

## HOMEOWNERSHIP AND AMERICA'S FINANCIAL UNDERCLASS

Why are Americans so obsessed with the concept of homeownership? Why do cash-strapped Americans who have no savings and unstable jobs continue to believe that buying a home is in their best interest? Why do parents continue to put their children at an educational disadvantage by buying homes in neighborhoods with low-performing schools just so they can claim to be homeowners? More importantly, when will America's leaders admit that homeownership is now risky for many Americans and that far too many financially struggling Americans are being encouraged to buy homes because home sales are good for the U.S. economy and for the powerful moneyed constituent groups who support U.S. political leaders?

After describing homeownership's myths, assumptions, and flawed premises, Mechele Dickerson explains why the economic conditions America's financial underclass face make it impossible for them to reap the benefits associated with homeownership. Dickerson specifically links housing choices to educational choices and demonstrates that Americans who are poorly educated will always struggle to become and remain homeowners. Dickerson also exposes the ongoing risks of "home buying while brown or black" and argues that remaining traces of racial discrimination in housing and mortgage markets combined with certain demographic features make it especially challenging for blacks and Latinos to receive homeownership's promised benefits. Given the dire economic conditions facing America's financial underclass, the author admonishes U.S. leaders to reassess current housing policies and develop new ones that make it easier for Americans to have affordable housing, whether it is rented or owned.

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# Homeownership and America's Financial Underclass

FLAWED PREMISES, BROKEN PROMISES,  
NEW PRESCRIPTIONS

**MECHELE DICKERSON**

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*To my parents, Warner and Arcola Dickerson*

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