

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with George N'Namdi

PERSON

N'Namdi, George R.

Alternative Names: George N'Namdi;

Life Dates: September 12, 1946-

Place of Birth: Columbus, Ohio, USA

Residence: Detroit, MI

Work: Detroit, MI

Occupations: Art Gallery Owner

Biographical Note

Art dealer and educator George R. N'Namdi was born September 12, 1946, in Columbus, Ohio; his grandfather, Rev. Langdon E. Johnson was a noted businessman and “race man” in West Virginia. N'Namdi's father, George R. Johnson, a postal worker, helped N'Namdi's mother, Ima Jo Winson Johnson, open three beauty shops. Fascinated by earning money, N'Namdi worked several jobs while attending Felton Elementary School, and Franklin and Champion Junior High Schools. N'Namdi graduated from Columbus East High School in 1965. Changing his major from accounting to education, N'Namdi graduated from Ohio State University in 1970; he earned his master's degree in education and another in psychology before obtaining his Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Michigan in 1974.

In 1970, N'Namdi was appointed regional education director for Head Start in Southwestern Ohio. When he moved to Ann Arbor in 1972 to work on his graduate degrees in psychology, N'Namdi became involved with the Black Student Psychological Association and cultural thinkers such as Geneva Smitherman and Niara Sudarkasa. During this period, N'Namdi and his wife changed their surnames to N'Namdi, which means “father's name lives on” in the Ibo language of Eastern Nigeria. In the mid seventies, N'Namdi served as a therapist at Milan Federal Prison and taught courses at the University of Michigan. In 1978, N'Namdi and his wife Carmen founded the Nataki Talibah School House; the Detroit based independent grade school, named for their late daughter, consistently outperformed local and state schools while teaching transcendental meditation and emphasizing the arts.

N'Namdi began collecting art in 1968; with a partner, in 1981, he opened Jazzonia

Gallery. In 1982 N’Namdi launched his family based G.R. N’Namdi Gallery; he later expanded his holdings to include galleries in Chicago and in New York City. N’Namdi’s son, Jumaane, manages the Chicago gallery and his daughter, Kemba, helps with the Detroit site. While exhibiting the works of artists Hughie Lee Smith, James VanDerZee, Allie McGhee, and Barbara Chase Riboud, N’Namdi is creating a \$3 million dollar complex in Detroit’s Cultural Center arts district.

Related Entries

University of Michigan [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Ph. D.

Felton Laboratory Charter School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Franklin Junior High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Champion Avenue School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

East High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

The Ohio State University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

The Ohio State University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]