



Discovery Guide

PERFORMING FOR LOS ANGELES YOUTH

CLYBOURNE PARK

BY Bruce Norris

DIRECTED BY Pam MacKinnon

Welcome to Center Theatre Group and *Clybourne Park* by Bruce Norris

Clybourne Park was inspired by the landmark drama, *A Raisin in the Sun* and picks up where that story ends: in a Chicago neighborhood in 1959. Act Two takes place 50 years later, in the same house in 2009.

Both the conversation in Act One and Act Two center around the fate of the house and how what happens to the house will impact the larger community. While each conversation starts off about real estate, the intersection between property and Race soon becomes impossible for the characters to ignore. Norris challenges us as an audience to look at Race relations from both a historical and present day perspective. To consider what progress has been made, and what changes still need to occur.

Real Estate and Race. Community and Communication. Tribes and Territory. Take a moment to think about those words. What do they mean to you? Do you think of them as separate issues or are they intertwined? What is their impact and importance in your own life?

Turn the page to learn more about why communities change. Read an interview with Set Designer, Dan Ostling, to discover how the design helps tell this story. Reflect on the power of humor to explore difficult topics. Think about the difference a half century has made regarding Race relations in the United States. Or has it?

Clybourne Park was awarded the 2011 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, a prestigious award that recognizes extraordinary achievements in journalism, literature, and music. When it was given the Pulitzer, the jury described it as "a powerful work whose memorable characters speak in witty and perceptive ways to America's sometimes toxic struggle with race and class consciousness."

Theatre raises questions and challenges audience members to discover their own answers. See what questions this information raises for you and what questions and answers the performance provides.

Thank you so much for joining us for *Clybourne Park*. We look forward to seeing you at the theatre!

"But you can't live
in a principle, can you?
Gotta live in a HOUSE."

—*Clybourne Park*

January 11–February 26, 2012 • Mark Taper Forum

Playwrights Horizons, Inc., New York City, produced the World Premiere of *Clybourne Park* off-Broadway in 2010.



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Ahmanson Theatre
 Mark Taper Forum
 Kirk Douglas Theatre

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Discovery Guide

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ACT I

BEV AND RUSS ARE MOVING OUT of their modest bungalow in Clybourne Park, an exclusively White neighborhood of Chicago, Illinois in 1959. Their primary reason for moving is to escape the constant reminders of their deceased son who was a Korean War veteran. Bev and Russ feel ostracized from their community and are selling their home at a deeply discounted rate. They do not know that their realtor sold the property to a Black family until their neighbor, Karl Linder, a member of the Clybourne Park Neighborhood Association, tells them. He urges Bev and Russ to not sell their house to the Black family for fear that if they do so, the property values will decrease and other White families will begin to leave the neighborhood. Despite threats and derision for their lack of concern for their fellow neighbors' properties, Bev and Russ refuse to change their decision. They no longer feel loyalty to a community that they feel has betrayed them.

ACT II

FIFTY YEARS PASS AND IN 2009, Clybourne Park is a radically different neighborhood. It has become a primarily Black community on the verge of gentrification. We meet Lindsey and Steve, who are purchasing the same house that Bev and Russ sold in 1959. The house has deteriorated during these 50 years and Lindsey and Steve plan on demolishing it and rebuilding a larger and more modern home. Lena, a relative of the Black family who purchased the home from Russ and Bev in 1959, doesn't want the house to be demolished because it would destroy an important part of the neighborhood's history. Act Two begins with a meeting to discuss the house's future. While the conversation begins with a discussion of renovation and property rights, it soon diverts to the sensitive topic of Race. The characters are unable to address Race directly and the conversation goes to unexpected places. It reveals the assumptions each of them have about other groups of people and begs us to ask the question: how far have we come since 1959?

Has the situation changed or merely the conversation?

Inspired by *A Raisin in the Sun*

OFTEN ART IS INSPIRED BY OTHER ART.

Lorraine Hansberry read and was deeply moved by Langston Hughes' poem Harlem, which asks "What happens to a dream deferred?" She wrote *A Raisin in the Sun* as an attempt to answer this very question and chose to end the play with a sense of hope. Although the struggle continues, the Younger families' dream of owning a home is no longer deferred. Other artists have seen *A Raisin in the Sun* and been moved to respond with their own artistic expression. *Clybourne Park* is one of these responses.

At the end of *A Raisin in the Sun*, the Younger Family is moving from a Black ghetto to a house in the all White neighborhood of Clybourne Park. They will be the first family to cross the color line in that neighborhood. While packing, they are approached by Karl Linder, a representative of the Clybourne Park Neighborhood Association. Karl offers the Youngers a competitive counter-offer to not move into the house. The Youngers decline his offer, even though Karl warns them about possible violence from their neighbors.

Bruce Norris was intrigued by Karl Linder. He took the character from *A Raisin in the Sun* and expanded his role; imagining what Linder might do next to prevent the Youngers from moving into his neighborhood. He got curious about the White family that was selling their home in Clybourne Park and re-imagined the play from their perspective. Who were they? Why were they selling their house? What was happening on the other side of town from the Younger family in 1959?

And what would be happening in that same neighborhood fifty years later?

Who's Who

In *Clybourne Park*, each actor plays two different characters. In Act One, we meet the actors as people living in America in 1959. In Act Two, 50 years have passed and each actor plays a different person, living in 2009.



RUSS, homeowner, married to Bev

DAN, contractor, working on the home



BEV, homeowner, married to Russ

KATHY, Lindsey and Steve's lawyer



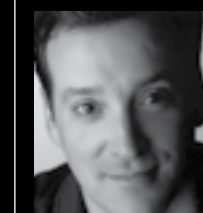
FRANCINE, domestic worker in the home of Russ and Bev

LENA, long-time neighborhood resident and a member of the Property Owner's Association



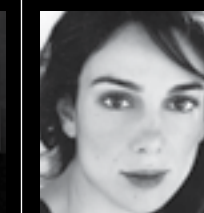
ALBERT, married to Francine

KEVIN, married to Lena



KARL, Russ and Bev's neighbor, represents the Neighborhood Association

STEVE, Lindsey's husband, new owner of the home



BETSY, married to Karl

LINDSEY, Steve's wife, new owner of the home



JIM, Minister of the neighborhood church

TOM, a lawyer representing the Property Owner's Association

Why do you think that Bruce Norris decided to have actors play two different roles? What was his intent?

As you watch the play, notice what the actors do physically, vocally and emotionally to create two very different people. What do the costumes tell us about each character? How do the different time periods impact the choices the actors make?

How does the choice to have actors playing two roles, impact us as an audience?

The Writer's Intent

PEOPLE WRITE FOR DIFFERENT REASONS.

For some it is to express feelings, to share stories, to capture experiences. Some write to provoke, enlighten, heal, or ignite change.

Playwrights write knowing their words will be shared with a live audience. Playwrights think about what they want their audience to feel, think or experience as they hear the words of the play brought to life.

"There is power in making people uncomfortable. There is power in provoking."
 — Bruce Norris

What is the power or purpose in making people uncomfortable? What is the power of provoking?

Have you ever been in an uncomfortable situation that gave you new insight or changed your thinking in some way? How did the discomfort motivate you?

What is the power in imagining the world the way you want it to be? How might art move our world forward? Do you believe, as Lorraine Hansberry did, that without art, there might be no world?

If you are a writer why do you write? What is your intent?

"Write about the world as it is and as you think it ought to be— if there is to be a world."
 — Lorraine Hansberry

"Communities change."

—Clybourne Park

"Neighborhoods can be communal places that support the members that live in it or they can be tribal places that attack outsiders or they can be both."

—Bill Savage, Northwestern University English Professor
New: 'Clybourne Park' Picks Up On 1959 Race Issues by Cheryl Corley, Copyright © 2011 National Public Radio®.

NEIGHBORHOODS CHANGE.

Even if some people might like their community to remain the same, the truth is that neighborhoods are often in flux. Many factors contribute to a community's change including changing demographics (who lives there), changing industry (businesses shut down, other types of businesses open), a changing economic climate (property values go up or down) and changing perceptions and emotions (how people feel about a neighborhood and its desirability or safety.)

Sometimes the change is welcomed and celebrated. Sometimes the change is frightening, and often the change can make a community completely unrecognizable. The reaction to change is highly personal and raises questions: What makes a house a home? What defines a neighborhood? What makes a neighborhood into a community?

Crossing the Color Line:

"ONE OF THE MOST FREQUENTLY USED STATEMENTS regarding Race issues in America is that of W.E.B. Du Bois (1903), who observed that the most pressing problem facing America in the twentieth century is that of the color line. This quote is so often repeated because the problem of how we perceive, define and negotiate race remains."

In 1959, conversations about Race often focused on neighborhood integration, specifically Black families moving into White neighborhoods—crossing an invisible but very real color line. We don't actually witness anyone crossing the color line in *Clybourne Park*. *A Raisin in the Sun* ends with the Younger family's decision to move into an all White neighborhood despite having been warned of the dangers. In *Clybourne Park*, an unnamed Black family (presumably the Youngers) crosses the color line and moves into the neighborhood between Act One and Act Two.

To be the first Black family in a White neighborhood requires great courage. In 1937, playwright Lorraine Hansberry's family moved to the all White neighborhood of Washington Park, in Chicago, Illinois.

Her family broke the color line in that neighborhood and fought a legal battle all the way to the Supreme Court, to keep their home.

People crossing the color line can become a catalyst for a neighborhood to change. The demographics of Washington Park changed very quickly. Until 1948, this was an area predominately for middle-class Whites. By 1960, in less than 12 years, this same neighborhood had grown to be over 95% Black. It remained that way until 2000, when some White families started moving into the neighborhood. Today, some sections of Washington Park have populations consisting of 30% Whites. Most sections, however, still have Black populations of 90%.

- Why do you think people decide to cross the color line? Do you think the risks of being the first family of a different race or ethnicity to move into a neighborhood are worth it? Would you cross the color line to live in a neighborhood that you desire?
- Besides geographical lines, what else can the color line refer to? What other lines need to be navigated in everyday life?

"The history of America IS the history of PRIVATE PROPERTY."

—Clybourne Park

Property: that which a person owns; the possession or possessions of a particular owner

The United States has very specific, legal definitions for various types of property. These include:

Public Property: property owned by a government; it commonly refers to parks, playgrounds, streets, sidewalks, schools, libraries, and other properties regularly used by the general public.

Private Property: land or belongings owned by a person or group and kept for their exclusive use; land not owned by the government. Different types of private property include:

- **Real Property:** land and the improvements to it made by human effort (also known as "immovable property").
- **Personal Property:** everything that is the subject of ownership that does not come under the definition of real property (roughly speaking, it is private property that is moveable). It is divided into two major categories:
 - **Tangible Personal Property:** refers to any type of property that can generally be moved, touched, or felt; includes such items as furniture, clothing, jewelry, art, writing, or household goods.
 - **Intangible Personal Property:** this refers to personal property that cannot actually be moved, touched, or felt, but instead represents something of value such as stocks, bonds, patents, and copyrights.
- **Intellectual Property:** property that results from original creative thought, such as patents, copyright material, and trademarks; it can describe a wide variety of property created by musicians, authors, artists, and inventors.

The conflicts that arise in *Clybourne Park* start with a dispute involving private property, namely real property, also known as "real estate."

In the United States, when a person owns real estate, he/she holds a set of rights that enable him/her to utilize this land in ways that they see fit. However, these rights are not absolute. Our government also reserves certain rights associated with these lands because it has agreed to protect the property for the owner. Among the government's rights is the right to control the use of private property to ensure the protection of the public's interest.

Currently, any citizen in the United States has the right to own private property, regardless of race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation. Property may be sold or bequeathed to whomever the owner desires.

The central debate taking place in *Clybourne Park* involves private property rights. In Act One, a family is selling its home and moving out of the Clybourne Park neighborhood. A community member objects to the home being sold to a Black family and attempts to dissuade the couple from following through with the sale. In Act Two, one couple is arguing for its right to do with their newly purchased property as they please. Another couple is fighting for the preservation of the history and character of their community.

Ethnologist and Harvard professor, Pauline Peters, has stated that property systems are not isolated from the social fabric of a community. Property ownership is connected to many aspects of U.S. history such as the concentration of power, slavery, the right to vote, and women's suffrage.

White Flight

THE FIRST ACT OF CLYBOURNE PARK ILLUSTRATES the beginning of White Flight. White Flight is a term used to describe when the majority of middle-class White people leave a neighborhood because people of different ethnic groups move into the neighborhood. The character Karl fears that if a Black family moves in, then more White people will leave, the neighborhood will begin to decline, and become overrun with poor Black residents.

During the act break, fifty years pass and Karl's prediction is true. In both the fictional *Clybourne Park*, and in major metropolitan cities across the United States, the departure of White residents led to vacancies, decreased property values, and an increased concentration of lower income families in the inner cities. Some historians note that White middle class property owners aren't the only ones to move when there is an influx of Black people in an

area. There is evidence that indicates more affluent Black people leave neighborhoods when the Black population exceeds one-third. The argument suggests that people may move away from declining home values and fear of poverty, rather than Race itself.

- Who is your ideal neighbor?
- Is there anyone in your neighborhood that you wished didn't live there? Why?
- Do you think there is anyone in your neighborhood who wishes that your family didn't live there? What makes you think this?
- Is there a neighborhood in Southern California that you wish you could live in? What excites you about that community? Does anything scare you about that area?

"I'm not here to solve society's problems. I'm simply telling you what will happen, and it will happen as follows: first one family will leave, then another...."

—Clybourne Park

".....there's just a lot of pride, and a lot of memories in these houses, and for some of us, that connection still has value...for those of us who have remained."

—Clybourne Park

Gentrification

ACCORDING TO MERRIAM-WEBSTER, Gentrification is "the process of renewal and rebuilding accompanying the influx of middle-class or affluent people into deteriorating areas that often displaces poorer residents. It is derived from the word gentry, which means, upper class."

Other terms used to describe the act of gentrification are revitalization, displacement, and neighborhood renewal or preservation. People have different opinions about the cost and benefits of gentrification. A home owners' right to do what they want with their property may conflict with another's desire to preserve the history and unique character of a neighborhood.

The second act of *Clybourne Park* begins as a debate about gentrification. The city is becoming a desirable place to live again and people who grew up in the suburbs are moving in and bringing change to the neighborhood. The character of Lena finds it demoralizing that Lindsey and Steve plan to change the house. She feels that they are stripping the neighborhood of its rich history. But, Steve and Lindsey want a house that suits their needs and taste, and see it as an investment to increase their property's value.

- Who lives in your neighborhood today?
- Who lived in your neighborhood 50 years ago?
- How has your neighborhood changed over the last 50 years?
- What changes are happening in your neighborhood today? Do you consider them changes for the better or worse? What do you wish would change? What do you hope never changes?
- Which word do you think best describes the process of gentrification: revitalization, displacement, or neighborhood renewal or preservation? Why?

The limits of Communication

"this entire conversation... isn't at least partly informed — am I right? By the issue of... racism?"

"Can we just come out and say what it is we're actually... saying instead of doing this elaborate little dance around it."

"Somebody translate!"

"Can I — ? I'm sorry. I didn't mean to — but I was hoping I could say something to everyone, if you don't mind?"

"But now I'm not allowed to tell it?"

"You know, it might be a good idea if we all turned off our phones."

"Am I being silenced?"

"I rather doubt your grandparents were sold as private property."
—Clybourne Park

Who gets to LAUGH?

"Humor is a weapon."

—Langston Hughes

THERE IS NO HIERARCHY OF DISCRIMINATION.

Prejudice and bigotry are not exclusive to any one group. However, Race relations between Black and White America have a unique charge rooted in our nation's history of slavery. Most Black Americans had their home, culture, and families stolen from them. They were brought to this country against their will. Black Americans were not considered people, but rather property, that could be bought and sold. The pain and anger from this legacy remains.

Many White Americans do not come from families who owned slaves and yet may feel a sense of responsibility and guilt for this history, as well as a feeling of helplessness in how to move forward. These underlying tensions make communication treacherous and sometimes impossible between Black and White America. Even with a desire for a positive outcome, the conversation remains difficult and emotional.

Clybourne Park looks specifically at Black and White Americans over a 50 year span of history. The passionate anger that Lena expresses regarding the house is fed by 400 years of discrimination. The house isn't just a house. The neighborhood represents the courage of her aunt in crossing the color line, and the pride of a people once seen as property in owning property to make a home and a better life for their family.

While we have seen progress in civil rights during the past 50 years of American history, there is still much change needed. The conversation isn't over. While slavery can never be made to not have happened, what can be done to move our country forward? How do we both honor the pain of the past, and include Americans of all colors and ethnicities in the challenge of making a better future?

Clybourne Park 6

COMEDIANS LIKE Chris Rock, George Lopez, Sarah Silverman, Margaret Cho, and Wanda Williams use humor as a vehicle to talk about Race. Some comedians talk about the Race they belong to and some comedians talk about other Races. Their jokes work because there is a truth or recognition that makes audiences feel uncomfortable. Comedians of all Races use prejudice and stereotypes with the hope of provoking a more honest conversation. Laughter can provide a release, and the breathing room needed to tackle tough issues.

In addition, Comedy can unite and it can divide. Laughter can either reinforce feeling part of a group or feeling like an outsider. Who laughs at what, and in whose company, can reveal a great deal about Race and group identity. Bruce Norris employs the best practices of the comedian in *Clybourne Park*. He uses humor to expose sensitive issues in America.

AS THE CACOPHONY OF QUOTES FROM CLYBOURNE PARK SUGGESTS, throughout the play characters try to communicate with one another and often fail miserably. We watch as people inadvertently offend someone by their words. We watch people struggle to find the right words to express their thoughts or feelings. We see people choose silence and others try to break through that silence. We meet characters unaware of the offensiveness of their words. We meet other people so acutely aware of wanting to say the right thing that their fear keeps them from being able to say anything at all.

Place and Race are two of the main topics of the play. Neighborhood change and racial tension often exacerbate each other. Property, which seems on the surface easy to discuss, intersects with issues of Race, which can be hard to talk about without anger, guilt, offensiveness, or misunderstanding. In both 1959 and in 2009, conversations that start out about a specific house, quickly become forums on Race and change.

Talking about Race in America can be fraught with obstacles, especially in racially mixed settings. Many people therefore avoid these conversations, which continues ignorance and slows our nation's ability to move forward on issues of diversity and equality.

Well meaning, well intentioned people often do or say the wrong thing. People make offensive, stereotypical or bigoted comments. Are they racist? Are they ignorant? Are they afraid? Why do you think it is so difficult to find a common language around Race?

- As you watch the play; notice what goes unspoken and what is spoken directly in each time period. What words are people oblivious to and what words ignite emotion? What topics were taboo in 1959? Are they the same in 2009? How do the characters discuss Race in each Act? What has changed and what remains the same?
- The play challenges us to have a better and more honest conversation about Race in America than the characters do. Do you think we are ready to? If not, what needs to happen to make this conversation possible? How can we talk about Race in ways that are productive, truthful, and respectful?
- How can theatre serve as a catalyst for conversation? Can it also be a catalyst for change?

Holding on to that Human Scale

A conversation with *Clybourne Park* set designer Daniel Ostling and Center Theatre Group Teaching Artist Marcos Najera.

Marcos Najera: Dan, what is your job? How would you describe what you do on a daily basis?

Daniel Ostling: I am a theatrical scenic designer. My job is to read plays and talk with the director. And then create a spatial environment that reflects and supports the action of the play that's called for in the script.

I think of myself as a spatial designer. Drama is about conflict and about how to create a space that manifests the tensions that are in a script and to create a world where these things sort of collide.

Research is really key. It's a really, really important part of what we do.

I feel strongly that my world is only as big as I am. My experience and the things that I know about are small compared with the world at large. So you always have to do research and learn more about the world that you are climbing into. People are very different, places are very different, architecture is very different, art is very different from one place to another and from one time period to another. Surround yourself with architecture and art and photographs and music.

Then I flesh out what these ideas might be. And that's a combination of what we call ground plans—which are sort of like looking from above, straight down. And that's about space and figuring out where things sit in relationship to the theatre.

Do these ground plans start as simple sketches?

Yes, I call them 'thumbnails.' They are tiny little sketches that we do about spatial relationships, about one part of the scenery to another or one area to another. And always in relationship to the theatre, the space that you are in. The first sketches are little scrawls, people wouldn't even know what they are. They are more shorthand for me. But they get more and more refined as they go on.

Is it just you with a pad of paper and a pen?

Yes, I have a sketchbook that I carry with me. Or sometimes in the corners of the script, I'll take little notes.

Oh, I bet your copy of the script is fascinating to look at!

Sometimes! And then we make models. We make little models, on a quarter inch scale usually. Which means one-quarter inch equals a foot. [.25 inch = 1 foot] So it's basically 1/48th the size of the real set.

That's one of my favorite things in theatre, to see those small model sets. I wish more students got to see them.

Well, the models start out really rough as well. Thrown together and you just sketch on it. And you really don't know what it is yet. So all of these things, whether it's the ground plans, or the sketching or the models—

there is really a process. Each one informs the other. The ground plans inform the model. The model informs the sketching. Back and forth. Back and forth. And each time you take a step [forward]. And it refines and refines and refines until it becomes clear what it is.

Then there's a process of documenting the design. Which is when we do the finished drafting which is really clean. And when we do the finished model and we do the paint elevations for the painters. Not that there isn't discovery anymore, but that's really about documenting it so someone else can create. It goes to the shop and scenery [people] build the scenery, the props people build the props, and then everything is painted. I'll visit all the shops to make sure everything is on track. Once it's done it loads into the theatre.

And THEN, we go through a whole tech process where the lighting designer and all the designers come together with the director and the actors and we put the [play] up on its feet and continue to refine it.

It sounds like you have lots of conversations with people along the way. What is most fun for you?

Oh gosh, I don't know. [Laughs] I think for me the most satisfying is when the idea really comes. You know, often you feel "Oh, this is impossible! This is never gonna happen!" And then it will just 'Whoosh! And it will just come out. There's still a lot of work, but those moments are always exciting because they're the moments where [finger snaps] everything sort of falls into place.

With *Clybourne Park*, I'm wondering if you can share with our students and teachers, where you are in the creative process?

The set is built, it's painted, it's being loaded into the theater. I have an assistant [in Los Angeles] now. She's checking up on it. I will come out and see it. There will inevitably be paint notes that need to happen.

We actually did this production in New York a couple of years ago in a proscenium setting. So we've adapted it to the Mark Taper Forum which is a thrust space. Which is sort of 'in the round' with the set thrusting out into the audience.

So people can almost sit around the stage.

Exactly. So that's been a lot of work adapting it for the Taper. We've kept the spirit of it, but everything is different than it was. My assistant is out there now and says it's really working. So I'm breathing a sigh of relief.

You know, one of the things that was important to us is that the house itself is a character. There's a real journey from the first act to the second act. You know, the house is not a mansion. It's a working class person's house. In my mind, that's very important. I'm from Chicago originally. So I know those houses. My friends live in those houses.

For me a super important thing is that the house feel real and familiar and that the scale doesn't—you know, often when we put things on stage everything gets big! You know what I mean? It gets dramatic! And it felt really, really important that we don't do that to this. That was a big task for me. Holding onto that human scale.

"You know, each play I work on is a whole new story, a whole new world opens up. And I can pick any way to tell that. There isn't a way that it has to be done. Whatever makes the story be the most powerful for the audience is what we do."

—Daniel Ostling

Are you saying because theaters themselves are so big, and the place where this story takes place is a small home—once you put it onstage it could make the house suddenly feel much bigger and lose its intimacy?

Not only lose its intimacy, but in my mind, the important thread that these people are not rich. This is a working class home. This is a small home. It's got two levels but it's a humble home. It's a really important part of the story.

In terms of the whole set, is there anything particular you'd like students to look for while they are watching the show?

I think it's interesting to know that there is nothing when we first come in. There's just a space where we do a play. So every single thing that is on that stage, every costume, every little prop, every box, every lighting instrument that is hanging, all of that is created for that one moment. A huge amount of effort goes into that to help focus the audience, to help tell the story. To connect one moment to the next.

It helps you lose yourself [while you watch the play], connect to the characters, and connect to the person laughing next to you.

You know, I haven't worked on many plays that throw us right in the middle of the reality of cultures coming together or clashing. I think Race is the original sin of America. I think we do a lot of talking about it, but I feel like we dance around it often. And we get squeamish seeing it in front of us unfold. I think Bruce Norris, the playwright, throws us right into the middle of it.

In your research and thinking about the design elements for this set, did you discover that the homes where we live tell us something about Race relations in our country?

I come from Chicago. Chicago is one of the most segregated cities in the country. Really clear lines between neighborhoods and the best way of looking at that is that everyone has their neighborhood and we are a city of neighborhoods. Another way of looking at that is that it is segregation and people don't mix. That's changed somewhat, but it's still unbelievably delineated compared with other American cities.

How did young Dan Ostling get started as a designer?

I actually stumbled into it. I was not an artist. I was not a theatre kid. I took more political science courses in college. One professor really blew my mind and made me question what I wanted to do in life. I come from a blue-collar family, me and my brother were the first generation to go to college and I didn't know anyone who liked what they did. So I really started to investigate things that give me joy. And sort of stumbled into theatre quite accidentally, but when I got there it felt like a fit. It just felt right. So I started all of my training in my junior year of college. I was just really interested in the story part of it and telling a story. I still feel like it's a new world for me. And I like that. That feels right to me.

You know, each play I work on is a whole new story, a whole new world opens up. And I can pick any way to tell that. There isn't a way that it has to be done. Whatever makes the story be the most powerful for the audience is what we do.



“But you know,
I think things are
about to change.
I really do.”

—Clybourne Park

Center Theatre Group Education and Community Partnerships

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Center Theatre Group's mission is to serve the diverse audiences of Los Angeles by producing and presenting theatre of the highest caliber, by nurturing new artists, by attracting new audiences, and by developing youth outreach and education programs. This mission is based on the belief that the art of theatre is a cultural force with the capacity to transform the lives of individuals and society at large.

Education and Community Partnerships

Theatre is an enduring and powerful tool for communicating ideas, stories, emotions and beliefs that fuel the intellect, imagination and creative spirit. Center Theatre Group believes that stimulating awareness, creativity, dialogue and an inquisitive mind is integral to the growth and well-being of the individual and the community; and that nurturing a life-long appreciation of the arts leads inextricably to an engaged and enlightened society.

Center Theatre Group's education and community partnership programs advance the organization's mission in three key ways:

Audiences: Inspiring current and future audiences to discover theatre and its connection to their lives;

Artists: Investing in the training, support and development of emerging young artists and young arts professionals who are the future of our field; and

Arts Education Leadership: Contributing to the community-wide efforts to improve the quality and scope of arts education in Los Angeles.



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FUNDER CREDITS

The Education & Community Partnerships Department receives generous support from The Dream Fund at UCLA Donor Advised Fund and the Center Theatre Group Affiliates, a volunteer organization dedicated to bringing innovative theatre and creative education to the young people of Los Angeles.

Additional support for Education & Community Partnerships is provided by The Sheri and Les Biller Family Foundation, the Employees Community Fund of Boeing California, The Sascha Brastoff Foundation, the Brotman Foundation of California, the Carol and James Collins Foundation, the Culver City Education Foundation, the James A. Doolittle Foundation, the Ella Fitzgerald Charitable Foundation, the Lawrence P. Frank Foundation, The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation, the William Randolph Hearst Education Endowment, the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, the MetLife Foundation, the Music Center Fund for the Performing Arts, the Kenneth T. & Eileen L. Norris Foundation, Laura & James Rosenwald & Orinocco Foundation, Playa Vista, Dwight Stuart Youth Fund, Theatre Communications Group, and the Weingart Foundation.

Center Theatre Group is a participant in the A-ha! Program: Think It, Do It, funded by the MetLife Foundation and administered by Theatre Communications Group, the national organization for the professional American theatre.



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