



**NEWS from the Shelby County Mayor's Office**

***Lee Harris, Mayor***

Vasco A. Smith, Jr., Administration Building  
11<sup>th</sup> Floor, 160 North Main, Memphis, Tennessee 38103

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

SEPTEMBER 13, 2022

Jennifer L. Sharp  
Strategic Communications Specialist  
Office: 901.222.2011  
Mobile: 901.661.1522

**SHELBY COUNTY MAYOR LEE HARRIS ANNOUNCES COUNTY'S FIRST ARTS  
AND CULTURE LIAISON**

***In this new role for Shelby County Government, Nykesha Cole will work alongside nonprofit leaders to bring the arts community and government together to invest in our creative economy.***



**Shelby County, TN** – Shelby County Mayor Lee Harris announces that Nykesha Cole, an experienced non-profit agency leader, has been named the first-ever arts and culture liaison for Shelby County Government. In this role, Cole will be responsible for fostering relationships with local arts and cultural organizations and county government. In addition, Cole will help develop new systems that expand the impact of arts and culture organizations within Shelby County.

VASCO A. SMITH, JR. ADMINISTRATION BUILDING  
160 North Main Street, 11th Floor Memphis, TN 8103  
901-222-2000 Fax 901-222-2005  
[www.shelbycountyttn.gov](http://www.shelbycountyttn.gov)



Shelby County's first arts and culture liaison is a policy suggestion of the Shelby County Nonprofit Committee. Mayor Harris established the committee last year to bring together representatives from over 150 nonprofit organizations to establish a committee that would strategically align the work they do, identify barriers by providing services, and formulate concrete solutions to problems. Its four subcommittees include Children, Youth, and Education; Health and Human Services; Workforce Development; and Arts and Culture.

Cole most recently served as the executive director of Mustard Seed, Inc., a social services nonprofit organization. She has an extensive background in the nonprofit and public sectors including the One Step Initiative, the Memphis and Shelby County Division of Planning and Development, and the Greater Memphis Chamber.

Cole holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism from Southern Methodist University and is a candidate for a Master's Degree in Public Service from the University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service. She has extensive volunteer experience with arts organizations and is passionate about their importance to all residents of Shelby County.

**Shelby County Mayor Lee Harris:** "The arts are a huge part of Memphis and Shelby County's DNA. We are surrounded by beautiful art and talented artists who bring Memphis music, dance, theater, film, and visual arts to the world. From our '901 Student Passport' program to our support for various local arts organizations, Shelby County Government is working diligently with our arts community to make sure we invest in this proud legacy. We are happy to now have Ms. Cole on board as she works to build on these efforts and cultivate collaborative relationships between the arts community and our local government."

**Nykesha Cole, Shelby County Art and Culture Liaison:** "I am excited to bring my experience, love, and appreciation for the arts to my role of liaison for arts and culture in Shelby County. The creative economy is a vital part of Shelby County's identity and growth. With this understanding, I intend to serve as an advocate for the arts in our community and beyond by bringing attention to this important sector. Shelby County's arts and culture community is unlike any other and we must showcase and support all of the wonderful organizations and creatives doing amazing things."

**Janet Lo, manager of community partnerships, Nonprofit Committee liaison:** "Ms. Cole will be a welcomed addition to our Division of Community Services as our inaugural arts and culture liaison. Ms. Cole has a long history of serving in the nonprofit and public sectors and a passion to support the unique vibrancy of the arts in our county. Her varied experiences will be an incredible



asset as we work with arts and culture organizations to foster a community that provides opportunities for everyone to engage in diverse, rich, and cultural experiences.”

**Amber Hamilton, executive director, Memphis Music Initiative:** “Creating this position is critical to a thoughtful, strategic plan for one of our county’s best assets, the rising and existing creative class. Every other metro area of our size has a position like this. We will be able to tap into arts grants and resources that are only available when a municipality applies, and we will be able to partner with our county’s arts organizations far more effectively. I hope Nykesha’s new role will help advance our goals for a stronger arts ecosystem and position Shelby County to receive the investments in the arts we deserve.”

(End of Release)