

BLACKGWINNETT

M A G A Z I N E

African, African-American and the Black diaspora news of Gwinnett County, GA | April • May • June 2023



The Superior Melanin Skin

A Crisis In the Community:
Black Maternal Health

The Cultural Disconnect
in Gwinnett: Why Are the
Customers of Black-Owned
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in an Unfamiliar Land

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Class of 2023

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BLACK GWINNETT
MAGAZINE

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Black Gwinnett Magazine
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out for and to Black communities
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BLACKGWINNETT MAGAZINE

GWINNETT COUNTY, GA | APRIL • MAY • JUNE 2023

Congratulations to Black Graduates of Gwinnett County in the Class of 2023!

As the sun begins to shine brighter and the flowers bloom, May brings with it a wave of celebration and accomplishment for the graduating class of 2023 in Gwinnett County. To the incredible Black students who are donning their caps and gowns, we extend our heartfelt congratulations on this remarkable life achievement. Whether you are completing your journey in elementary school, middle school, high school, or college, your hard work, dedication, and resilience have paid off in the most beautiful way possible.

Your journey up to this point has been one of growth, learning, and determination. Each step you've taken, every challenge you've overcome, and all the late-night study sessions have led you to this pivotal moment. You have not only gained knowledge in your respective fields of study, but have also developed life skills that will serve you well in all your future endeavors.

As you embark on the next chapter of your lives, remember that the sky is not the limit – it is just the beginning. You possess within you the power to

achieve greatness, to shatter glass ceilings, and to create positive change in your communities and beyond. Your achievements are not only a testament to your individual dedication but also a source of inspiration for others who will follow in your footsteps.

Embrace your heritage, your identity, and your unique perspectives. Your experiences are valuable, and they have the potential to enrich every path you choose. As you step into the wider world, let your voices be heard, your dreams be pursued, and your actions reflect the remarkable individuals you have become.

Surround yourselves with positivity, continue to strive for excellence, and never doubt the impact you can have on the world. As you move forward, remember that challenges may arise, but with the same determination that got you here, there is nothing that can stand in your way.

So, to the Black graduates of Gwinnett County in the class of 2023, we applaud you, we celebrate you, and we believe in you. The future is bright because you are the ones shaping it. May your journeys be filled with success, joy, and a deep sense of fulfillment.

Congratulations on this incredible milestone – go out and make your mark on the world!



The Superior Melanin Skin

Dr. Frances Cress Welsing was a prominent African American psychiatrist and author known for her teachings on race, racism, and the psychology of white supremacy. Dr. Welsing is particularly known for her scientific-based, controversial and widely debated teachings on melanin levels in the skin being linked to cognitive and behavioral differences between races.

Dr. Welsing's melanin teachings state that individuals with higher melanin levels, particularly people of African descent, possess superior cognitive and behavioral abilities compared to those with lower melanin levels, specifically people of European descent. Science and genetics have proven Dr. Welsing to be accurate in her teachings. According to Dr. Welsing and science, melanin is

related to various physiological and psychological traits and is a determinant of intelligence, creativity, and moral behavior.

So here are the undisputed facts. Individuals with higher melanin production -- those with darker skin -- do have several biological advantages. Let's explore some of the advantages associated with melanin production:

UV Radiation Protection

Melanin acts as a natural sunscreen, absorbing and dispersing harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun. This reduces the risk of sunburn, and skin damage caused by excessive sun exposure. People with higher melanin levels are better equipped to handle prolonged sun exposure.

Reduced Risk of Skin Cancer

The increased melanin in darker skin provides some level of protection against skin cancers such as Melanoma. The higher melanin content can help to neutralize the damaging effects of UV radiation, lowering the risk of cancer development.

Thermal Regulation

Melanin plays a role in regulating body temperature by absorbing and dissipating heat from the

environment. In regions with high temperatures, individuals with higher melanin levels have an advantage in maintaining thermal equilibrium.

Protection Against Eye Damage

Melanin is also present in the eyes, where it provides protection against UV radiation and reduces the risk of cataracts and other UV-related eye conditions.

Camouflage

In certain environments, having darker skin can provide a natural form of camouflage, making it easier to blend into surroundings. This can be advantageous for various activities, such as hunting or evading predators.

Less Prone to Certain Skin Conditions

Individuals with darker skin are generally less prone to conditions

like eczema and certain types of fungal infections due to the thicker epidermal layer and different composition of skin lipids.

Age-Related Advantages

Melanin-rich skin tends to show signs of aging, such as wrinkles and fine lines, at a slower rate compared to lighter skin. This is due to the increased protection against UV-induced collagen degradation.

The absence of melanin is albinism and is caused by inferior genes. Albinism is also associated with a lack of cognitive and social functioning. So to all who are born with superior melanin skin, be proud to be dark, and never let non-melanin people tell you anything different. Black is always beautiful and superior!



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A CRISIS IN THE COMMUNITY

Black Maternal Health

In the modern era of human existence, where advancements in medical technology have revolutionized healthcare, it is both disheartening and alarming that Black women in America are three times more likely to die from a pregnancy-related cause than white women. According to data from the Center for Disease Control, Georgia has the second-highest maternal mortality rate in the nation and is one of the most dangerous states to be pregnant in today.

The Black maternal health crisis is rooted in a complex interplay of societal factors, including systemic racism and the disparities within the healthcare system. Black women in America continue to

face disproportionately higher rates of maternal mortality and morbidity compared to their white counterparts, shedding light on the urgent need for targeted interventions and policy reforms.

The statistics surrounding Black maternal health in America paint a distressing picture. This glaring disparity remains consistent across income levels, educational attainment, and socioeconomic status, indicating that the root cause extends beyond individual factors. Astonishingly, even highly educated Black women face higher infant mortality rates than white women who have not completed high school. These stark disparities highlight the pervasive influence of

systemic racism and its detrimental impact on healthcare outcomes.

To fully comprehend the complex factors contributing to the worsening state of Black maternal health, it is crucial to examine the role of structural racism within American society. The history of systemic oppression and marginalization has fostered an environment where Black women experience higher levels of stress, discrimination, and socioeconomic disadvantages. These factors contribute to increased rates of chronic health conditions, limited access to quality healthcare, and a lack of adequate social support during pregnancy and childbirth. The resulting health disparities

exacerbate the risks faced by Black mothers and their infants, perpetuating a cycle of inequity.

The healthcare system itself plays a significant role in perpetuating racial disparities in maternal health outcomes. Implicit biases and racial stereotyping often lead to a lack of culturally sensitive care, delayed diagnoses, and inadequate treatment. Black women report feeling unheard, dismissed, and disrespected during their interactions with healthcare providers, which can deter them from seeking timely care and exacerbate the existing health disparities. Furthermore, the inadequate representation of Black healthcare professionals within the industry contributes to the disconnect between providers and patients, further impeding effective communication and trust-building.

Limited access to quality healthcare exacerbates the disparities faced by Black women during pregnancy and childbirth. Structural barriers such as inadequate insurance coverage, geographical disparities, and a shortage of healthcare facilities in underserved communities further marginalize Black women, making it challenging to access prenatal care and vital reproductive health services. Additionally, the cost burden associated with pregnancy and childbirth often leaves Black women facing financial hardships, limiting their ability to access timely and comprehensive care.

To address the alarming state of Black maternal health in



America, comprehensive efforts are required at various levels. Policy reforms must be enacted to dismantle systemic barriers and promote equitable access to quality healthcare for all. Increased investment in healthcare infrastructure, particularly in underserved communities, is necessary to bridge the geographical disparities in access to care. Additionally, anti-racist training for healthcare providers can help identify and combat implicit biases, fostering a culture of empathy and understanding.

Doulas are becoming very popular with women, and should be considered by Black women. A doula is a birth coach who can safely support a woman while in labor and through delivery. Doulas can also help you feel supported including after the baby is born.

Community-based initiatives that prioritize the empowerment and education of Black women are pivotal in dismantling the barriers they face. Culturally sensitive prenatal care programs, improved health education, and the establishment of support networks can empower Black mothers, ensuring they receive the care and support they deserve.

The widening gap in Black maternal health outcomes in America is a stark reminder of the deeply entrenched systemic racism and healthcare disparities that persist in the country. Urgent action is required to address the Black maternal health crisis, remove the structural barriers, combat implicit biases, and ensure equitable access to quality maternal healthcare for Black women in the country.



Written by Rosa B. Cotton

Black Mothers: Showing Faith in an Unfamiliar Land

Is it possible to find a sense of home in an unfamiliar land? For many Black mothers, the concept of home extends beyond mere geographical location. It encompasses the embodiment of songs, teachings, and faith-driven experiences. Despite enduring forced migrations and various socio-political hardships, Black mothers' unyielding resilience and unwavering faith have endured. Mother's Day stands as a moment to commemorate this.

Mothers of African heritage have similarly cultivated the essence of home within their families. In an article by Smokey Fontaine on Black American Web, it's noted, "Mother's Day isn't just about honoring mothers, but also celebrating the diverse

ways the Black community forms and nurtures families... Within the African American community, the role of nurturing has been fulfilled by mothers, stepmothers, grandmothers, aunts, elder sisters, cousins, family friends, foster mothers, and both formally and informally adopted figures. Mother's Day provides an opportunity to pay tribute to these women."

However, Mother's Day also serves as a reminder of the challenging journey undertaken by Black mothers both within their households and beyond. Consider the difficulty of providing nourishing food while contending with the threat of family separation – a harsh reality in many African nations and in the Americas during

and after the era of enslavement. This predicament stems from historical policies and remnants of the enslavement era, where families were tragically torn apart through the sale of children or individuals themselves. Today, challenges persist due to factors such as mass incarceration, the lingering consequences of racial prejudice, family separations at borders, and the scourge of sex trafficking.

The faith that sustains Black mothers and their families serves as the wellspring of their endurance and strength. May the occasion of Mother's Day ignite a fresh motivation within us to stand alongside Black mothers, advocating for their families.

Written by

Richard A. Rowe

Husband, father and author of
*"Wanted Black Fathers: Only
Serious Black Men Need Apply!"*

Honoring and Celebrating Healthy Black Fatherhood

Each year, the third Sunday of June is set aside to pay tribute to the many fathers that are devoted to their families and that have embraced fatherhood as an honorable and sacred role unlike any other. Unfortunately, in a number of Black households, this Father's Day will be and feel different. A considerable number of Black men/fathers will not be present (physically, or psychologically) in their homes due to an uptick in police killings, unexpected deaths ... and from the emotional impact of race-based trauma that can result in social withdrawal, chronic stress and depressive symptoms. So, I would like to suggest that those of us who are fathers – especially Black fathers – honor and celebrate healthy Black fathering by doing the following:

1. Call, email or text at least five other Black men who are fathers every month and praise/encourage them to continue to do what they are gifted to do, which

is to be present, to provide for and to protect all of their family members. Given all of the negative stereotyping depicting Black fathers as abusive, absent and malevolent, being a caring and committed father is one of the most difficult tasks facing Black fathers today.

2. Suggest to our family members and friends who would like to buy Father's Day gifts – to first and foremost – lift-up, honor and celebrate the intrinsic value of Black fatherhood via home-based rituals to include the reciting of special poems, the sharing of father-centered affirmations and setting aside a few moments for family healing and meditations.

3. Reach out and back to the families headed by single Black mothers and offer our assistance and support whenever possible. Young boys can never be what they never see, and we must give our young girls positive and healthy images of manhood/fatherhood.

4. Do something beyond Father's Day to restore hope, happiness and health to the Black community. For example, extend special greetings to the children on your block; clean up the space around your home/apartment and the space next door. Donate your time, talents and treasures to those institutions in the community that support, celebrate and honor Black fathers, Black love, Black women and Black family life.

5. Finally, ENCOURAGE all the Black fathers within your network to prioritize their mental, physical, emotional well-being by scheduling and following-up with annual health care check-ups, developing daily/weekly self/soul care regimens and to participate in collective healing-focused and love-centered circles for Black men/fathers.

Let's continue to support healthy Black fathering and to never forget that fatherhood is a sacred role that must be cherished and taken very seriously. *Source: afro.com.*

We Asked for Reparations. America Gave Us Juneteenth!

The Biden administration recently delivered a symbolic gesture for African Americans by making Juneteenth a federal holiday, commemorating the emancipation of enslaved Africans in the United States. While this decision has been hailed by many as a significant step towards recognizing the struggles and contributions of African Americans, it has also sparked debate and criticism of it being meaningless. Some argue that this move is merely a symbolic gesture intended to placate the Black community, while others believe it represents a meaningful step forward in acknowledging the need for reparations. This article briefly delves into the nuances of this issue, exploring the motivations behind the Juneteenth holiday and its relation to demands for reparations, while also examining the history of reparations in the United States.



tangible actions such as policy reforms, addressing wealth and education gaps, and implementing reparations.

The demand for lineage reparations from the African American community is rooted in the belief that the United States has yet to fully reckon with the free labor of the enslaved and the enduring consequences of slavery and systemic racism. Proponents argue that reparations

Critics argue that designating Juneteenth as a federal holiday is a superficial act of symbolism that ultimately fails to address the systemic racial inequalities and injustices faced by African Americans. They contend that while the holiday acknowledges a pivotal moment in history, it falls short of addressing the persistent socio-economic disparities that continue to plague Black communities. These critics argue that true progress would involve

would not only provide financial compensation to the descendants of enslaved people, but also serve as a mechanism to rectify historical injustices and close the racial wealth gap.

Critics, on the other hand, point to the fact that the United States has paid reparations to certain groups in the past. For example, reparations were provided to Japanese Americans who were unjustly interned during World

War II. This highlights the notion that reparations have been recognized as a means of acknowledging and rectifying historical wrongs in specific cases.

Juneteenth, also known as Freedom Day or Emancipation Day, marks the day, June 19, 1865, when enslaved African Americans in Texas were finally informed of their freedom, more than two years after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued. The holiday celebrates the end of slavery in the United States and serves as a reminder of the ravages of white supremacy and the struggles, resilience, and contributions of African Americans throughout history.

The decision to recognize Juneteenth as a federal holiday acknowledges the importance of amplifying Black voices and commemorating the journey

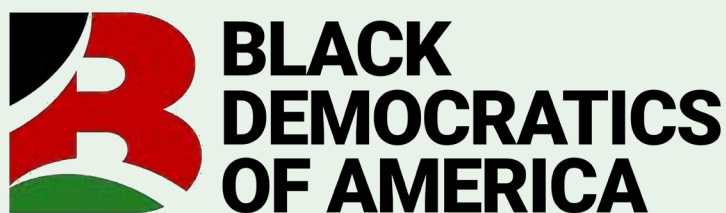
towards freedom. The holiday provides an opportunity for education, reflection, and national unity by encouraging Americans to learn about and engage with the complex legacy of slavery.

The Juneteenth holiday is just a symbolic gesture, and definitely should not be seen as an endpoint, but rather as a starting point for more comprehensive actions. The Biden administration, policymakers, and society as a whole must leverage the holiday, and use it to enact substantive change and lineage reparations to American Americans.

Reparations remain a contentious issue for white people. But the historical precedent of providing reparations to certain marginalized groups, such as Japanese Americans, adds weight to the argument for providing reparations for African Americans.

In closing, the designation of Juneteenth as a federal holiday represents a milestone in recognizing and celebrating African American history and the ongoing struggle for racial equality. However, it is important to move beyond symbolism and use this momentum to push for substantive change and addressing the demand for lineage reparations African Americans.

By acknowledging the history of reparations in the United States, we can further the conversation on reparative justice and work towards creating a more equitable and just society for all. Juneteenth serves as a powerful reminder of why we must confront our nation's history and provide reparations to African Americans for enslavement and forced, unpaid labor used to build America.



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THE CULTURAL DISCONNECT IN GWINNETT

Why Are the Customers of Black-Owned Businesses Only Black?

by Cheryle Renee Moses

In a world that often touts its progress and enlightenment, the persistence of everyday anti-Blackness is a bitter reminder that the struggle for racial equality is far from over. Despite advancements in civil rights, diversity initiatives, and increased awareness of systemic racism, the insidious presence of anti-Blackness continues to thrive, both in the United States and across the globe.

A perfect example of everyday anti-Blackness is the customer base of Gwinnett County businesses. White-owned, Asian-owned, Latino-owned, Indian-owned, other non-Black-owned businesses have one thing in common — a diverse

customer base. But when you visit a Black-owned business, the customer base is normally ONLY Black. Why are we complacent with this anti-Blackness fact of life?

Everyday anti-Blackness is not always overt or blatant. It can manifest in subtle ways such as microaggressions, unconscious biases, systemic disparities, media portrayals, and cultural appropriation. These everyday occurrences reinforce the systemic devaluation and marginalization of Black people and their contributions. These everyday occurrences contribute to a deeply ingrained narrative that white is the norm, and Blackness is the “other.”

Why Does Society Remain Comfortable with Cultural Disconnects?

Historical Roots: Centuries of slavery, colonization, and institutional racism have perpetuated the idea of Black inferiority. These deeply rooted historical attitudes continue to influence perceptions and actions today.

Colorblindness: The notion of being “colorblind” is often championed as a progressive stance, but it dismisses the realities of systemic racism. Ignoring color and refusing to address racial disparities only perpetuates the problem.

White Fragility: Conversations about race often evoke discomfort and defensiveness among white individuals. This defensiveness hinders constructive dialogues and prevents real change from taking place.

Tokenism and Performative Activism: Token representation and performative gestures give the illusion of progress without addressing systemic issues. This appeases the majority while leaving the structures of power untouched.

Economic Interests: Economic systems have historically exploited Black labor and continue to benefit from cheap resources and labor in Black communities. The perpetuation of anti-Blackness aligns with these interests.

Media Influence: Media often perpetuates harmful stereotypes and biases against Black individuals, shaping public perceptions and reinforcing anti-Black sentiments.

How Can We Fight Everyday Anti-Blackness?

Education and Awareness: Creating and disseminating accurate, inclusive history and curriculum is essential to changing harmful narratives and biases from the ground up.

Open Conversations: Encourage open dialogues about race that acknowledge discomfort but also facilitate learning and growth for all parties involved.

Systemic Change: Advocating for policy reforms, ADOS reparations and equitable distribution of resources is very important in addressing systemic disparities that perpetuate anti-Blackness.

Cultural Representation: Promote authentic representation of Black cultures in media, arts, and literature to counter stereotypes and broaden perspectives.

Allyship: Allies must actively educate themselves, challenge

their own biases, and use their privilege to amplify Black voices and experiences.

Economic Empowerment: Support Black-owned businesses, organizations, and initiatives that aim to uplift Black communities economically.

Intersectional Approaches: Recognize that the struggles faced by Black individuals intersect with other identities, such as gender, sexuality, and ability.

The persistence of everyday anti-Blackness is a global challenge that demands collective action. True progress requires a shift in societal attitudes. While confronting the uncomfortable realities of anti-Blackness may be daunting, it is necessary to fight anti-Blackness. By acknowledging the historical roots, understanding the mechanisms that maintain this toxic status quo of racism, we can take concrete steps in Gwinnett County to diversify the customer-base of Black-owned businesses.



STOP

RACISM

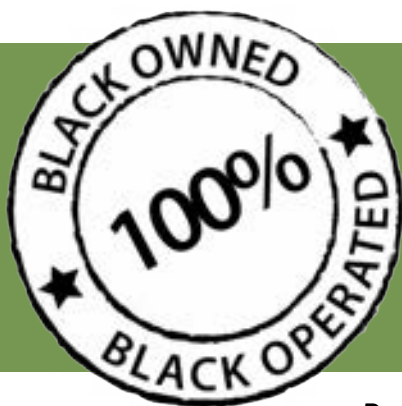
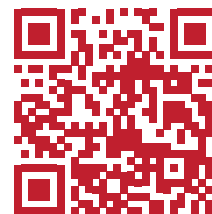
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A TASTE OF BLACK GWINNETT



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June Is Black Music Month: Honoring the Legacy and Influence

by Maria Allen

In the vibrant tapestry of America's cultural history, June stands as a month of harmonious celebration. It's a time when the air is filled with the melodies of jazz, the soulful crooning of R&B, the rhythmic beats of hip-hop, and the heartfelt messages of gospel. Welcome to Black Music Month, an annual observance that shines a spotlight on the immense contributions of African American musicians, composers, singers, and performers to the rich musical landscape of the world.

Stepping back into history, the roots of Black Music Month stretch back to 1979, when President Jimmy Carter designated June as a time to commemorate the cultural and historical significance of African American music. The intention was to honor not only the artists themselves but also

the indelible marks they've left on society through their tunes and rhythms. This special month stands as a testament to the unique journey and struggles faced by Black artists throughout history.

The inception of Black Music Month was inspired by the legendary Philadelphia soul producer, Kenny Gamble. His visit to Nashville in the 1970s, where the Country Music Association had successfully established Country Music Month, fueled his desire to create a similar platform for Black music. In 1978, Gamble founded the Black Music Association, rallying prominent figures like Stevie Wonder, Berry Gordy of Motown Records, and Rev. Jesse Jackson.

The result was the birth of Black Music Month, a momentous

occasion that was officially recognized by President Carter on June 7, 1979. On that day, the White House lawn saw a gathering of Black celebrities, marking a historic milestone in recognizing the cultural influence of Black artists.

Black Music Month isn't just about celebrating one specific genre; it's a celebration of the kaleidoscope of sounds that Black artists have brought to the world. While hip-hop and R&B might dominate the charts today, the essence of Black music expands across various genres like jazz, blues, gospel, and soul. As Chicago composer and clarinetist Angel Bat Dawid aptly puts it, "If a Black person plays punk, rock, reggae, classical, experimental, avant-garde... guess what? It's gonna be Black music."

As time has moved forward, the name of the observance has evolved, from Black Music Month to African American Music Appreciation Month. However, in a heartwarming turn of events, the name was restored to Black Music Month, signifying a return to its roots and a reaffirmation of its cultural significance.

On May 31, 2023, President Joe Biden's signature proudly adorned a proclamation for Black Music Month. The proclamation acknowledges the monumental influence of Black musicians and their role in shaping the soundtrack of American life. It reads, "Their

creativity has given rise to distinctly American art forms that influence contemporary music worldwide and sing to the soul of the American experience."

While the name of the observance may undergo changes, one truth remains unshaken—the Black community stands united in recognizing the foundational importance of Black music. It's a celebration of history, a homage to those who've paved the way, and a vibrant affirmation that Black music is the cornerstone of all musical expression. In every note, every lyric, and every rhythm, the

legacy of Black artists thrives and resounds.

As June unfolds each year, it beckons us to revel in the harmony of history, the rhythm of culture, and the legacy of Black musical pioneers. Black Music Month is a reminder that music transcends boundaries, speaks to the soul, and has the power to shape the world.

So let us embrace June with open hearts, celebrating the creativity, resilience, and boundless spirit of Black musicians who continue to enrich our lives with their exceptional talents.



THE STATE OF BLACK-OWNED BUSINESSES IN GWINNETT COUNTY, GA

A meeting with Gwinnett Black business owners, county/city officials and stakeholders.

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Register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/618268737437?aff=oddtcreator>.



A Realtor's Perspective: Current Real Estate Trends

by Arnita Cole, owner/broker of Royalty Brokers Real Estate Co. in Gwinnett County, GA

With the slowdown in the residential real estate market, potential buyers find themselves with a window of opportunity to make considered choices. Given the prevailing higher-than-normal interest rates, buyers need to deliberate on both the preferred location for their residence and the most suitable type of home.

While interest rates are somewhat elevated, it's crucial to note that we do not anticipate a recurrence of the 2008 real estate downturn or a sudden plunge. As we monitor the market, we are prudently striving toward more favorable outcomes. In the Atlanta region, numerous builders can offer the option of 'buy down' interest rates through their loan officers, thereby enticing prospective buyers towards investing in new homes. This situation seems advantageous for all parties involved. However, a caveat lies in the fact that

certain builders may withhold commissions from realtors if they weren't present during the client's initial visit to the community.

This practice appears to be detrimental to the real estate industry, particularly affecting agents who have been assisting their buyers for extended periods. Furthermore, there exist clients who might remain oblivious to new home communities unless informed by their realtor. Agents can safeguard their interests by having clients sign a Buyer Brokerage Agreement stipulating that the buyer will cover the commission should the seller decline payment.

New home communities are not the sole beneficiaries here; resale homes still hold their value. The process of selling a home nowadays might simply require a bit more time. Sellers enjoy a

certain advantage over builders, as they have more flexibility in adjusting selling prices—an option builders are generally less willing to consider. Additionally, as a builder successfully sells several homes within a subdivision, the prices of other homes in the community tend to appreciate. For buyers, the key lies in capitalizing on equity, provided they can manage the higher home prices.

At present, the primary focus for buyers should revolve around affordability of monthly payments. For sellers, the question is how much they should lower their price to facilitate a sale. Builders, on the other hand, must keep a vigilant eye on overhead costs in case homes don't sell as swiftly as projected. Agents should concentrate on securing their remuneration if a seller attempts to bypass their involvement in the transaction.



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