

## The Core Values of the Rondo Community

The formation of African American neighborhoods is intricately linked to the history of segregation in the United States either through formal laws or as a product of social norms and conditions. At the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, this practice of separating African Americans was developed in Rondo. By the 1930's, 87% of African Americans living in St. Paul resided in Rondo and, when this occurred, Rondo became the type of ethnic enclave found in many cities across the United States.

Rondo shared many of the characteristics of other African American neighborhoods. It was self-contained with an assortment of housing, jobs, churches, social institutions and community agencies. However, for those looking at Rondo from the outside, opinions are held that described Rondo as a slum or poor urban area in need of repair.

These attitudes were rarely believed by the residents despite the existence of dilapidated houses and pockets of poverty. For the majority, Rondo was "home" a place representing an authenticity of feeling, passion, and emotions derived from rising above the struggle and suffering of being of African descent in America. It was a place where one could eat the food, tell the stories, praise the lord, and dance to the music in a dramatic rhythm all our own.

Although the Black population in Rondo was small, a few factors merged to create a situation where the culture of Rondo played a significant role in the development of a vibrant community whose influence spilled beyond the borders of Saint Paul and Minnesota to the nation and the world at large.

Generations of hardship imposed on the African American community forged the development of these attitudes by residents of Rondo. These were the core values of Rondo, and their early introduction and widespread observance gave Rondo a unique flair and confidence to withstand the often-harsh treatment of outer society. The values were:

The goodness of religion; the value of education; the dignity of work; the necessity of social interaction; the importance of economic independence; the majesty of home ownership; the importance of respect for self, family, and others; the existence of hope.

**WORK:** Through work you experience dignity, build your character. African Americans understand that work unleashes one's unique gifts, talents, and abilities; it enables one to earn a living to take care of his/herself and one's family. Work defines us and as descendants we honor our ancestors for their fortitude to survive slavery, never receiving pay for the toil and work that helped build this country. We do the jobs that need to be done and we do not let others define how we should feel about an honest occupation.

**HOMEOWNERSHIP:** A home is a castle and owning your home is the ultimate American Dream, the cornerstone of the family, security in tough times and evidence of your labor and the basis of your wealth. Your home holds your family's treasures, provides shelter against harsh times and realities, and is the source of your legacy to your children.

**RELIGION:** Attend a church or mosque of your choice. Hang on to your African roots and incorporate them into your chosen course of worship in the new world and integrate them into your daily routines to teach lessons, ease suffering, relay messages and confirm the equality of all before God.

**RESPECT:** Be polite, tell the truth, stay loyal and listen, adopt a moral plan and learn from your elders; this will be the development of respect for yourself, will guide your respect for others, and validates the role of family, the place where it all begins. Learn and respect your heritage, the history of your people, and pass it on

**ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE:** Your goal is to amass economic capital through a job, or jobs working with your hands and mind for economic independence and a better quality of life. Be sure to set something aside each paycheck for the rainy days. Live within your means and spend wisely. Learn the value of money and the foolishness of overspending.

**SOCIAL INTERACTION:** It is good to be alone and solitude can be a beautiful thing. However, the moments you will really remember to the fullest will be those spent with other people. They do not have to be extravagant moments, or out of the ordinary, but simply those moments when the music is right, the companionship is tight, the food, ambiance, make you feel like dancing, and this gives rise to collaborative, spontaneous joy.

**EDUCATION:** Be serious about your studies. Education opens the doors for African Americans and is the one thing that cannot be taken away. It is the pathway to careers be they professional or skilled. It enables you to have a career and build wealth. Knowledge is power!

**HOPE:** The day will come when Blackness no longer signals a higher risk than whites of premature death, impoverishment, unemployment, educational gaps, incarceration, victimization, homelessness, and police harassment; all vestiges of racial discrimination will be reduced. You must believe in this or face a life of depression and despair.

Marvin Roger Anderson  
Rondo Center of Diverse Expressions  
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