

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Rita Ann Turfley Powdrell

PERSON

Powdrell, Rita Ann Turfley, 1946-

Alternative Names: Rita Ann Turfley Powdrell;

Life Dates: July 1, 1946-

Place of Birth: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Residence: Albuquerque, NM

Occupations: Nonprofit Executive

Biographical Note

Nonprofit executive Rita Ann Turfley Powdrell was born on July 1, 1946 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to Ann Scott Turfley and Richard Thomas Turfley. In 1968, Powdrell received her B.A. degree in sociology from the University of New Mexico.

In 1968, Powdrell served as a social worker in the county welfare system in Fresno, California. Four years later, she was hired as a California state regulations interpreter and trainer. In 1974, Powdrell and her family moved back to Albuquerque, New Mexico, where she served as a counselor advisor at the Albuquerque Technical Vocational Institute. At the Technical Vocational Institute, Powdrell worked on Preparatory Program, a new program that supported students who were coming out of high school. In 1983, Powdrell opened and managed a new location of the restaurant Mr. Powdrell's Barbeque House with her husband, his brother and her sister-in-law. Mr. Powdrell's Barbeque had been owned and operated by her husband's family since 1962. In 1991, Powdrell co-founded the Griot Society with Brenda Dabney; and, in 1995, they curated and exhibited "New Mexico's African American Legacy: Visible, Vital, and Valuable," a pictorial history of African Americans who were brought or migrated to the territory of New Mexico. In 2002, the Griot Society joined with numerous African American organizations in New Mexico to form The African American Museum and Cultural Center of New Mexico. The center, where Powdrell served as executive director, exhibited the wealth of African American history in New Mexico at museums and other venues throughout the state and served to increase awareness and understanding of the contributions of African Americans in New Mexico and the southwest.

Powdrell has received multiple awards for her work. In 2011, Powdrell received the Outstanding Service Award from the Office of African American Affairs. In 2012, the

African American History Museum and Cultural Center of New Mexico received the Heritage Organization Award from the Department of Cultural Affairs, New Mexico Historic Preservation Division. In 2014, Powdrell received the “Living Legend” award from the University of New Mexico Black Alumni Chapter and the state of New Mexico’s Distinguished Public Service Award.

Powdrell and her husband and business partner, Joe Powdrell, have four children: Carmen Powdrell, Nataura Moore, Jovona Webb, and Richard Powdrell.

Rita Ann Turfley Powdrell was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on July 25, 2019.

Related Entries

Johnston Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

University of New Mexico [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.A.

Chartiers Valley Middle School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Chartiers Valley High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Fresno County Welfare System [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1968 to 1970]

Social Worker

State of California [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1972 to 1974]

Social Service Worker

Albuquerque Technical Vocational Institute [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1974 to 1982]

Counselor/Advisor

Solar Energy [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Saxophonist; Flutist

African American History Museum and Cultural Center [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 2004 to ?]

Founder and Executive Director

Mr. Powdrell's Barbeque House [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1983 to ?]

Owner and Manager

John Kane Hospital [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1962 to 1964]

Candy Striper

Henry's Barbeque [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1967 to 1968]

Waitress

Griot Society [MEMBEROf]
[from 1991 to ?]

Founder

Home Circle Club [MEMBEROf]
[from 2012 to ?]

Historian