "doggedly guarding her four children, while my father fought the respectable part of the battle in the Washington court."

Debaters—

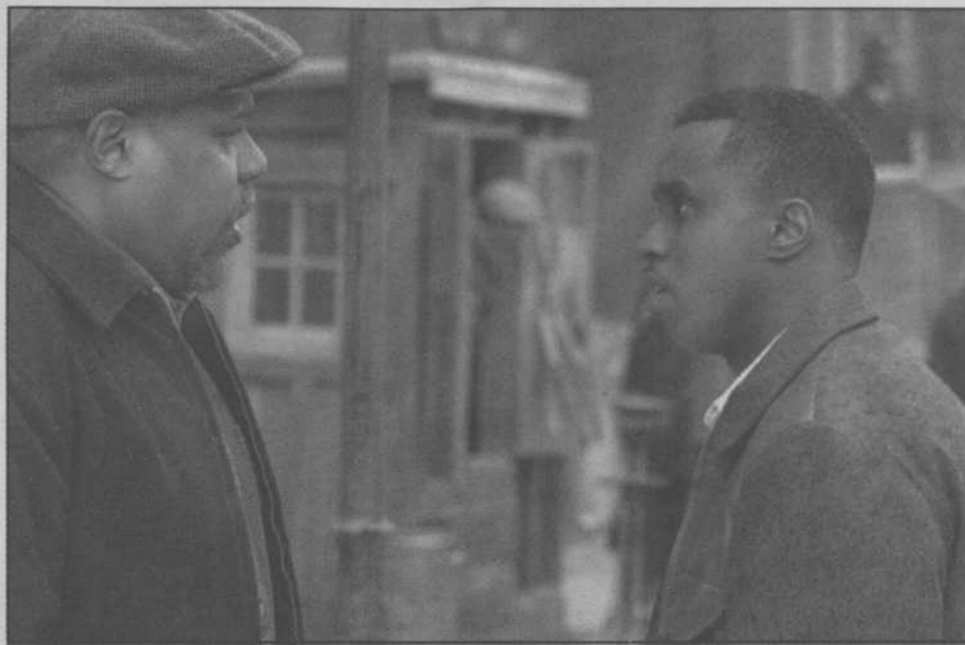
(Continued from Page 6) said.

"The Image Award means legacy. This woman represents my legacy."

Harper attended Harvard law school with Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama, and said backstage that he'd used downtime during the writer's strike to campaign on Obama's behalf. Obama's recent string of successes in the primary campaign had many talking politics onstage.

Other artists commented on the current political climate.

"This is such an exciting time in our lives. We can all feel the change happening, and we all have the power," said "Ugly Betty's" Vanessa L. Williams, winner for supporting actress in a comedy series. "Vote."



"A Raisin in the Sun" co-star Sean Combs, right, made his fortune as a hip-hop mogul.

That case, Hansberry v. Lee, would make it all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, which struck down restrictive covenants when it ruled on November 13, 1940, that Whites could no longer rely on restrictive covenants to bar African-Americans

from living in their communities. But despite the landmark decision in their favor, without police protection, the Hansberrys would remain subject to continued mistreatment by racist neighbors determined to make their lives miserable.

"A Raisin in the Sun" focuses on a fictional family named Younger with dreams of moving out of the ghetto but still living in a dilapidated tenement on Chicago's South Side. A Broadway revival in 2004 featured Sean "Diddy" Combs surrounded by

Phylicia Rashad, Audra McDonald, Sanaa Lathan and Bill Nunn. That talented ensemble has been reassembled for this moving made-for-TV version.

At the point of departure, we meet Walter, Jr. (Combs) a hard-working 35-year-old chauffeur in the process of assuming the role of patriarch of a family comprised of his pregnant wife, Ruth (McDonald), his son, Travis (Justin Martin), his exhausted, domestic servant mother, Lena (Rashad), and his sister, Beneatha (Lathan), following the death of his father. The plot revolves around the question of how Walter, Sr.'s life insurance proceeds ought to be spent.

Grandma thinks they should use the \$10,000 to buy a home in a White neighborhood, since the five of them are currently cramped in a rundown, roach-infested apartment. College student

Beneatha wants some of the money to pay for med school, while ambitious Walter would like to invest in a liquor store with his pal, Bobo (Nunn), and smooth-talking Willy (Ron C. Jones). And when Lena hands the check over to her son as the new man of the house, it's just a matter of time before she comes to regret that ill-advised decision.

Helped immeasurably by his principal cast of his talented co-stars, Diddy comes of age as an actor here, delivering a memorable performance in an African-American literary classic of Shakespearean proportions. "A Raisin in the Sun" proves to be every bit as relevant today as the day it was first staged.

Excellent (4 stars). Unrated.

A "Raisin in the Sun" will premiere on ABC-TV at 5 PM (PST) on Monday, February 25th.

Fitzgeralds Casino & Hotel Presents
The Temptations Review
 Featuring **Dennis Edwards**
 with a special appearance by Miki Howard

Saturday, February 23, 2008 • 8:00pm
 Cashman Theatre • 850 N. Las Vegas Blvd. • Las Vegas, NV 89101
 \$30 plus tax / fees • \$3 parking

Advance tickets available at Fitz Gift Shop or day of event at Cashman Theater.
 Free shuttle bus service from Fitz Casino & Hotel

6th Anniversary Celebration
 FITZ CASINO & HOTEL LAS VEGAS

Fitz
 CASINO & HOTEL LAS VEGAS
 Luck Lives Here

RECEIVE \$10 OFF
 the purchase of two tickets to the Temptations Review with this coupon

Present this coupon to gift shop clerk with payment to receive \$10 off the purchase of two tickets.
 Coupon Code: NEON

Fitzgeralds
 in partnership with CDA, LLC presents

TASTE & SOUNDS of SOUL

Enjoy a Fremont Street Block Party Extravaganza honoring Black History Month and celebrating the 6th Anniversary of Fitz Casino Hotel Las Vegas

Featuring Booths, Attractions and Events

Friday, February 22 • 4pm – 11pm
 Saturday, February 23 • 11am – 1am
 Sunday, February 24 • 12pm – 6pm

EVERYONE IS WELCOME!