

Q&A

Jonathan Kelly of Quintet Acquisitions, LLC

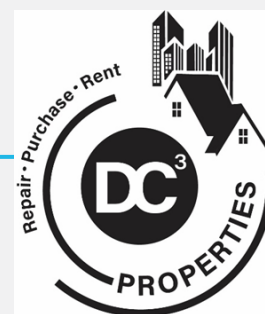
Q1: If you were to encourage younger generations to pursue careers in your field, how would you go about that?

The past is full of the raw fuel younger generations need to successfully navigate the obstacles that they will face in a rapidly evolving marketplace; we must look back and take measure. The sacrifices and examples of past business owners like Paul Gaston, who helped pay for Martin Luther King Jr. 's six figure bail from a Birmingham Jail are instructive on the impact business leaders have at key moments on the course of history. While business leaders like David Stewart of World Wide Technologies have shown us that humble beginnings are sturdy foundations to build a bridge to the future and connect us to one another. Junior Bridgeman changed the playbook in franchising and Fawn Weaver honored a master artisan with true spirit creating a thriving brand.

As younger people develop their own blueprints, gain their experience degrees and gain access to capital they will contribute to help the American economy reach its potential in the 21st century.

Q2: How can financial institutions encourage people of color in our community?

Financial institutions are the circulatory system of their communities. They are the veins and arteries that allow communities to grow and transport capital to where it it's need. When financial institutions fail to deliver resources where needed in a community it is similar to the debilitating impact of poor circulation and it does irreparable harm when vital parts of the community go untouched. Financial institutions must make it a priority to drive better health for the economies in their communities and take responsibility to get capital to places where it is transformative. The first step toward progress here is ensuring that people of color understand that financial institutions want to partner to generate successful sustained economic progress and reinvestment. Putting that welcome mat out opens up pathways for capital formation and plays to the advantages of local relationships and long-term commitment that financial institutions can use to make their capital speak louder than words.



Derrick Reaves of DC3 Properties, LLC

Q1: Why do you feel it is important to celebrate Black History Month?

Persistence, perseverance, and self-empowerment are words that describe Black History Month. Celebrating Black History provides a great education regarding the many sacrifices and accomplishments of African Americans; while encouraging others to walk with confidence in the footsteps of those who came before us, as we continue to add to the legacy daily.

Q2: What are some challenges or obstacles you feel you have faced as a person of color? How have you overcome those challenges or obstacles?

I have been fortunate to have successfully weathered an abundance of challenges and obstacles over the years. Finding ways to overcome each of them have become the steps I've used to continue to move forward in my career. Growing up in Greensboro, NC, my parents were not able to give my siblings and I all that we wanted however, they were more than able to provide what we needed. This included the motivation, spiritual guidance, and love required to believe that with hard work we could succeed. In my youth I saw way too much violence, drugs, and a lack of hope that destroyed people while at the same time those same circumstances motivated others to find ways to be great. In short, I've learned that overcoming obstacles is as much a result of the power of my network as it is in how powerful I've become and the way in which I work. As I continue growing, I realize there will always be new challenges and obstacles to overcome.

Q3: If you were to encourage younger generations to pursue careers in your field, how would you go about that?

I would share with them that they must first envision what they want. They must become laser focused on that vision. They must understand and embrace that if you can see it then you can achieve it with hard work and perseverance. I would encourage them to build a plan, write down the steps, research others that have done what they are seeking to do, find those that are doing what they want and seek out their advice. Take notes, include timelines so that you can stay focused, and most importantly keep your credit score strong. It is true that some will find ways to totally self-finance any venture they are pursuing however, most people will need capital to ensure their goals are achieved. It is important to understand that while in school your transcript tells the world how well you are doing. In business your credit score lets the world know how serious you are with keeping your commitments to people who have trusted you in the past. If your vision is large enough to included others you can do well financially and others will want to take part in the success however, no one will join you if they believe your word is not valid.

Derrick Reaves of DC3 Properties, LLC continued

Q4: How can the entrepreneurship industry be more welcoming or inclusive for people of color?

Access to capital is the most important tool needed for more entrepreneurs to be successful. A close second to funding is ensuring access to cooperative groups, business guidance, mentorship, and technology. Money alone without the knowledge of how to use it can be a short-term win but a long-term disaster.

Q5: What steps are being taken to promote black-owned businesses in your community?

Over the last few years, I have noticed a huge uptick in the number of black-owned businesses highlighted on more diverse media platforms including TV and radio. I see large corporations featuring black businesses as a part of their D&I initiatives, especially during Black History Month. I strongly believe that more consumer exposure will result in more success as it's not possible for any customer to purchase if they do not know what the business is selling or services they are providing.

Q6: How can financial institutions encourage people of color in our community?

Financial institutions can encourage diverse communities by committing to equitable lending practices. Committing to providing additional resources (guidance) and financial opportunities that would help companies scale would be very beneficial to diverse business owners.

Q7: Anything you would like to add?

Booker T Washington said, "Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed." As we look to move forward in our careers/businesses we will all continue to face challenges and obstacles. We should all remember that with hard work, determination, and vision, anything is possible. We should surround ourselves with people that are doing better in our chosen disciplines and have more knowledge than we possess. We must surround ourselves with individuals that push us to become better and be willing to find ways to build a diverse network of thought to challenge us. If we can all find ways to be a blessing to others it is amazing how many times we seem to be blessed in return.

*Thank you to Derrick and Jonathan
for helping make a difference in our community!*