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Hannah Barker
Xavier University

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Race, Real Estate, and Realism: *Clybourne Park* and Social Change

Hannah Barker

There is no political value in having sensitive feelings about the world. I don't think it generates political action. You go [to the theatre], you watch, you say, "That's sad," and then you go for a steak. The best you can hope for is to make people slightly uncomfortable. At least if you take the piss out of the audience, they feel they are being addressed.

--Bruce Norris, author of *Clybourne Park*

Throughout my final semester as an undergraduate English major, I have been seeing more plays—both ones I have read in class and ones I have not—in order to gain a better understanding of the theatre world. One play that had a big impact on me was *Clybourne Park*, which I saw in January at Playhouse in the Park, in Cincinnati. *Clybourne Park* was written in 2011 by Bruce Norris. It has won countless awards, including the Pulitzer Prize. *Clybourne Park* picks up where Lorraine Hansberry's famous *A Raisin in the Sun* left off; Act I takes place in 1959. A white, middle class couple, Russ and Bev, is moving out of their all-white neighborhood of Clybourne Park. A black family, the Youngers from *A Raisin in the Sun*, is moving into the house. Karl Lindner, the same Karl from Hansberry's play, tries to convince Russ and Bev to either stay, or not allow the black family to move into the neighborhood. Act II is set fifty years later in 2009. The same actors play these characters, and the audience can pick up on many parallels between the 1959 scene and the 2009 scene. In Act II, *Clybourne Park* has become an all-black neighborhood, and a white family is trying to move into the same home from Act I and re-gentrify it by essentially tearing the house down and rebuilding it. Here, no one seems to have changed: in both scenes, the characters are uncomfortable discussing race. They are defined by their differences and refuse to accept others who are different.

Clybourne Park addresses tough, but relevant, social issues with which audiences from almost any city can identify. For me, the play brought to mind Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine (OTR) neighborhood. This area of Cincinnati is currently experiencing gentrification and has had issues with race and property in the past—especially with the 2001 race riots—so *Clybourne Park*, which does not

have a “happy ending,” made me curious about the intersection of race and property in Cincinnati currently. What is the right action to take in the development of OTR? Has the city made any positive progress? Watching *Clybourne Park* also made me question the value of theatre. Are the concepts in this play more effective because they are on a stage? Can this play make a difference in places like OTR, since it exposes some of society’s problems? As this essay’s epigraph reveals, playwright Bruce Norris does *not* see theatre as capable of creating much social change. Sure, it can make people uncomfortable, but that’s “the best you can hope for” (Norris Interview by Beatrice Basso). Through this paper, and using *Clybourne Park* as evidence, I will show that theatre *is* capable of promoting social change. Based on studies of art and modern drama, and the events that surrounded *Clybourne Park*’s premiere in Cincinnati, I will challenge Bruce Norris’s negative outlook on modern drama’s ability to motivate social action for the better.

First, I will explore theories about art in general and how art has the ability to influence people’s actions. Then, more specifically, I will address modern drama and what theorists have discovered about its ability to influence social change. As part of this analysis, I will include examples from *Clybourne Park* to show how it fits in with the power of modern drama. I will follow this discussion by illustrating how modern drama can be more effective than the novel or other forms of art that promote pro-social messages. Finally, I will delve more into OTR and the parallels between it and *Clybourne Park*, addressing how so far, the effects of the play on the city prove hopeful for the future of Cincinnati, theatre, and theatre’s ability to act as a catalyst for change.

Art’s Ability to Influence

Art’s relationship to social order is both complex and highly controversial; however, there are many examples supporting how art can show a general concept in a particular context to help people better understand themselves and create change in their society. According to Emma Goldman in *The Social Significance of Modern Drama*, people can view the purpose of art in two ways: “art for art’s sake” and “art as the mirror of life” (3). The former occurs when the artist shows indifference toward the complex struggles of life. But the latter is central to modern art. Goldman claims, “The artist being a part of life cannot detach himself from the events and occurrences that pass panorama-like before his eyes, impressing themselves upon his emotions and intellectual vision” (3). It is difficult for the artist, who is a part of society, not to reflect what he sees and experiences in society in his works. This is why art is so relatable to many people: it is created by humans who share the same experiences as the viewers. Norris, seeing the separation of race in his all-white neighborhood as a kid, wrote *Clybourne Park* after this experience. He comments in an interview with Beatrice Basso, “At any given moment, you know that even something as insignificant as taste—‘I like this house better than that house, it’s prettier’—identifies us as part of a group that looks at another group skeptically or critically” (147). Norris’

characters are pitted against each other in these “groups”: Karl, Betsy, and Jim against Francine and Albert in Act I and Lindsey and Steve against Lena and Kevin in Act II. *Clybourne Park* is realistic and relatable because Norris cannot remove himself from this reality of separation.

D.W. Gotshalk also points out many of the contributions art offers to society in *Art and the Social Order*. He says that the creation and appreciation of art include similar emotions to social action, such as senses, feelings, imagination, and intellect. He writes, “fine art transforms what social action everywhere embodies and is thus implicitly a social force in the very creation and appreciation of an object which serves purely aesthetic purposes” (204). While Gotshalk points out that art and social action trigger similar responses, he recognizes that art alone cannot create permanent social change. Gotshalk asserts that the artist is limited because he cannot control external circumstances, which affect the influence art has on a society. Art must work with the society it has the ability to change: “Unless a work of directive art is bulwarked by pressures and terrors from elsewhere, by a critical situation such as a war, a national calamity, an economic or moral crisis, its message is likely to seem artificial and labored and its point irrelevant” (205). This makes sense, because if a play makes the audience think about the negative effects of violent wars, and there is no war going on in this particular society, the message appears irrelevant—why make a change to an issue that doesn’t exist? *Clybourne Park* exists alongside the real gentrification and race issue in OTR and other large cities; therefore, these outside pressures make the Clybourne Park neighborhood a more resonant experience for its viewers.

Gotshalk also notes that art is not magic; it cannot make everything perfect. What artists *can* do is, “[i]n creation and appreciation they can increase the range of our sensory and imaginative grasp, enlarge the scope and subtlety of our feelings and insights, preserve and strengthen a large sheaf of the finer and rarer values of human existence—creativity, originality, spontaneity” (213). The abilities of the artist can lead to social action, since people tend to act based on what they think, feel, value, see, etc., which are aspects the artist has the ability to influence. Artists can modify people’s characters in a way that leads to social action; they can make “the mind more flexible, receptive, discriminate, and responsive” (212). In order to change people in this way though, the artist also needs recognition from society: “society is required to recognize difficulties to the good confronting itself and a unity of belief...increase and multiply (as far as harmonious with general welfare)...seek, rather than to force, the co-operation of the artist...[and] stimulate alert, informed, and critical attention to the works of the artist” (228). According to Gotshalk, all of these aspects must be present for art to have its maximum effect. It is unlikely that any society has ever fulfilled all of the requirements, but many have been close (229). Art helps keep society in check by exposing its violence and hostility; however, in order to be fully effective, people need to seek out the art.

Additionally, art needs society to see and recognize the parallels between the play and society's own experiences. If Cincinnati views the events in *Clybourne Park* with a critical eye, as a platform for changing the economics of the city, then this play could help people understand the underlying racial and sociological issues involved in OTR gentrification.

The Social Role of Modern Drama

While drama has always had an influential role in society, the era of modern drama further increased theater's power to spur change. Starting roughly in the era of Ibsen's plays, theatre turned toward a new style: modern drama. Many critics view modern drama as a more realistic type of theatre—one which exposes the atrocities of society by showing viewers an outsider perspective of what society is actually like. Martin Esslin in *An Anatomy of Drama* describes modern theatre as “a mirror which society looks at itself” (103). For example, the fact that “at certain times the theatre tended to show only middle-class people to middle-class people demonstrates that in those times the lower classes were effectively excluded from society and therefore from the theatre” (Esslin 103). *Clybourne Park* is one of these types of plays. Only the middle-class characters are shown to a presumably middle-class audience. Viewers don't get to see the black family who is trying to purchase the house in 1959. They don't get to see any poor characters, which suggests that these people don't have any say in society, or, at least in the case of *Clybourne Park*, any say in the issues of race and gentrification. Norris comments on his choice for the kinds of characters he creates:

People ask how come I don't write plays about, say, people in housing projects, and I say, “Well, because those are not the people who go to the theatre.” You can say, “We should get them to the theatre,” but in actual fact, people who buy subscriptions to theatres like ACT are usually wealthy people. They are almost always wealthy, liberal people. So why not write plays that are about those people, since those are the people who are in the audience? If you actually want to have a conversation with that audience, then you should address them directly. That's what I always think. (Interview with Beatrice Basso 148)

If an audience sees a mirror image of a society they don't recognize, or they don't feel responsible for, then the effect of the artist is more likely to be lost. Though the audience for *Clybourne Park* removes itself for the most part from the 1959 scene, which is right in the middle of the Civil Rights Era, it cannot remove itself as easily from the 2009 scene. The parallels between the scenes are so clear that the audience sees a poor mirror image of itself and hopefully feels uneasy about the way society is portrayed; this feeling, along with if they recognize their society in the one on stage, makes the audience hopefully want to fix the problem.

A playwright's rendering of society therefore plays an important role in the social effect of the play. Esslin writes, "The more completely a playwright imagines a situation and the characters in it, the nearer the play will come to the complexity and ambivalence of the real world" (Esslin 98). Norris effectively creates this realistic scene with his play, especially in Act II. The characters Norris creates are extremely complex. Norris, to Beatrice Basso, comments on the characters' interactions: "Everyone holds their tongue, because we live in a society where speech is much more dangerous than activity—than action No one knows that they should be embarrassed in the first act; everyone knows they should in the second act. We're embarrassed about everything" (149). The audience can somewhat forgive or at least roll their eyes at the racist and closed-minded attitudes of the characters in Act I. For example, Karl approaches Francine, the black housekeeper for Russ and Bev. He asks her about skiing as a way to prove that blacks and whites cannot live together because they are different:

KARL: Francine, may I ask? Do you ski?

FRANCINE: Ski?

KARL: Downhill skiing?

FRANCINE: We don't ski, no.

KARL: And this is my point. The children who attend St. Stanislaus. Once a year we take the middle schoolers up to Indianhead Mountain, and I can tell you, in the time I've been there, I have not once seen a colored family on those slopes. (33)

In the year 2014, most people understand that slavery and the discrimination toward African Americans that came long after they were free was and is not tolerable, not morally acceptable. When the audience hears Karl make this point about skiing, they can laugh it off because they understand that Karl is ignorant. He doesn't understand that a black person is equal to a white person, and they can co-exist. The first act is not so much a mirror, as it is a reminder to the audience of how ignorant and cruel people were before the Civil Rights Movement.

In the second act, the roles reverse, including the fact that now the black family skis instead of the white family. But more importantly, the same racial stereotypes and fears of difference permeate the conversation. Except this time, like Norris points out, people are embarrassed to talk about it:

STEVE: What, and now we're the evil invaders who are—

LINDSEY: (To Steve) She never said that!!!!

STEVE: —appropriating your ancestral homeland?

LINDSEY: (To Steve) This, this, this—No. I'm sorry, this is the most asinine—(To Lena and Kevin) Half of my friends are black! (73)

At this exchange, the audience probably cringes because it's awkward. The entire room still is ignorant, both the white couple and the African American couple.

Everyone appears offended, and Lindsey tries to ease her conscience by saying, “Half of my friends are black.” She’s embarrassed by this inability to speak about the racial tensions that still exist. The second act is the mirror to the middle-class society watching the play. The audience has probably encountered similar situations, and because the second act so closely mirrors the first, where the people were clearly ignorant about race, the audience can see how much still needs to be changed in regard to race and property. The racial tensions still exist, but people, both the characters and the audience who bought tickets to see the play, are afraid to address them because, like Lindsey, they recognize the sensitivity of the issue.

Famous playwright and critic Bertolt Brecht offered strong ideas on modern theatre that illuminate *Clybourne Park*. Brecht admires theatre and deems it successful when it appeals to reason, makes the audience think for themselves, and gives a maximum freedom of interpretation. Norris’ play does all of these (Brecht 15). At the end of *Clybourne Park*, there is no explicit message that society needs to change. Rather, based on reason, the audience can think about their current society and infer that something has to be done. After the people in Act II disperse in anger, Bev from Act I comes on the stage again. She speaks to her son Kenneth, who committed suicide after killing people in the Korean War. She says, “But you know, I think things are about to change. I really do. It’s been a hard couple of years to all of us, I know they have been, but I really believe things are about to change for the better. I firmly believe that” (84). Based on the similarities in Act I and Act II, the audience can infer that nothing has changed in fifty years. This makes Bev’s statement and the ending of the play even more heartbreaking. White people moved out of the neighborhood, black people moved in, and now white people want back in the neighborhood, meaning black people will probably get pushed out. Both races have never lived together. Norris exposes this social issue without explicitly telling the audience what to think about it. He doesn’t even offer a solution; he only presents the mirror.

Norris’ objective presentation of the story also fits along with Brecht’s views. Brecht says that the playwright should not force an audience to interpret his piece a certain way. Drama isn’t about tricking the audience with falsified emotions. Instead, characters “ought to be presented quite coldly, classically and objectively. For they are not matter for empathy; they are there to be understood” (15). *Clybourne Park* does just this. None of the characters are really likeable. When watching the play, I didn’t find myself siding with any of them. Instead, I saw myself and my society in the characters and their experiences, and it made me sad. Because the scenes in *Clybourne Park* are extremely realistic, they are pure modern drama, according to theorists like Brecht.

Although he claims not to have a political agenda, Norris promotes an implicit message with *Clybourne Park*: society needs to unify and needs to mend the problems of race and inequality. Timothy Douglas, the director for Cincinnati’s 2014 production of *Clybourne Park*, explains in an interview, more

optimistically than Norris, what the play does. As an African American, he brings another perspective to the play and the issues it presents: “There hasn’t been a coming together for how we heal the atrocity of African American slavery . . . so we don’t have the words for that conversation, which is why this play gets explosive. It’s not that people don’t want it, but they don’t even know how. This play just offers us a little corner of that conversation” (Douglas). In other words, history hasn’t disappeared just because laws have changed and time has passed. People have to be open to dialogue with people different from them. Otherwise, society stays stuck in a negative cycle, like the one depicted in *Clybourne Park*. But why is theatre the appropriate vehicle to display this message? What does theatre do that makes it the best medium for promoting this social message?

Many theorists agree that theatre is a social act and therefore an appropriate method to expose social needs. However, in order to be successful as a political statement, a play has to show that society is capable of being changed. Brecht writes: “The question of describing the world is a social one . . . the present-day world can be reproduced even in the theatre, but only if it is understood as being capable of transformation” (275). If people leave *Clybourne Park*, saying, “Well, society is worse than I thought. Everything is hopeless,” then the play is pointless. I don’t think the audience leaves saying this as a result of this play though. Because the audience can parallel the play with their own city, they can see the issue as realistic. They don’t want their relations with others to be as sour as those between Steve and Lindsey and Kevin and Lena. As Nolan comments in “The Racial Politics of Real Estate: Bruce Norris’s *Clybourne Park*,” “Perhaps Norris’s appeal in this play is for all people to accept ‘the other’ and recognize the similarities and commonalities that bind us all as human beings” (256). Hopefully, the audience thinks that if they could insert themselves into the play, they could change something and will therefore insert themselves in their society to make that change.

Some people, including Norris, disagree, claiming that theatre is merely a spectator activity. W.B. Worthen in *Modern Drama and the Rhetoric of Theater* argues this point:

Realistic production invites empathy and even understanding, but it invites us to practice that understanding only as spectators. June Howard and others have suggested that in naturalistic fiction, the role of the spectator prevents understanding and self-awareness described by the spectatorial heroes of naturalistic novels. (24)

Crucially, Worthen and Norris neglect to see the important differences between theatre and other forms of art, like film or the novel, that make theatre into this vehicle for creating change. Readers consume a novel in private. Theatre, on the other hand, is a “collective experience” (Esslin 100). As Esslin points out, “The reaction [theatre] evokes happens in public. Thus the message (political or otherwise) which a play contains always coexists with a demonstration of its

reception by a social unit, the collectivity of the audience” (Esslin 100). Plays require an audience and therefore are social acts. Film, which also requires some sort of audience, though it is not performed live, uses the camera as its instrument. The camera doesn’t offer an immediate relationship between live people, actual actions, and a physical environment. Theatre drama is immediate and direct, and therefore, drama tends to be more powerful than the novel or film in promoting action. It can influence people more because it requires their participation and reaction, beyond the role of a spectator. William Archer sums up the nature of theatre succinctly: “The painter may paint, the sculptor model, the lyric poet sing, simply to please himself, but the drama has no meaning except in relation to an audience. It is a portrayal of life by means of a mechanism so devised as to bring it home to a considerable number of people assembled in a given place” (13). Theatre *can* spark social change because the drama medium provides an influential connection to the audience.

Indeed, several plays have been notably successful in promoting social change. Two examples of successful playwrights in the realm of social change are Henrik Ibsen and Lorraine Hansberry, the playwright of *A Raisin in the Sun*. Ibsen wrote a number of plays about marital life and the woman’s role. His plays are very realistic and are like *Clybourne Park* in that they don’t explicitly state a message, but instead hold a mirror up to society, which inevitably exposes its flaws. Esslin writes, “Ibsen was a very important influence in opening up the discussion of the position of women in society and did, in fact, I believe, make a decisive contribution to the change which started with women’s suffrage and which is still going on today under the heading of the women’s liberation movement” (98). Ibsen, of course, was not the sole reason women received voting and other rights in this country. But his works, combined with societal issues and people’s actions, led to a greater social change. Though it is difficult to measure how much influence theatre actually had on events like women’s suffrage, it is reasonable to assume that Ibsen’s plays had some influence, since women’s rights movements coincided with or followed several of his works.

Lorraine Hansberry also promoted social change with *A Raisin in the Sun*. Unlike Norris, Hansberry was more optimistic with theatre’s capacity to make a difference: “Hansberry believed that universality could be reached by an honest examination of the specific—that the struggles of an African American family to move themselves out of a ghetto in the South Side of Chicago would speak to the larger issues of the human race” (Rubin 48). As one of the first female African American playwrights, Hansberry certainly made waves against discrimination. If anything, she exposed how difficult it was for an African American family to make a better life for themselves. Additionally, “Hansberry’s lasting legacy, more than any one work, is proof that art has the power to illuminate, change, and create society” (Rubin 49). Though society still has a long way to go, especially in respect to race relations, it has come much further since *A Raisin in the Sun*. Works by Hansberry and Ibsen offer examples of how theatre can be a successful component of change in a society. Because *Clybourne Park* was written in 2011,

it's probably too soon to say whether or not it will have an impact on society; however, it has already sparked conversation in places like Cincinnati, which offers hope for the future.

Clybourne Park in Cincinnati

Theatres across the country, from New York to Portland, have performed *Clybourne Park*. Although the play is set in Chicago, the cycle of urban decay and gentrification it describes is a reality for many cities across the country. Here in Cincinnati, the play hits particularly close to home, because Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine neighborhood is currently undergoing the same difficult transition as in *Clybourne Park*. In the play, the cycle eventually leads to gentrification and the revelation that racial relations have not improved.

From around 1840-1900, there was a large immigration of Germans to Cincinnati, especially into the OTR area. The Germans left a large cultural impact in Cincinnati, especially OTR: beer brewing, architecture, and food. In 1840, Cincinnati's population was roughly 46,338 people; in 1850, it grew to 115,435 people, a 149% increase (Rhiney). In 1915, there was a suburban exodus, also known as "white flight," to escape the dirty, crowded conditions of the downtown neighborhoods. The poorer people who could not afford to move out of the city were forced to stay, causing areas like OTR to be predominantly poorer.

Starting in the 1960s, many African Americans in the southern United States migrated north to take advantage of auto industry jobs. Unable to afford the cost of living in the suburbs, many African Americans ended up moving into OTR. Just like in *Clybourne Park*, OTR experienced a period of high crime and drug rates, leading to further degradation of the area over the years. Today, many of the buildings have been abandoned: in 2000, 1,667 housing units reportedly stood empty (Rhiney). Additionally, many of the residents of OTR fall below the poverty line, and the area continues to be racially divided. In 2005, it was reported that in OTR, 55% of the African American families who lived there were under the poverty line, but only 1% of the white families living there were below the poverty line (Rhiney). Currently, organizations, like the non-profit 3CDC, are remodeling and restructuring OTR, in an attempt to make it a more appealing destination for wealthy suburbanites. This mirrors the plot of *Clybourne Park*, where the wealthy couple (Steve and Lindsey) are trying to renovate the house so they can move in and raise a family. The problem with this mindset, both in Cincinnati and *Clybourne Park*, is that the reconstruction is pushing out the people who already live in these lower-income areas, because they can no longer afford to live there—a process which many refer to as "gentrification."

Dan Rubin describes gentrification in his article "What is Gentrification?" saying, "Some translate gentrification simply as the visible upgrading of a blighted area, while others investigate what they perceive as a conspiracy of government and business interests purposefully disinvesting and then reinvesting

in a particular neighborhood in order to turn a profit” (20). In other words, Rubin suggests that the process of renovating blighted neighborhoods, such as Clybourne Park and Over-the-Rhine, is not as innocuous as it seems; the process may actually be driven by a desire to make money, while ignoring the poor who live there. As stated before, OTR is predominantly African-American, and as a result, many people see gentrification as a displacement of minorities by white people. This in turn leads to negative race relations and deepens the disparity between race and class. In *Clybourne Park*, Lena’s remark echoes the darker truth: “I’m asking you to think about the motivation behind the long-range political initiative to change the face of this neighborhood And I’m saying that there are certain economic interests that are being served by those changes and others that are not” (70). While strictly economic on its surface, gentrification quickly becomes a racial issue.

Although fictional, the history of Clybourne Park is nearly identical to that of OTR. Originally, white people dominated Clybourne Park, and it was a well-off neighborhood. Then, as black families moved in, white families moved out, and its racial make-up changed. Following a period of crime and drug activity, the neighborhood went downhill. Then, many years later, the white, wealthy people from the suburbs noticed the beautiful, historical architecture and suddenly wanted back in the neighborhood. Lindsey’s description of Clybourne Park details this very process:

LINDSEY: And I totally admit, I’m the one who was resistant, especially with the schools and everything, but once I stopped seeing the neighborhood the way it used to be, and could see what it is now, and its potential?

LENA: Used to be what?

LINDSEY: (Beat.) What it “used to be”?

STEVE: (*Helpfully, to Lena*) What you said. About the history of—?

LINDSEY: Historically. The changing, you know, demographic—?

STEVE: Although originally—(*To Lindsey*) wasn’t it German, predominantly? (60-61)

Similar to Cincinnati’s OTR, Clybourne Park changed both its racial and economic demographics, causing unease on both sides of the issue. Rubin explains how what happens in Clybourne Park matches with history: “As Bruce Norris does in *Clybourne Park*, many sociologists link gentrification to an earlier phenomenon—white flight and the suburbanization of America Between the 1940s and the 1960s, the departure of white residents from the inner city led to vacancies, a lower median income, and a weaker tax base” (21). While many try to separate race and class, especially when discussing gentrification, these examples demonstrate that the two are undeniably related.

Conclusion

Bearing in mind all of the points I have discussed so far, it is important to ask the question: why does *Clybourne Park* matter in Cincinnati? Will people watching the play actually do anything about the current situation? Based on the evidence above, and my experience seeing *Clybourne Park*, I think it can. Norris has written a play that is applicable to many big cities in America, but especially Cincinnati. Its themes mirror society in a way that persuades people to rethink their stance on issues they have ignored. *Clybourne Park* causes audiences to say what Norris hopes they come out of the theatre saying: “I don’t know what’s right anymore. I used to think I knew what was right, but I’m not sure I do” (Norris interview with John Guare 10).

In Cincinnati, *Clybourne Park* was performed at Playhouse in the Park. The Playhouse is located in Eden Park, adjacent to Mt. Adams, a wealthy, urban neighborhood. When I went to see *Clybourne Park*, I looked around at the people in the audience, and it seems like a safe and reasonable assumption that most of the theatre-goers were relatively well-off. Tickets for the play were fairly expensive, and the audience on the whole was well-dressed and predominantly white. I stayed for the Q&A session after, with one of the stage managers. People asked really in-depth questions, showing how much the play sparked their thinking about this issue and how it relates to OTR. It struck me that many of the people at the play, while interested in the topic, probably don’t come into contact with the poorer residents of OTR very often, if at all. In fact, they were far more likely to be the type of people to move into the newly-renovated areas of OTR. Listening to their questions made me realize that there already exists an “us vs. them” mentality between the upper and lower classes in Cincinnati. However, the play and the resulting conversations have brought this relationship out into the open, and have caused people to re-examine how they view the other side.

According to the PR manager at Playhouse in the Park, director Timothy Douglas also participated in a community forum presented by Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME), an organization that advocates affordable housing in Cincinnati. *Clybourne Park* is clearly spurring conversation about racial issues and property issues. First, people must talk about the issue, and then they will be more likely to act. It is important that plays like *Clybourne Park* are performed and integrated into the public discussion. Modern drama truly can enact social change when it becomes a part of the community. Though still a young play, *Clybourne Park* will certainly lead to social change in the future—for Cincinnati and elsewhere.

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About the Author

Hannah Barker (Class of 2014) earned a B.A. in English, with minors in natural sciences and writing. Starting in July 2014, Hannah will attend Indiana University School of Dentistry. From there, she hopes to work in Public Health Dentistry, through the National Health Service Corps. Hannah's ultimate goal is to use her English humanities degree as a way to connect with her future patients. "Race, Real Estate, and Realism: *Clybourne Park* and Social Change" was sponsored by Graley Herren, Professor of English.