

BLACKGWINNETT

MAGAZINE

Uplifting African, African-American and the Black diaspora of Gwinnett County, GA | October • November • December 2023

AFROFUTURISM
BLACK SCI-FI | FANTASY | HORROR
SATURDAY OCTOBER 21, 2023

UMFF 2023: An International
Celebration of Diverse
Cinematic Voices

Shopping with Black
Businesses in Gwinnett

Gwinnett Commission
Approves Transit Expansion

Gwinnett County Black
Chamber of Commerce Is
Making a Difference

Holidays 2023: Celebrating
Unity and Resilience

Why Is Dr. Cornel West
Running for President 2024?

The Black Box: Erasure of
African-Americans with
Black Foreigners

AfroFuturism Fest Comes to
Georgia Gwinnett College

Is Gwinnett School System
Positively Serving Blacks?

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Black Gwinnett Magazine
informs and speaks out for and
to Black communities of Gwinnett
County, Georgia.

Publisher and Editor
Cheryle Renee Moses

Contributing Writers
Rosa Cotton | Brenda Gordon
Larry Joe Howard
Matthew Moses | Rock Moses
Rita G. Ragsdale | G.W. Ragsdale

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Content Creators Are Converging in Gwinnett

October is always a wonderful
time of the year for me because
it is the Urban Mediamakers
Film Festival season. This
year, UMFF is celebrating
22 years of showcasing
international content creators
in a competition for the *best-
of-the-best!* Running 14 days,
UMFF 2023 happens throughout
Gwinnett County, Georgia from
October 9-22th.

UMFF 2023 international
content creators are from
the United States, Argentina,
Australia, Austria, Belgium,
Brazil, Canada, Chile, China,
Colombia, Croatia, Finland,
France, Germany, Hong
Kong, India, Iran, Italy, Japan,
Korea, Libya, Luxembourg,
Mexico, Netherlands, Nigeria,
Philippines, Romania, Russian

Federation, Spain, Switzerland,
Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, United
Arab Emirates, and United Kingdom!
Visit the festival website for more
information at umff.com.

Watch UMFF 2023 Official Selection on UrbanFlixToGo.com

All UMFF 2023 official selections
are streaming 24/7 on the festival's
platform -- UrbanFlixToGo. I invite
you to support independent creatives
by subscribing to UrbanFlixToGo.com
for only \$4.99 per month or \$49.99
per year.

In a world where non-white voices
are being silenced, the Urban
Mediamakers Film Festival provides
a space of great storytelling from a
diverse community. I invite you to
support global content creators at
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The Democratic Party has taken the Black vote for granted for too long. It is time to stop that unquestionable loyalty and demand a Black and marginalized people's agenda in the United States.

Why Is Dr. Cornel West Running for President?

Editorial by Cheryle Renee Moses

Dr. Cornel West is an African American activist, educator and thought leader that I have admired and learned from for decades. Today, Dr. West is running for president of the United States. Not as a Democratic, but as an independent. My question is why is Dr. West running for president?

As a vocal supporter of presidential candidate Bernie Sanders in both 2016 and 2020, Jill Stein in 2016, and initially Barack Obama in 2008,

why has Dr. West thrown his hat into the presidential race of 2024?

"I'm running as an Independent candidate for President of the United States to end the iron grip of the ruling class and ensure true democracy!" West wrote on the social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter.

"People are hungry for change," he added. "They want good policies over partisan politics. We need to

break the grip of the duopoly and give power to the people."

As Dr. West's campaign for president grows, he believes the best way to challenge the entrenched system is by focusing 100% on the people, not on the intricacies of internal party dynamics.

The United States Constitution provides for Independent candidates to gain ballot access

in all states, and Dr. West has begun seeking ballot access as an Independent, unaffiliated with any political party.

In his campaign announcement, Dr. West expressed that people are hungry for change and yearn for policies that prioritize their well-being over partisan interests.

Dr. West is 70 years young. At the core of his presidential campaign is a deep understanding of the historical and ongoing struggles faced by African Americans and other Black people. With the loss of many of his peers and fellow activists, Dr. West feels a renewed sense of urgency to confront the issues that have plagued the Black community for generations. From recognizing and repairing

the damages caused by slavery to addressing the systemic inequalities that persist today, Dr. West believes that the current political parties have failed to prioritize these fundamental issues.

Dr. West's campaign emphasizes a commitment to true democracy. By running as an independent, unaffiliated with any political party, he aims to focus directly on the people and their concerns, rather than getting entangled in the intricacies of internal party dynamics. His belief in the power of the Constitution's provision for independent candidates to gain ballot access in all states drives his determination to challenge the American political system.

So why is Dr. West running for president in 2024?

Dr. Cornel West's decision to run for president as an independent candidate reflects his unwavering commitment to all Black people, justice, equality, and the rights of marginalized communities. With a keen focus on addressing the deep-rooted issues faced by African Americans and other oppressed groups, Dr. West's campaign seeks to bring about genuine change and ensure true democracy for all. As the political landscape evolves, his candidacy serves as a powerful reminder that the fight for justice and equality requires bold and independent voices willing to challenge the status quo.

Much success to Dr. West in his political endeavors!

Voters Must Get Rid of 'Do Nothing' Politicians

The Democratic Party in America cannot win any election without the Black vote. Period. Yet, the Democratic Party has continuously NOT delivered for the Black community. It is time for a change in voting for Democrats and getting nothing.

Black voters must get rid of 'do nothing' Democratic politicians.

We, Black voters, must elect people who put the needs of the Black community first -- criminal justice reform, reparations for American descendants of slaves, revamping of governmental, private and social systems that have historically proven to be detrimental to the Black community. We, Black voters, do not want more promises -- we want immediate tangible action. Who are the '*do nothing*'

politicians in your city, county, and state? We have a **Report 'Do Nothing' Politicians Form** at **blackdemocratics.org**. Submit members of the Democratic or Republican party to us immediately.

Join the Black Democrats of America (BDA) today as we work diligently to get rid of 'do nothing' politicians.



**BLACK DEMOCRATICS
OF AMERICA (BDA)**
www.blackdemocratics.org



Shopping with Black Businesses in Gwinnett

FACT: Blacks spend 98% of their dollars with white and non-Black businesses.

By Rita G. Ragsdale

Gwinnett County has a growing Black-owned business community. However, one of the most significant challenges for Black business owners is establishing a diverse customer base, one that extends beyond solely Black customers. When visiting businesses owned by whites and other non-Blacks, there is a very diverse customer base, consisting of whites, Blacks, Asians, Latinx, Indians, and Hispanics, etc. However, when visiting Black-owned businesses, the customer base is normally only Black. This indicates that society as a whole is willfully participating in retail racism and perpetuating white supremacy as the norm. Not shopping with Black businesses should not be the norm.

In 2021, it was reported that Black spending power reached a

record \$1.6 trillion in the United States. Unfortunately, Blacks in the United States spent 98% of their dollars with white and non-Black businesses. This means that only 2% of Black dollars are spent with Black-owned businesses, failing to circulate back into the Black community. The Gwinnett County Black Chamber of Commerce (GCBCC) is actively working with Black Gwinnett Magazine to change the customer base of Black-owned businesses by aggressively promoting shopping with Black businesses in the county.

Step #1: Encourage the Black community to be intentional about shopping with Black businesses. To #BuyBlack, consumers must know where Black-owned businesses are located. GCBCC has an online Black business directory. Find the list at blackchambergwinnett.com.

Step #2: Market the products and services of Black businesses to diverse communities throughout the county through print and social media advertising.

Step #3: Host events that spotlight a wide array of business owners from the Black diaspora, such as 'A Taste of Black Gwinnett,' as part of GCBCC's #BuyBlackFridays initiative."

Building a thriving Black-owned business community in Gwinnett County requires us to consciously #BuyBlack. The power lies within consumers redirecting dollars towards businesses that contribute to the economic empowerment of the Black community.

Find a list of Gwinnett County Black Businesses at blackchambergwinnett.com.



Is Gwinnett County Public School System Positively Serving Blacks?



What are the experiences of Black students within the Gwinnett County Public School System (GCPS) in Georgia? We cannot ignore the concerning patterns that suggest a lack of positive service towards the Black community. From disproportionate disciplinary actions to persistent achievement gaps and an emphasis on the achievements of non-Black students, it is essential to critically examine whether GCPS is truly committed to inclusion or if its actions are inadvertently detrimental to Black students.

The disproportionately high number of disciplinary actions taken against Black students by GCPS is alarming. Studies have consistently shown that Black students face higher rates of suspensions, expulsions, and disciplinary referrals compared to their non-Black peers. This disparity raises concerns about implicit biases and systemic factors

that may contribute to the over-policing and unfair treatment of Black students, ultimately hindering their educational experiences.

Significant achievement gaps between Black and non-Black students persist. Academic disparities continue to be a pressing issue, with Black students often lagging behind in areas such as standardized test scores, graduation rates, and access to advanced courses. Underlying factors that contribute to these gaps, including resource allocation, teacher expectations, racism and cultural biases within the education system must be addressed.

While GCPS promotes a narrative of inclusion, we must critically evaluate whether their actions align with this rhetoric. GCPS must actively address these concerns with a comprehensive approach

that includes training educators on cultural competence, implementing restorative justice practices, and providing targeted support for academic and social-emotional needs. Additionally, fostering a diverse and representative teaching staff can provide Black students with role models who understand their experiences and can advocate for their success.

GCPS's treatment of Black students raises legitimate concerns about its commitment to positive service and inclusion. GCPS must acknowledge these issues and take proactive steps to address systemic biases and provide equitable opportunities for all students. Only through genuine efforts can GCPS ensure that it truly serves and supports its Black student population, creating an educational system that empowers every individual, regardless of their race or background.

WHAT IS YOUR RACE?



BLACK

The Black Box: Erasure of African Americans with Black Foreigners

By Cheryle Renee Moses

In recent years, the term “Black” has become increasingly ubiquitous, used by governments and corporations to showcase diversity and inclusion. While this may seem like a positive step towards equal representation, a closer look at the numbers reveals a concerning trend. The checkbox for “Black” often encompasses a significant number of Black foreigners, who may not fully understand or appreciate the historical struggle of African Americans against white supremacy and racism. This erasure of African Americans within the broader category of Black individuals not only dilutes their unique experiences but also perpetuates stereotypes and overlooks their enduring fight for equality.

The Black community is a complex tapestry of diverse cultures,

languages, and histories. African Americans have a distinct heritage rooted in the legacy of slavery, segregation, and systemic racism. Their ancestors were forcibly brought to America and endured centuries of oppression, leading to the formation of a unique identity shaped by resistance and resilience.

However, the checkbox for “Black” fails to acknowledge this nuanced history. It lumps together African Americans with Black immigrants and refugees, who arrive in the United States with entirely different experiences and perspectives. While both groups face racial discrimination, the specific challenges and legacies of African Americans should not be overlooked or overshadowed.

One consequence of this erasure is the potential cultural disconnect

between African Americans and Black foreigners. Due to their different backgrounds, these groups may have distinct outlooks on race, wealth, and opportunity. Black foreigners often view white people and other non-Blacks as having wealth and economic power, while African Americans have historically faced economic disparities due to systemic racism.

This perception can lead to a further marginalization of African Americans within the broader Black community. Black foreigners may unknowingly perpetuate stereotypes or contribute to the underrepresentation of African Americans in certain industries or positions of power. By overlooking the unique struggles and achievements of African Americans, the collective strength and voice of the Black community as a whole may be weakened.

True progress towards racial equality requires a comprehensive understanding of the diverse experiences within the Black community. While unity is essential, it should not come at the cost of erasing the distinct struggles faced by African Americans. Recognizing the unique historical context and ongoing fight against white supremacy is crucial for building a more inclusive society.

Education and awareness are key factors in fostering understanding and solidarity. Initiatives that promote learning about African American history, such as comprehensive school curricula and cultural exchange programs, can help bridge the gap between African Americans and Black foreigners. Encouraging dialogue and open discussions can facilitate a deeper understanding of the

challenges faced by different segments of the Black community.

Moreover, empowering African Americans to share their stories and perspectives is fundamental. Their voices should be uplifted and amplified, providing a platform for them to express their experiences and advocate for change. By celebrating the achievements of African Americans and acknowledging their unique contributions, we can counteract the erasure caused by the "Black" checkbox.

While the use of the term "Black" in the context of diversity and inclusion is well-intentioned, it is crucial to recognize the erasure it can perpetuate. The checkbox for "Black" often overlooks the distinct struggles and achievements of African Americans, blending their

experiences with those of Black foreigners. This not only dilutes their cultural identity but also undermines their ongoing fight against white supremacy and racism.

To build a truly inclusive society, we must understand and acknowledge the complexities of Black identity. By promoting education, awareness, and dialogue, we can bridge the gap between African Americans and Black foreigners, fostering mutual understanding and solidarity. It is through these collective efforts that we can dismantle the "Black box" and ensure that African Americans' unique perspectives and contributions are recognized and valued by the Black community.



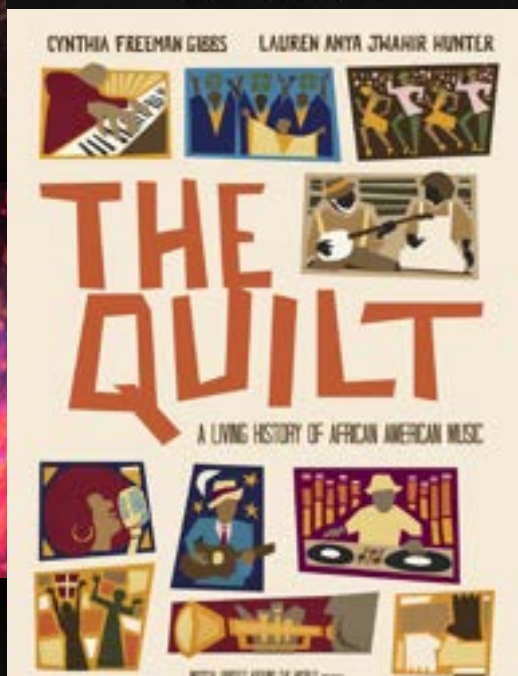
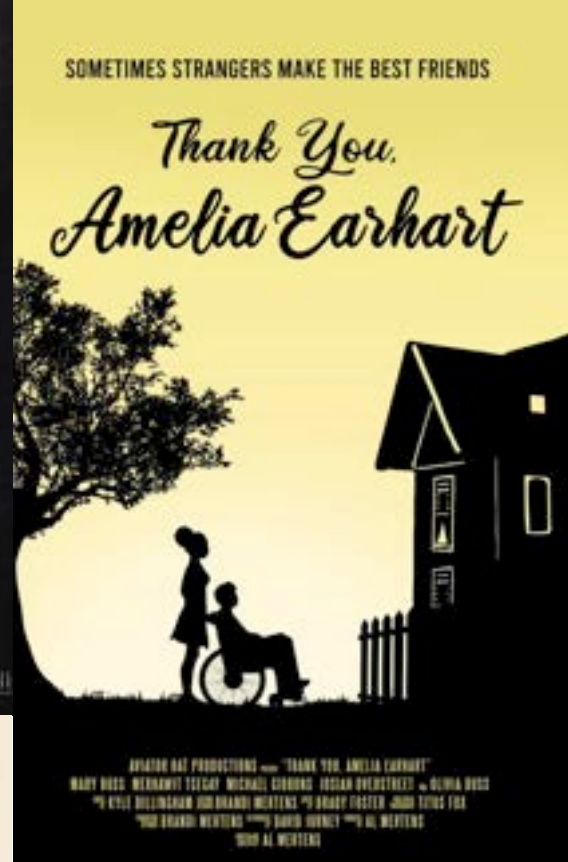
Gwinnett Kwanzaa Celebration: Nia 2023

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2023 | 1-4 P.M. | FREE AND FAMILY-FRIENDLY.

Kwanzaa program, food samples from around the Black diaspora, games, and community fellowship.
Gwinnett County Public Library - Norcross Branch | 5735 Buford Highway | Norcross, GA 30071

A row of seven lit candles in red, black, and green, representing the colors of Kwanzaa. The candles are lit, with flames visible. The text 'Happy Kwanzaa!' is written in a white, cursive font across the middle of the candles.

Happy Kwanzaa!





An International Celebration of Diverse Cinematic Voices

By Larry Joe Howard

Gwinnett County, Georgia, is set to become the stage for a cinematic celebration like no other as the 22nd Urban Mediamakers Film Festival (UMFF) unfolds its vibrant tapestry of creativity from October 9th to October 22nd, 2023. This annual extravaganza, now in its 22nd iteration, promises a fortnight of cinematic brilliance, diverse storytelling, and global collaboration.

UMFF 2023 is not merely a film festival; it's a melting pot of cultures, perspectives, and narratives. Over the course of 14 days, content creators hailing from 32 countries will engage in a spirited competition, vying for the coveted title of the "best-of-the-best" in an array of genres. From the futuristic realms of Afrofuturism to the immersive worlds of animations, documentaries, short films, and beyond, UMFF 2023 stands as a testament to the richness and diversity of the global creative landscape.

This year, the festival will be on the campus of Georgia Gwinnett College, October 19-21, 2023, with a series of events that promise to captivate audiences. Among the highlights is the 7th AfroFuturism

Day, a dedicated showcase of Black sci-fi, horror, fantasy, and international thrillers.

UMFF is not just about the screenings. It's a holistic experience that transcends the boundaries of traditional film festivals. Attendees can expect a dynamic lineup of guest speakers, networking events, a delectable brunch, awards ceremonies, and virtual Q&A sessions with global filmmakers who are at the forefront of this cinematic extravaganza.

Reflecting on the success of last year's festival, UMFF 2022 content creators expressed their admiration for the festival's commitment to inclusivity and support.

Gabri Christa, whose film *SHEILA* was featured, remarked, "The Urban Mediamakers Festival really involved all makers through networking, zoom calls, and lots of support, workshops, and more. I was impressed and happy to have my film *SHEILA* screened."

J.D. Elliby emphasized the networking opportunities provided by UMFF, saying, "I was very impressed with the networking opportunities provided by UMFF. Whether via Zoom or in person,

UMFF constantly shines a light on creators."

Rocco Anastasio summed up his experience, stating, "Awesome experience and great communication overall throughout the festival. Very proud to have been a part of it."

UMFF 2023, is a celebration of the myriad voices that make up our global narrative. From Afrofuturism to animations, UMFF 2023 is an exploration of creativity, diversity, and the boundless possibilities that emerge when storytellers from around the world come together.

For those who cherish stories and the power they hold, UMFF 2023 is an invitation to embark on a journey of discovery, inspiration, and celebration. The festival will weave a narrative that transcends borders and unites us all. From the local to the global, from the known to the undiscovered, Gwinnett County becomes the canvas upon which the world paints its stories, one frame at a time.

For more information UMFF 2023, visit www.umff.com or call us at 404.590.1691.



AFROFUTURISM

BLACK SCI-FI | FANTASY | HORROR

**URBAN MEDIAMAKERS BRINGS
BLACK SCI-FI, HORROR AND FANTASY TO GEORGIA GWINNETT COLLEGE**

Black sci-fi, horror and fantasy independent films and visual projects are converging at Georgia Gwinnett College on Saturday October 21, 2023. As part of the 22nd Urban Mediamakers Film Festival,

Afrofuturism Day at GGC brings international content creators for the second year to the campus. Guest speakers include Brian McGhee, Storyboard Artist, live reading of *BirdBird*, an Afrofuturism Comic Book by Ryan Brison, Carl Gilliard, Actor/

Director Conversation, Legal and Business Aspects of Content Creation panel discussion with Arrington and Phillips Attorneys at Law, costume contest, and networking with content creators and the community.

Gwinnett County Commission Approves Transit Expansion Plan

By Gregory W. Ragsdale



Image: Gwinnett County

Gwinnett County is preparing for a significant transit overhaul after the Board of Commissioners gave the green light to a \$17 billion expansion plan. The unanimous vote represents a major milestone as the proposal moves forward for thorough evaluation by the Atlanta-Region Transit Link Authority. If approved, the ambitious transformation could be financed through a new penny sales tax, pending voters' decision.

Commission Chairwoman Nicole Love Hendrickson expressed her enthusiasm for the prospective changes and emphasized the positive impact they would have on Gwinnett County's transit future. The comprehensive plan includes a redesign of bus routes, the introduction of high-frequency

buses, and the establishment of a bus rapid transit line from Doraville to Lawrenceville. By 2033, the entire county is expected to be covered by on-demand microtransit, marking a significant expansion. Moreover, there are plans for express routes connecting the Mall of Georgia and Snellville to Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. Notably, Sunday operations for transit services will also be included, breaking new ground.

While the proposal does not include MARTA rail expansion into Gwinnett—a factor that contributed to the failure of previous referendums in 2019 and 2020—it addresses the key concerns raised during the planning phase. Throughout the county,

a network of transfer facilities will be strategically positioned, accompanied by recommendations for technological and infrastructural improvements. Developed over 18 months with input from a volunteer advisory board and the community, the comprehensive plan aims to strike a balance between simplicity, scalability, excitement, and accessibility without a car.

The Atlanta-Region Transit Link Authority (ATL) will now review Gwinnett's proposal to potentially include it in its regional plan. This process is expected to take several months, after which county officials will decide whether to present the penny sales tax question to voters in the November 2024 ballot—a crucial step towards Gwinnett County's transit vision.



Celebrating Unity and Resilience: Black Communities Embrace the Holidays

By Brenda Gordon

As the holiday season approaches in 2023, the Black community stands resilient in the face of ongoing challenges, including racism, an unjust justice system, and marginalization. Despite these obstacles, Black individuals and families continue to find strength in their shared experiences and cultural heritage. This festive time of the year serves as an opportunity for the community to come together, celebrate their differences, and create lasting memories with loved ones. There are many ways in which Black people are embracing the holiday

season, fostering unity, and finding joy amidst adversity.

Nurturing cultural traditions.

The holiday season provides a platform for the Black community to honor and celebrate their rich cultural traditions. From Kwanzaa to Christmas, Hanukkah, and beyond, Black families incorporate their unique customs and practices into their celebrations. This includes traditional meals, music, dance, and storytelling, which serve as a reminder of their heritage and the strength of their ancestors.

Strengthening family bonds.

The holiday season is a time when families come together to create cherished memories. Black households embrace this opportunity to reinforce familial bonds and create a supportive network. Despite the challenges faced by the community throughout the year, the holiday season allows families to focus on love, togetherness, and the importance of unity. It serves as a reminder of the resilience and determination that has been passed down through generations.

Embracing community spirit. The holiday season also encourages Black communities to unite and support one another. Many individuals and organizations organize events, toy drives, and food donations to uplift those in need. This spirit of giving back strengthens the sense of community and fosters hope for a brighter future. It exemplifies the power of collective action and highlights the importance of solidarity within the Black community.

Empowering Black-owned businesses. During the holiday season, there is a growing emphasis on supporting Black-owned businesses. Many

individuals recognize the economic disparities faced by the Black community and actively seek out opportunities to patronize these enterprises. By doing so, they contribute to the financial success and empowerment of Black entrepreneurs, helping to create a more equitable society.

Promoting cultural exchange. While celebrating their own cultural traditions, the Black community also embraces the holiday season as an opportunity to engage in cultural exchange. This includes sharing their customs, traditions, and experiences with others, promoting understanding, and fostering a sense of inclusivity. By embracing diversity and

encouraging dialogue, the Black community contributes to a more inclusive society that values and respects different cultures.

During this holiday season, celebrate the heritage, brilliance, innovation, and global trendsetting of the Black community! Let this season provide an opportunity for the Black community to come together, celebrate their heritage, and find joy in the company of loved ones. Through cultural traditions, family bonds, community spirit, support for Black-owned businesses, and promoting cultural exchange, Black individuals and families showcase their resilience and determination to thrive in the face of adversity.



A TASTE OF BLACK GWINNETT

HOLIDAY EDITION 2023



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Gwinnett Black Chamber of Commerce: Making a Difference for Businesses

By William Moses, Sr.

Since its establishment in June 2019, the Gwinnett County Black Chamber of Commerce (GCBCC) has been steadfast in its mission to support and empower Black-owned businesses in Gwinnett. With a clear focus on developing strategies for success, the chamber has worked tirelessly to create a sustainable support system for Black businesses in the community. Through collaborative efforts and impactful initiatives, GCBCC strives to foster generational legacies and wealth for Black entrepreneurs, making a significant difference in the business landscape of Gwinnett County.

GCBCC recognizes the importance of providing Black-owned businesses with the tools and resources they need to thrive. Through collaborative advertising and marketing initiatives, the chamber has been instrumental in creating a supportive ecosystem that fosters growth and success. By promoting the visibility of Black businesses and connecting them with diverse communities throughout Gwinnett County, GCBCC has helped to expand their customer base and increase

opportunities for long-term success.

In May 2023, GCBCC organized a meeting that brought together Black business owners, county leadership, and stakeholders from various cities within Gwinnett County. During this gathering, GCBCC highlighted the pressing issue of Black-owned businesses having predominantly Black customers and the need for broader support from the county as a whole. Presenting viable solutions, including a grant program aimed at assisting Black business owners in recovering from the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, GCBCC sparked a crucial conversation and advocated for meaningful change.

In August 2023, Gwinnett County responded to the call for action by introducing the Small Business Grant 2023. While not limited to Black-owned businesses, this grant program provides vital economic support to small businesses negatively impacted by the pandemic. GCBCC sees this grant as a direct result of their advocacy and collaborative efforts, demonstrating the chamber's

commitment to making a tangible difference in the lives of Black business owners. By securing resources to boost their bottom lines, the grant empowers Black businesses in Gwinnett County to navigate the challenges brought on by COVID-19 and continue their journey towards long-term success.

The Gwinnett Black Chamber of Commerce has emerged as a beacon of hope and empowerment for Black-owned businesses in Gwinnett County. Through its dedicated efforts to develop strategies, build a supportive ecosystem, and advocate for economic recovery, GCBCC has made a significant impact on the local business landscape in the county. By fostering generational legacies and creating opportunities for wealth creation, the chamber is driving positive change and inspiring Black entrepreneurs to reach new heights. As GCBCC continues its mission, it stands poised to lead the way in shaping a thriving and inclusive Black business community in Gwinnett County. Get more information on the chamber at blackchambergwinnett.com.



Gwinnett

Small Business Grant 2023

The Gwinnett Small Business Grant will award grants ranging from \$3,000 to \$15,000 for eligible small businesses that have experienced either loss of income or have

incurred costs to continue doing business during the pandemic.

To apply for the Gwinnett Small Business Grant, visit [https://](https://www.gwinnettcountry.com)

www.gwinnettcountry.com. The grant will be open until all funds are exhausted. With that in mind, please submit your application as soon as possible.



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Through an **ONLINE DIRECTORY**, the **Gwinnett County Black Chamber of Commerce (GCBCC)** provides easy access to connect with Black-owned businesses in and serving the area. Visit blackchambergwinnett.com!



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