

# SHELLEY D. BEST

## PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

An inspiring, visionary nonprofit leader and public artist with a successful track-record in creating and developing sustainable arts and cultural initiatives in diverse communities. Adept at transition management, capacity building, and human and financial resource development. Exceptional communicator with strong ability to establish and maintain fruitful collaborations across constituencies. Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) champion and longtime arts advocate with a wide professional local and national network.



## CONTACT

295 PRINCETON STREET,  
HARTFORD, CT 06106

(860) 965-7859

DrSDBest@gmail.com

## CORE QUALIFICATIONS

- Collaborative Leadership
- Board Management & Development
- Budget & Finance
- Business Development
- Creative Fundraising
- Arts Advocacy & Programming
- Community Partnerships
- Staff & Volunteer Development
- Transition Management
- Creative Collaboration
- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
- Visual Artist

## EXPERIENCE

### The Conference of Churches - Hartford, Connecticut

President and Chief Executive Officer (2001-Present)  
Chief Curator, The 224 EcoSpace (2012-Present)

Led the visionary and successful initiative to update and expand the 100+ year-old organization's vision and mission into a more inclusive multi-ethnic and interfaith community development model. Negotiated the deal with state and local government officials and won the support of key business and community stakeholders to purchase the vacant 30,000 square foot building at 224 Farmington Avenue and spearheaded renovation and fundraising efforts to transform the property into "one of the most unique office spaces" featured in the 2017 Hartford Business Journal. Responsible for the oversight and management of all operations, including developing and implementing strategies and directing and delegating assignments to achieve the overall mission.

### Key Accomplishments

- Transformed property from \$1.5 million to \$3 million replacement value.
- Increased federal recovery and reinvestment dollars for the state.
- In 2012, founded the 224 EcoSpace, a nationally recognized model of creative social enterprise of The Conference of Churches.
- Built and activated creative fundraising campaigns.
- Elevated The 224 EcoSpace brand as the premier arts, health and wellness center in Hartford and the first of its kind nationally
- Developed and implemented innovative business model to support entrepreneurs and artists and created a multi-faceted community.
- Provide gallery and studio space for visual, performing and healing artists, including yoga instructors.
- Led new strategic planning initiative in 2019.
- Leveraged technology to restructure and launch a national board of directors at onset of Covid-19.
- In, 2020 developed and led the Artist of Color Accelerate (AOC), a capacity building initiative for artists of color, growing sustainable art and business practices.
- Heightened visibility and resources for artists through collaboration with 10 art organizations, including the Bushnell and Real Art ways in Hartford.

## EDUCATION

---

### D.Min

Hartford Seminary  
Hartford, CT

### M.Div

Yale University Divinity School  
New Haven, CT

### M.A

Hartford Seminary  
Hartford, CT

### B.A.

Central Connecticut State University  
New Britain, CT

## HONORS AND DISTINCTIONS

---

- Distinction in Congregational Ministry, Yale Divinity School (2021)
- Traditioned Innovation Award, Duke University (2020)
- Do Good X Fellow, selected as one of six national changemakers (2019)
- The Village "Champion for Children Award (2016)
- The IMA Drum Major for Justice Award (2016)
- The Hartford Business Journal, "Women in Business Award." (2014)

## SOCIAL

---

 revdrshelley

 revshelley

 shelleybest

## Key Accomplishments

- Raised over \$20 million to fund arts, economic development and human service ventures.
- Engaged community support and investment to create The 224 EcoSpace
- Developed nationally recognized, sustainable, social enterprise model of funding
- Created Hartford's first artist of color incubator
- Elevated the capacity of hundreds of leaders locally and globally through solopreneur model.
- Established positive relationships with thousands of arts, culture, human service, government, faith and philanthropy leaders across the region.

## OTHER EXPERIENCE & COMMUNITY SERVICE

---

- Hartford Board of Education, Board Member
- AIDS Project Hartford, Board Member
- Connecticut Association of Human Services, Board Member
- Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Network, Board Member
- Hartford Public Library, Board Member
- Hartford Seminary, Corporator
- Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, Commissioner
- Harriet Beecher Stowe House, Trustee

## EXHIBITIONS

---

### Solo Exhibition

"What is Black? Norfolk Public Library, Norfolk, CT  
2021

### Group Exhibition

"Audacious Agency." Yale University  
2019

### Solo Exhibition

"SoulVision: Creative PlaceMaking. The 224 EcoSpace. Hartford, CT.  
2016

### Group Exhibition

"Masculinity" The Collaboration Gallery. The 224 EcoSpace. Hartford, CT  
2016

### Group Exhibition

"Women Rising." The Conrad L. Mallet Gallery at Capitol Community College  
2016

### Group Exhibition

"The Autobiography of My Sister's Soul. "The Collaboration Gallery. The 224 EcoSpace. Hartford, CT  
2016

### Group Exhibition

"Flight." The Conrad L. Mallet Gallery at Capitol Community College.  
2015