

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Ken Smikle

PERSON

Smikle, Ken, 1952-2018

Alternative Names: Ken Smikle; Kenneth Albert Smikle

Life Dates: January 3, 1952-September 12, 2018

Place of Birth: New York, New York, USA

Residence: Chicago, IL

Occupations: Marketing Chief Executive

Biographical Note

Publisher and entrepreneur Kenneth Albert Smikle was born on January 3, 1952, in Harlem, New York, to Mary Alice Dobbins Smikle and Dr. Kenneth Raymond Smikle, a college dean. Smikle attended Harlem's P.S. 123 (Mahalia Jackson School), R.A. Vanwyck Junior High School, and graduated from Benjamin Cardozo High School in Bay Side, Queens, in 1970. Smikle, who played jazz trombone and wanted to arrange music, attended Queensborough Community College, CUNY's York College, and Queens College where he took radio and television classes and edited the Black Eyed Journal.

In 1974, Smikle, his brother, Dawoud Bey, and Gerald Gladney started Spirit magazine, and in 1975, they started an arts publication called Easy, which ran until 1978. Smikle joined Harlem's Amsterdam News as arts editor from 1978 to 1980. In 1983, Smikle wrote for Essence magazine and The National Leader, and in 1984, he joined Black Enterprise serving as senior editor. Moving to Chicago, Smikle founded Target Market News in 1988 where he was editor and publisher. Target Market News is considered one of the leading authorities on marketing, advertising and media directed to the African American market. Smikle appeared on CNN, CNBC, CBS News, NBC's Today Show, ABC's World News Tonight, The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer, National Public Radio's All Things Considered, Marketplace and numerous other television and radio programs. Smikle was frequently quoted in Newsweek, Time, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, USA Today, The Washington Post, The Los Angeles Times, Advertising Age, Publishers Weekly and other leading periodicals. In 1991, Smikle co-founded the African American Marketing and Media Association. Smikle was also a member of the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ).

As a speaker, Smikle addressed the Democratic Caucus Conference of the U.S. House

of Representatives; employees of Nike, Pepsi-Cola, Quaker Oats; and organizations like the National Newspaper Publishers Association, the Greater Miami Advertising Federation, the Food Marketing Institute, the National Association of Broadcasters, the National Association of Black Owned Broadcasters, the National Alliance of Market Developers, the United Way and the American Booksellers Association.

At the time of his HistoryMakers interview, Smikle lived in Chicago with his wife, Renee Ferguson, an investigative reporter at WMAQ-TV, and son, Jason.

Ken Smikle passed away on September 12, 2018.

Smikle was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on December 15, 2006.

Related Entries

Benjamin N. Cardozo High School [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to ?]

P.S. 123 [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to ?]

R.A. Vanwyck Junior High School [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to ?]

J.H.S. 217 Robert A. Van Wyck [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to ?]

Queens College, City University of New York [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to ?]

York College, City University of New York [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to ?]

National Leader [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from ? to 1984]

Journalist

Communications Excellence for Black Audiences [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from ? to ?]

Journalist

[EMPLOYEEOf]
[from ? to ?]

Amsterdam News [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1977 to 1998]

Journalist

World Records [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1978 to ?]

Black Arts Editor

Black Enterprise Magazine [EMPLOYEE**Of**]
[from 1984 to 1987]

Editor

Target Market News [EMPLOYEE**Of**]
[from 1988 to ?]

Founder and President

Black Issues Book Review [MEMBER**Of**]
[from 2005 to ?]

Owner