

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

RNDC proudly celebrates Black History Month, a time to acknowledge the rich culture and achievements of Blacks/African Americans. We have an ongoing commitment to a culture of inclusion, where diversity is celebrated and where every person can be her or his authentic self. RNDC truly values the unique perspectives, experiences, and contributions of our diverse associates, communities, and business partners.

Name: Keith Thompson

Job Role: Director of Operations

Work Location: Houston, TX



Why is Black History Month important to you?

Black History Month is important to me because my father and grandmother taught me early about the struggles, tribulations and achievements, both past and present. It will always serve as a reminder of where we come from as people and the constant uphill battle we continue to face. I will never forget what my grandmother once said to us “There is no more powerful force than God or the

knowledge of Black history. And there is no higher cause than honoring our struggle, ancestors, and family by remembering what we had to do just to get where we are today.” It’s stories about Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr., George Washington Carver, Nelson Mandela and my dad that drives me to have pride, passion and a purpose in my life today.

What would you like our RNDC/YMCO family to know about you? Briefly, tell us your story – personal and/or professional. What makes you uniquely you?

I grew up the youngest of eight in Albuquerque. My family didn’t always have means but my parents worked very hard for what we had. I hardly saw my pops during the week when I was young as he worked full-time and went to night school to earn his masters. My pops told me about the struggles of having to drop out of school to pick cotton for 25 cents an hour as a young man when his dad passed in order to help



his mom raise his siblings. He would eventually go on to pave the way for other African Americans by becoming Deputy Chief of Police and a staple in the law enforcement community. As my hero and other greats of his kind, I wanted to follow in his footsteps. My first job was a paper route at the age of seven. I learned what pride, passion, and purpose really meant. The paper had to be at the front door so my 200 plus customers didn't have to leave their porch. In my family you never cut corners and you finished what you started. I learned a lot growing up from family history, watching and listening to my surroundings: from powdered milk, to lima beans to whoopins that seemed to be a sport in my house, I made a conscious decision to do better. I put my effort in sports, winning multiple state championships in soccer, playing at a high level in basketball, and even being in a rap group that opened up for Easy E, Bone Thugs and the 69 Boys. I have the same passion today that I saw in my father when I was growing up, and what my kids see in me. Like my father, I worked two jobs, was a full-time husband and father while getting my Master's in Business Administration, just so my kids didn't have the same struggles I had. I have truly been blessed to meet some outstanding individuals who have helped me not only be the leader I am today but helped me realize that my potential is only limited by one ---- ME.



To tie in with our 2020 Black History Month theme, tell us about any family traditions or fond memories that involve music. Why is music important to the Black Experience?

Music was a way for slaves to cope, communicate and express how they felt. It brought our people, and eventually all people, together in ways no one can imagine. Like many, I grew up in the church where you might be there five to six days a week, every week for one meeting or another, and all-day Sunday. You learn a lot of gospels. Many gospels we still sing today were started in the Underground Railroad: Wade in the Water and Sweet Chariot. These are some of the most famous gospels in the black community. I'm sure if I didn't mention the following as well, someone would get me: Joyful Joyful, Oh Happy Day, Souled Out, I'm Coming Up on the Rough Side, Soon and Very Soon, Holiness, Peace Be Still, and I Surrender All.

Tell us about your taste in music. What is your favorite music genre? Who are your favorite music artists, past or present? Why?

The different type of music I listen to depends on the situation and my current state of mind. I listen to Blues, Hip-Hop/Rap, R&B/Soul, some Reggae, Country, and Tejano. I've always considered myself a game changer regardless if it was in sports or professionally. So, my favorite artists are those who changed the game like Ray Charles, James Brown, Luther Vandross, Teddy Pendergrass, Aretha Franklin, Nat King Cole, Al Green, B.B. King, Run DMC, Jackson 5, LL Cool J, N.W.A., Queen Latifah, Tupac, Will Smith and Ludacris. Each one of these artists or groups tell stories in their own way and have had an impact in my life, one way or another.

What is your favorite adult beverage?

I grew up on MD 20/20 but my current favorites are Southern Comfort and Alize. As I gracefully age, I'm expanding my horizons with Bourbon and Whiskey.