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Where Is My Land ANNOUNCES STOLEN BLACK LAND TAKEN FROM THE FAMILY OF PLAYWRIGHT LORRAINE HANSBERRY (A Raisin in the Sun)

February 1, 2023 – Taye Hansberry, Carl A. Hansberry, Sr.’s great-granddaughter, and 99-year-old Mamie Hansberry, sister to Lorraine Hansberry and last remaining daughter of Carl A. Hansberry, Sr., have requested the assistance of Where Is My Land in their family’s efforts to obtain reparative justice for the theft of the family’s properties. *“I began to learn the real circumstances surrounding my family losing everything my great grandfather, Carl Hansberry built. The more questions I asked of my grandmother, Mamie Hansberry, the more I knew that this heartbreaking wrong had to be made right. So, my journey began,”* says Taye.

In 1937, Carl Hansberry purchased a home in an all-white neighborhood that was subjected to Woodlawn Property Owners Association’s racially restrictive covenants, which barred Black people from renting or purchasing in the Woodlawn subdivision. To conduct the transaction, Hansberry purchased the home through his white attorney. The Hansberrys moved into the home in May of 1937. After moving into the home, the Hansberrys were subjected to mob violence from the white neighbors including a brick being thrown through the window narrowly missing 7-year-old Lorraine’s head. The family was forced to hire security for their safety. Later, a member of the aforementioned Association filed an action against Hansberry, arguing that his occupancy violated the neighborhood’s racially restrictive covenant. The state court upheld the legality of the racially restrictive covenant and ruled that Carl Hansberry had no interest in the property however, he took the case all the way to the Supreme Court of the United States, which invalidated the Woodlawn neighborhood’s restrictive covenant and opened the door for 500 Black families to move into Woodlawn. *“My great-grandfather was a target because of his known opposition to racial discrimination,”* says Taye.

Carl Hansberry was a real estate broker and Black entrepreneur. Carl owned several properties in the Hyde Park area of Chicago and was the founder of Hansberry Enterprises. Hansberry purchased properties to help accommodate the rapidly increasing population of Black residents in need of low-rent housing. *“Carl Hansberry’s legacy inspired so many, especially Lorraine. His business acumen and desire to ensure Black people in the south side of Chicago were not unhoused were noble. Despite it all, white supremacy won. We stand with the Hansberry family and will fight until justice is the victor!”* says Kavon Ward, CEO of Where Is My Land.

Hansberry’s rental properties were scrutinized and subjected to excessive code violations and fines issued by the Southeast Chicago Commission (SECC), an entity created by the University of Chicago. During the “The Great Migration”, Blacks moving to the city from the south were relegated to living in only a few areas of Chicago, inevitably leading to overcrowding. The city refused to provide adequate services, leading to deplorable conditions that created potential health hazards. Consequently, several of Hansberry’s buildings were declared a blight. The Federal Housing Act of 1949 sanctioned the theft of Hansberry’s properties providing the legal grounds to abuse eminent domain under the guise of urban renewal. Banks refused to loan money to Hansberry and other Black entrepreneurs and insurance companies would not insure their properties. As a result, Hansberry’s wealth was depleted, making him unable to keep up with fines and repairs needed to maintain housing for Black tenants. Most of the Hansberry family properties were taken between the late 1950s and 1960s. *“The taking of our family properties caused great trauma. We were displaced from our home; our community and our economic stability completely diminished. Faced with impossible circumstances, I was forced to flee with my young daughter to California with nothing. The confiscation of our properties caused us to lose everything my father worked so hard for all of his life,”* says Mamie Hansberry.

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