What Women Can Be Essay, Research Paper

Mama: Illustration of What Women Can Be

In the 1950’s through the 1960’s women were not respected in there everyday lives, in the job field or in general. They did not have the rights they deserved, so during this time the “women’s movement” began. Women fought for their rights and fought for the self-respect that they thought they deserved. In the play A Raisin in the Sun by Lorraine Hansberry, the character Mama, expresses her feelings of pushing or extracting a new side for a woman. Her role explains that woman can be independent and can live for themselves. Through her behavior in this play she demonstrates that women can support and guide a family. Mama is in charge of the family, which is unusual, since men are traditionally the “head of a family”. Through Mama’s wisdom and dialect she expresses and portrays an image of pro-feminism. Mama’s experience in the play A Raisin in the Sun illustrates the expressions, the emotions, and the feeling with which Mama and women had to cope. She was able to characterize this through her passionate dreams, her control and her strong willed attitude.

Mama is a powerful, strong witted person. She has a lot of control in this play and dominates as a woman character. This is unusual because this is usually a male’s position in life. She is a woman, “who has adjusted to many things in life and overcome many more, her face is full of strength” (39). In this play she is illustrated as taking over for the head of the family and controls the lives of everyone in her house. Rules are followed to Mama’s extent. She controls what is said and done in her house. After Walter yells, “WILL SOMEBODY PLEASE LISTEN TO ME TODAY!” (70). Mama responds in a strong tone of voice saying, “I don’t ‘low no yellin’ in this house, Walter Lee, and you know it” (70). This shows that women could take the duties of a man and that women can survive on their own. She is an important character that is viewed as a significant figure. Mama’s behavior through the plays shows that women could play the role of being a man. She conducts the house to her satisfaction. When Beneatha says, “There simply is no blasted God—there is only man and it is he who makes miracles!” (51). Mama reacts by slapping her across the face to show her that this is her house and that she is in control. Not only did Mama control her family’s actions in her house, but she also controlled any guests’ actions in her household. Mama was the controller of the house and the whole neighborhood knew about it. Mrs. Johnson even reminded herself of Mama’s control by saying to Mama, “Oh I always forgets you don’t know ‘low that word in your house” (101). Mama illuminates her status of being woman with not only her control but also her attitude and her dreams.

As a woman, Mama’s aspirations to get a house was uncommon in those days, but Mama always dreamed of moving out of there small apartment and into a nice house in a safer neighborhood with a small garden. (92). She describes her dream house like it is the most spectacular thing in the world. She is extremely happy for herself, but happier for her family. However, Mama’s goals are more complicated then just wanting a house. With this house she feels that the family now has hope and can accomplish their dreams. On the other hand, without this house Mama predicts that the family will continue with very little hope and will not have much to look forward to. “The sole natural light the family may enjoy in the course of a day is only that which fights its way through this little window” (Pg. 24). The lack of light in the play is the symbol of the absence of hope within the family member’s hearts. Mama’s displays her “womanism” by using her control and sharing her dreams with her family.

During this time period women did not think, or act for themselves on their own. They were not respected nor did they have their own attitudes. Men were the controller them and their lives. Mama regulated this and exhibited that women could live for themselves as well as think for themselves. Even though everything fell apart towards the end of the book, Mama still had a positive attitude. No matter how bad things got she still was willing and motivated. She wanted to be happy and filled with hope. Mama states, “When it gets like that in life—you just got to do something different, push on out and do something bigger.” (94). Her attitude is positive and she did what she could to try to make the rest of the family feel the same way. Her good attitude is what made the family happy and filled with hope. However, woman during this time did not have too much to be positive about. With the exception of the Younger’s household most women in this period had no self-respect and were controlled by their husbands.

In A Raisin in the Sun, Mama illuminates the fact that woman can exist and can do positive things in the world on there own. By Mama’s role, she shows that women can live on their own without the guidance of men. Mama’s strong; bold attitude overcame the aspirations of the struggle between men and women, which led to clarifying the book as a guide to the upbringing of the women’s movement. Through Mama’s desires, the play A Raisin in the Sun examines the expressions, the emotions and the feelings of what woman had to cope with during the 1950’s and 1960’s. Mama’s dreams and her attitude designed a new path for woman to walk on. Through Mama’s conduct this play reveals a positive attitude towards the women’s movement and represents that woman can survive on their own.