

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Rita Aliese Fry

PERSON

Fry, Rita Aliese, 1946-

Alternative Names: Rita Aliese Fry;

Life Dates: May 28, 1946-

Place of Birth: Memphis, Tennessee, USA

Residence: Chicago, IL

Work: Chicago, IL

Occupations: Public Defender

Biographical Note

Rita Aliese Fry was born in Memphis, Tennessee, on May 28, 1946. Moving with her family to Chicago, Fry attended Catholic schools and graduated from high school in 1964. First attending Prairie State College in Chicago Heights for an A.A. in 1968, Fry then attended Loyola University of Chicago for a bachelor's degree in 1971. She later went on to attend Northwestern University School of Law, earning her J.D. in 1979.

Fry joined the Cook County Office of Public Defense in 1980, serving as an assistant public defender. She remained there until 1986, when she took a position with the city of Chicago Law Department as a supervisory attorney. Two years later, she returned to the Cook County Public Defender's Office, this time serving as the chief executive, where she remains in her second term today. The Office of the Cook County Public Defender is the largest public defender office in the country, with Fry supervising more than 500 attorneys.

Also active in public policy, Fry has worked as a consultant both in private practice and through government appointment. Governor George Ryan named her to the Illinois Commission on Capital Punishment, a panel that sought to reevaluate Illinois' administration of the death penalty. In 1994, she was selected by the president of the Supreme Court of Ethiopia to assist in establishing a public defender system in that country. Fry has received numerous awards, including the Phenomenal Women Award and the Sixth Amendment Award, and she remains active with a number of organizations, including serving as vice president of the Leadership Council of Greater Chicago and serving on the board of directors of the Lawyer Assistance Program. Fry and her husband, Adelbert, have one son, who is also an attorney.

Related Entries

St. Charles Borromeo School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

St. Mary High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

HS diploma

Prarie State College [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

A.A.

Loyola University Chicago [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

BA -

Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

J.D.

Old St. Mary's School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Cook County States Attorney's Office [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 19800701 to 19860630]

Attorney

City of Chicago [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 19860701 to 19880630]

Supervisor, Public Defender's Office

Cook County Public Defender's Office [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 19880701 to ?]

Cheif Executive

Leadership of Greater Chicago [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Vice-President

Federal Bar Association [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

President

Lawyer Assistance Program [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Board of Directors

Public Interest Law Initiative (PILI) [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Board of Directors