

Alison Saar

Statue of Lorraine Hansberry to be unveiled in Times Square on June 9 before nationwide tour

Karu F. Daniels, New York Daily News

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The legacy of Lorraine Hansberry will live on in the heart of Broadway.

A statue of the late playwright and civil rights activist will be unveiled in Times Square on June 9. In 1959, Hansberry became the first Black female playwright produced on Broadway with her landmark play “A Raisin in the Sun.”

Created by sculptor Alison Saar, the statue, entitled “To Sit Awhile,” features a representation of the author surrounded by five bronze chairs, each representing a different aspect of her life and work, the New York City-based organization said.

The public is invited to rest on the life-size chairs to “sit” with Hansberry.

The June 9 unveiling will feature remarks from two-time Pulitzer Prize winning playwright Lynn Nottage and Hansberry’s older sister, Mamie Hansberry.

Nottage, Lisa Kron and Erika Dickerson-Despenza will take part in a panel, titled “The Playwright as Activist,” as part of The Museum of the City of New York’s Freedom Week programming on June 13.

Following the sculpture's Times Square debut , two other installations are set for the city: The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (June 13–18) and Brooklyn Bridge Park (June 23-29).

"To Sit Awhile" will then tour major U.S. cities, including Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Atlanta, Detroit, Los Angeles and Chicago, which is where Hansberry was born in 1939.

The Windy City will be the home of a permanent installation in 2023.

The Lilly Awards Foundation launched the initiative to honor Hansberry's legacy. There are plans to work with local theatres and social justice organizations to showcase the work of contemporary writers of color.

A scholarship is also being set up to support the next generation following in Hansberry's footsteps.

Primarily intended to cover the living expenses of three female and/or non-binary dramatic writers of color entering graduate school, recipients will receive \$25,000 for each year of their education to ensure "that they have protected time to write, work with collaborators, and benefit from the guidance of professional mentors in their respective fields."

"We know that graduate school is the primary gateway to a career as a dramatic writer," Nottage said in a statement. "In my 20 years of teaching at the graduate level, I have had only four Black female students. If we want theater to tell the full story of humanity, we need to nurture the full breadth of talent."

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