



Monthly Board Brief, June 2022

Outcomes/Impact

1. Grants and Funding. (ACTION) Staff will present proposed allocations to GFC and Commission in June. FY22 Thrive projects are wrapping up. Staff are receiving positive feedback re Cycle 2 coaching and professional development from artists and mentors.
2. HR and Hiring
 - Equity and Restorative Practices have been given the “green light” to post the FT ASO2 and PT ASO3 positions; Vanderbilt graduate student Karissa Coady joining SFI and ERP to complete practicum hours
 - Office Support Specialist Position in process with Metro HR
 - Communications/PIO: in order to meet communication needs of the department Mollie Berliss has been hired to assist in the interim. The search for Emily’s replacement is in process.
3. FY23 Budget. The Mayor’s budget includes (for the first time) \$3M in grants funding for arts and culture.
 - Additional \$574,800 for grants, bringing us to \$3M for the first time ever
 - Additional \$75k for Thrive artist-led community projects
 - Additional \$25k for Equity Related Programming
4. Metro Artwork Donation (ACTION). Staff received an artwork donation proposal from Vanderbilt Curb Center for Art, Enterprise & Public Policy. Per Metro’s Donated Art Policy, that proposal is coming to Commission for approval. The artwork is a mosaic sculpture, *Pathways to a Higher Note*, by Betty Turney-Turner. Parks Board has approved this donation for installation on grounds of Centennial Art Center.
5. Percent for Public Art Program. Staff are working with the procurement department to amend the artist contracts for %fund projects that require additional funding due to rising inflation costs. Several in-progress public art projects are moving into the design development and fabrication phases.
 - Community engagement and design development underway for the Donelson Library projects.
 - Design process underway for Nolensville Pike transit shelter artist-designed vinyl
 - Fabrication of Kossie Gardner Sr. Park mural wall in process (July completion)
 - Fabrication of Mill Ridge Park public art in process (August/September completion)
6. Equity. Draft Equity Lens will be distributed to all Committee Chairs for engagement and completion; BIPOC Arts Administrators Event on hold; REAL Alumni Network event was scheduled for May 18th with a book study on *How to Be an Inclusive Leader* by Jennifer Brown; New CARE members have been selected and onboarding is underway.

7. Strategic Planning. On pause while working through meeting logistics.
8. Youth Programs. All DIAL interns, host organizations, and mentors have been selected and matched. The interns started at their host sites on June 6th . We have designed programming to introduce the interns to the city. POWER Youth has launched. We have contracted Nichole to perform site visits.
 - Arts Programming for Court-Involved Youth applications received and rated; \$88k+ dollars to be approved for allocation
 - POWER Youth and DIAL programming underway

Key Upcoming Priorities

1. Restorative Arts relaunch/redesign to begin July 2022
2. Next joint CARE + Commission Meeting
3. FY23 Thrive guidelines posted, application will launch July 2022. Planning for community outreach ongoing.
4. FY22 Grants, Thrive and ABC grant closeouts coming in. All due June 15. Staff is reviewing.
5. Launch of Nashville Fairgrounds Phase 2. Created specifically as an opportunity for local artists, this call will be an action item in July with the goal of releasing the call to artists in August.

METRO'S DEI EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP FINDINGS

METRO ARTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OVERVIEW

PREPARED BY ANDREA BLACKMAN & RAZEL JONES

SUMMARY HIGHLIGHTS

Nearly a year ago, the DEI Executive Leadership Team was invited into Metro Arts by the former Executive Director of Metro Arts and Metro's Director of Human Resources to help the department gain some clarity and address DEI-related concerns. We were tasked with examining how DEI is functioning in Metro Arts and providing support to ensure that DEI is functioning in a way that is productive and healthy in Metro Arts. It is noteworthy and impressive that Metro Arts has demonstrated commitment by creating an equity statement and framework, taking the bold move of creating a Committee for Anti-Racism and Equity (CARE), and assembling and engaging a team of employees passionate about DEI work. We are encouraged that the general sentiment among the stakeholders we have engaged is passion for wanting to ensure access and equity in the Arts community.

KEY FACTORS AND INDICATORS

We have observed what appear to be multiple visions and ideologies existing concerning what DEI work should look like for Metro Arts both internally and externally. We have also observed severely broken and/or clogged lines of communication between various entities and individuals working on behalf of Metro Arts in one capacity or another. We are in the process of assisting entities (Commission, CARE, ED, team leaders, teams, and individual employees) in finding common ground to determine a clearer and unified vision of what Metro Arts can be in this space both internally and externally and ensuring that this DEI vision coincides with the DEI Executive Leadership Team's framework of DEI vision and functionality for Metro overall. It is important to note that it is impossible to be effective in externally facing DEI work without ensuring that the internal DEI functionality, framework, and vision is structured, intact, and singular.

After nearly a year of intense engagement with, and assessment of Metro Arts, the DEI Executive Leadership Team offers the following five high-level action steps for Phase 1 of departmental alignment and progress with DEI-related initiatives. While these recommendations were expedited in response to the series of events occurring in and around Metro Arts, this is work that we will be engaging with all Metro departments.

ACTION STEPS AND PRIORITIES

Operationalizing Metro Arts means reimagining and co-creating an environment that will:

1. Establish an immediate DEI transition leadership team
2. Develop a common language and vision for Commission, CARE, ED, team leaders, and team members
3. Establish roles, authority, and develop accountability practices for staff
4. Identify the risk the department is willing to take to operationalize its stated value of equity
5. Establish a new system of accountability for dealing with conflicts and tensions related to DEI

We recommend that the updated DEI model and structure be periodically reevaluated with Metro's DEI Executive Leadership as a way of continuously improving the way Metro Arts operates; certain checkpoints will be established with the appropriate entities to ensure that these evaluations are occurring.

FY23 Arts Programming for Court Involved Youth (reverification year)

Arts Program Organization	Award Amount
From the Heart	\$20,000
Global Education Center	\$20,000
Southern Word	\$15,600
Nashville Repertory Theater	\$20,000
Tennessee Performing Arts Center	\$12,550
TOTAL	\$88,150

DRAFT FY23 Grant Fund Allocation Analysis

FY2023 Total Grant Fund: \$3,000,000
Category allocation dollar total: \$2,500,435
Unallocated (over/under): (\$499,565)

Basic: \$2,818,251.90 (93.94%)
 B1: \$963,963.60 (32.12%)
 B2: \$839,455.20 (27.98%)
 B3: \$1,014,833.10 (33.83%)

Core: \$244,875.25 (9.79%)

Total: \$3,063,127.15 (103.74%)

Budgeted: \$3,000,000
Funded: \$3,063,127
Difference: \$63,127

Basic Operating Support Group 1 (Organizations with Budgets over \$100,000)

National Museum of African American Music

FY22 Award: \$146,200
FY23 Request (or max request): \$300,000
FY23 Award Calculation: \$146,190
Formula: 48.73%
Rank: 1
Prog Score: 87.33
Financial: 10
Score (see FY22): 97.33
Point Difference from rank above: N/A
FY23 Recommendation: \$181,276
FY22 Award: \$146,200
Increase: \$35,076

Frist Art Museum

FY22 Award: \$125,200
FY23 Request (or max request): \$300,000
FY23 Award Calculation: \$125,190
Formula: 41.73%
Rank: 2
Prog Score: 80.33
Financial: 10
Score (see FY22): 90.33
Point Difference from rank above: 7.00
FY23 Recommendation: \$155,236
FY22 Award: \$125,200
Increase: \$30,036

Country Music Foundation, Inc. dba Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum

FY22 Award: \$113,000
FY23 Request (or max request): \$300,000
FY23 Award Calculation: \$113,010
Formula: 37.67%
Rank: 3
Prog Score: 77
Financial: 9
Score (see FY22): 86
Point Difference from rank above: 4.33
FY23 Recommendation: \$140,132
FY22 Award: \$113,000
Increase: \$27,132

Cheekwood Botanical Garden and Museum of Art

FY22 Award: \$107,000
FY23 Request (or max request): \$300,000
FY23 Award Calculation: \$107,010
Formula: 35.67%
Rank: 4
Prog Score: 70.33
Financial: 10
Score (see FY22): 80.33
Point Difference from rank above: 5.67
FY23 Recommendation: \$132,692
FY22 Award: \$107,000
Increase: \$25,692

Tennessee Performing Arts Center

FY22 Award: \$100,000
FY23 Request (or max request): \$300,000
FY23 Award Calculation: \$99,990
Formula: 33.33%
Rank: 5
Prog Score: 68
Financial: 10
Score (see FY22): 78
Point Difference from rank above: 2.33
FY23 Recommendation: \$123,988
FY22 Award: \$100,000
Increase: \$23,988

Nashville Symphony Association

FY22 Award: \$98,000
FY23 Request (or max request): \$300,000
FY23 Award Calculation: \$98,010
Formula: 32.67%
Rank: 6
Prog Score: 68

Financial: 8
Score (see FY22): 76
Point Difference from rank above: 2.00
FY23 Recommendation: \$121,532
FY22 Award: \$98,000
Increase: \$23,532

Nashville Ballet

FY22 Award: \$88,000
FY23 Request (or max request): \$300,000
FY23 Award Calculation: \$87,990
Formula: 29.33%
Rank: 7
Prog Score: 64.33
Financial: 8
Score (see FY22): 72.33
Point Difference from rank above: 3.67
FY23 Recommendation: \$109,108
FY22 Award: \$88,000
Increase: \$21,108

Basic Operating Support Group 2 (Organizations with Budgets over \$100,000)

Belcourt Theatre, Inc.

FY22 Award: \$151,100
FY23 Request (or max request): \$300,000
FY23 Award Calculation: \$151,500
Formula: 50.50%
Rank: 1
Prog Score: 78.5
Financial: 10
Score (see FY22): 88.5
Point Difference from rank above: N/A
FY23 Recommendation: \$187,860
FY22 Award: \$151,500
Increase: \$36,360

OZ Arts

FY22 Award: \$133,000
FY23 Request (or max request): \$300,000
FY23 Award Calculation: \$132,990
Formula: 44.33%
Rank: 2
Prog Score: 72.33
Financial: 10
Score (see FY22): 82.33
Point Difference from rank above: 6.17
FY23 Recommendation: \$164,908
FY22 Award: \$133,000

Increase: \$31,908

Nashville Opera

FY22 Award: \$117,000
FY23 Request (or max request): \$300,000
FY23 Award Calculation: \$117,000
Formula: 39.00%
Rank: 3
Prog Score: 68
Financial: 9
Score (see FY22): 77
Point Difference from rank above: 5.33
FY23 Recommendation: \$145,080
FY22 Award: \$117,000
Increase: \$28,080

Humanities Tennessee

FY22 Award: \$67,000
FY23 Request (or max request): \$300,000
FY23 Award Calculation: \$100,500
Formula: 33.50%
Rank: 4
Prog Score: 64.5
Financial: 7
Score (see FY22): 71.5
Point Difference from rank above: 5.50
FY23 Recommendation: \$124,620
FY22 Award: \$67,000
Increase: \$57,620

Nashville Children's Theater

FY22 Award: \$88,000
FY23 Request (or max request): \$300,000
FY23 Award Calculation: \$87,990
Formula: 29.33%
Rank: 5
Prog Score: 60.33
Financial: 7
Score (see FY22): 67.33
Point Difference from rank above: 4.17
FY23 Recommendation: \$109,108
FY22 Award: \$88,000
Increase: \$21,108

Nashville Repertory Theatre, Inc

FY22 Award: \$87,000
FY23 Request (or max request): \$300,000
FY23 Award Calculation: \$87,000

Formula: 29.00%
Rank: 6
Prog Score: 60
Financial: 7
Score (see FY22): 67
Point Difference from rank above: 0.33
FY23 Recommendation: \$107,880
FY22 Award: \$87,000
Increase: \$20,880

Basic Operating Support Group 3 (Organizations with Budgets over \$100,000)

Nashville in Harmony

FY22 Award: \$20,000
FY23 Request (or max request): \$21,397
FY23 Award Calculation: \$17,832
Formula: 83.34%
Rank: 1
Prog Score: 87.67
Financial: 10
Score (see FY22): 97.67
Point Difference from rank above: N/A
FY23 Recommendation: \$22,122
FY22 Award: \$20,000
Increase: \$2,122

Southern Word

FY22 Award: \$76,300
FY23 Request (or max request): \$105,900
FY23 Award Calculation: \$76,227
Formula: 71.98%
Rank: 2
Prog Score: 81.33
Financial: 10
Score (see FY22): 91.33
Point Difference from rank above: 6.34
FY23 Recommendation: \$94,521
FY22 Award: \$76,300
Increase: \$18,221

Youth Empowerment through Arts and Humanities

FY22 Award: \$18,200
FY23 Request (or max request): \$28,500
FY23 Award Calculation: \$18,693
Formula: 65.59%
Rank: 3
Prog Score: 82.67
Financial: 7
Score (see FY22): 89.67

Point Difference from rank above: 1.66
FY23 Recommendation: \$23,180
FY22 Award: \$18,200
Increase: \$4,980

Moves and Grooves, Inc.

FY22 Award: \$62,400
FY23 Request (or max request): \$80,000
FY23 Award Calculation: \$51,176
Formula: 63.97%
Rank: 4
Prog Score: 80.67
Financial: 9
Score (see FY22): 89.67
Point Difference from rank above: 0
FY23 Recommendation: \$63,458
FY22 Award: \$62,500
Increase: \$1,058

The Theater Bug

FY22 Award: \$30,300
FY23 Request (or max request): \$53,382
FY23 Award Calculation: \$34,127
Formula: 63.93%
Rank: 5
Prog Score: 79.5
Financial: 10
Score (see FY22): 89.5
Point Difference from rank above: 0.17
FY23 Recommendation: \$42,318
FY22 Award: \$30,300
Increase: \$12,018

Turnip Green Creative Reuse

FY22 Award: \$68,200
FY23 Request (or max request): \$116,224
FY23 Award Calculation: \$74,163
Formula: 63.81%
Rank: 6
Prog Score: 82.33
Financial: 7
Score (see FY22): 89.33
Point Difference from rank above: 0.17
FY23 Recommendation: \$91,962
FY22 Award: \$68,200
Increase: \$23,762

Global Education Center

FY22 Award: \$50,900
FY23 Request (or max request): \$77,268
FY23 Award Calculation: \$49,166
Formula: 63.63%
Rank: 7
Prog Score: 74.67
Financial: 10
Score (see FY22): 84.67
Point Difference from rank above: 4.66
FY23 Recommendation: \$60,965
FY22 Award: \$50,900
Increase: \$10,065

Operation Song

FY22 Award: \$22,900
FY23 Request (or max request): \$39,500
FY23 Award Calculation: \$23,333
Formula: 59.07%
Rank: 8
Prog Score: 75.33
Financial: 9
Score (see FY22): 89.33
Point Difference from rank above: 0.34
FY23 Recommendation: \$28,932
FY22 Award: \$22,900
Increase: \$6,032

The Porch Writers' Collective

FY22 Award: \$27,000
FY23 Request (or max request): \$50,000
FY23 Award Calculation: \$29,265
Formula: 58.53%
Rank: 9
Prog Score: 76
Financial: 8
Score (see FY22): 84
Point Difference from rank above: 0.33
FY23 Recommendation: \$36,289
FY22 Award: \$27,000
Increase: \$9,289

Actors Bridge Ensemble Theater of Nashville, Inc.

FY22 Award: \$18,200
FY23 Request (or max request): \$32,399
FY23 Award Calculation: \$18,927
Formula: 58.42%
Rank: 10
Prog Score: 73

Financial: 93
Score (see FY22): 82
Point Difference from rank above: 2.00
FY23 Recommendation: \$23,470
FY22 Award: \$18,200
Increase: \$5,270

Arts & Business Council of Greater Nashville
FY22 Award: \$22,800
FY23 Request (or max request): \$49,742
FY23 Award Calculation: \$28,542
Formula: 11%
Rank: 11
Prog Score: 73
Financial: 8
Score (see FY22): 81
Point Difference from rank above: 1.00
FY23 Recommendation: \$35,392
FY22 Award: \$22,800
Increase: \$12,592

Nashville Jazz Workshop
FY22 Award: \$65,000
FY23 Request (or max request): \$121,896
FY23 Award Calculation: \$69,834
Formula: 57.29%
Rank: 11
Prog Score: 71
Financial: 10
Score (see FY22): 81
Point Difference from rank above: 0
FY23 Recommendation: \$86,594
FY22 Award: \$65,000
Increase: \$21,594

Tennessee Association of Craft Artists (dba Tennessee Craft)
FY22 Award: \$52,800
FY23 Request (or max request): \$85,000
FY23 Award Calculation: \$48,348
Formula: 56.88%
Rank: 12
Prog Score: 70.5
Financial: 10
Score (see FY22): 80.5
Point Difference from rank above: 0.50
FY23 Recommendation: \$59,952
FY22 Award: \$52,800
Increase: \$7,152

W.O. Smith/Nashville Community Music School
FY22 Award: \$87,300
FY23 Request (or max request): \$130,000
FY23 Award Calculation: \$73,216
Formula: 56.32%
Rank: 13
Prog Score: 72.67
Financial: 7
Score (see FY22): 79.67
Point Difference from rank above: 0.83
FY23 Recommendation: \$90,788
FY22 Award: \$87,300
Increase: \$3,488

Nashville Shakespeare Festival
FY22 Award: \$74,900
FY23 Request (or max request): \$169,148
FY23 Award Calculation: \$94,807
Formula: 56.05%
Rank: 14
Prog Score: 71
Financial: 7
Score (see FY22): 78
Point Difference from rank above: 1.67
FY23 Recommendation: \$117,561
FY22 Award: \$74,900
Increase: \$42,661

Healing Arts Project Inc – HAPI
FY22 Award: \$12,000
FY23 Request (or max request): \$20,000
FY23 Award Calculation: \$10,788
Formula: 53.94%
Rank: 15
Prog Score: 70
Financial: 7
Score (see FY22): 77
Point Difference from rank above: 1.00
FY23 Recommendation: \$13,377
FY22 Award: \$12,000
Increase: \$1,377

Music for Seniors
FY22 Award: \$27,500
FY23 Request (or max request): \$51,564
FY23 Award Calculation: \$27,530
Formula: 53.39%
Rank: 16

Prog Score: 67.67
Financial: 9
Score (see FY22): 76.67
Point Difference from rank above: 0.33
FY23 Recommendation: \$34,137
FY22 Award: \$27,500
Increase: \$6,637

New Dialect

FY22 Award: \$18,600
FY23 Request (or max request): \$37,450
FY23 Award Calculation: \$19,901
Formula: 53.14%
Rank: 17
Prog Score: 63
Financial: 10
Score (see FY22): 73
Point Difference from rank above: 3.67
FY23 Recommendation: \$24,677
FY22 Award: \$18,600
Increase: \$6,077

Nashville Film Festival

FY22 Award: \$69,000
FY23 Request (or max request): \$108,798
FY23 Award Calculation: \$52,539
Formula: 48.29%
Rank: 18
Prog Score: 63
Financial: 9
Score (see FY22): 72
Point Difference from rank above: 1.00
FY23 Recommendation: \$65,148
FY22 Award: \$69,000
Increase: \$(3,852)

Total Request Amounts, Basic Operating:

FY22 Award: \$2,245,200
FY23 Request (or max request): \$5,278,168
FY23 Award Calculation: \$2,272,784
FY23 Recommendation: \$2,818,252
FY22 Award: \$3,666,100
Increase: \$955,571

Core Operating Support Group 3 (Organizations with Budgets under \$99,999)

Girls Write Nashville

FY22 Award: \$11,480

FY23 Request (or max request): \$20,000
FY23 Award Calculation: \$20,000
Formula: 100%
Rank: 1
Prog Score: 81.25
Financial: 7
Total: 88.25
Point Difference from rank above: N/A
FY23 Recommendation: \$20,000
FY22 Award: \$11,480
Increase: \$8,520

Chinese Arts Alliance of Nashville

FY22 Award: \$8,407
FY23 Request (or max request): \$9,018
FY23 Award Calculation: \$8,702
Formula: 96.5%
Rank: 2
Prog Score: 77.75
Financial: 7
Total: 88.25
Point Difference from rank above: 3.5
FY23 Recommendation: \$8,702
FY22 Award: \$8,407
Increase: \$295

Intersection

FY22 Award: \$15,153
FY23 Request (or max request): \$16,420
FY23 Award Calculation: \$15,558
Formula: 94.75%
Rank: 3
Prog Score: 78.50
Financial: 4.50
Total: 83.00
Point Difference from rank above: 1.75
FY23 Recommendation: \$15,558
FY22 Award: \$15,153
Increase: \$405

Dancing Through the Curriculum

FY22 Award: \$12,180
FY23 Request (or max request): \$17,600
FY23 Award Calculation: \$16,412
Formula: 93.25%
Rank: 4
Prog Score: 74.5
Financial: 7

Total: 81.50
Point Difference from rank above: 1.5
FY23 Recommendation: \$16,412
FY22 Award: \$12,180
Increase: \$4,232

CreatiVets (new)

FY22 Award: N/A
FY23 Request (or max request): \$20,000
FY23 Award Calculation: \$18,550
Formula: 92.75%
Rank: 5
Prog Score: 73.00
Financial: 8.00
Total: 81.00
Point Difference from rank above: 0.5
FY23 Recommendation: \$18,550
FY22 Award: N/A
Increase: N/A

Creative Girls Rock (New)

FY22 Award: N/A
FY23 Request (or max request): \$14,000
FY23 Award Calculation: \$12,938
Formula: 92.42%
Rank: 6
Prog Score: 73.67
Financial: 7
Total: 80.67
Point Difference from rank above: 0.33
FY23 Recommendation: \$12,938
FY22 Award: N/A
Increase: N/A

Choral Arts Link

FY22 Award: \$5,450
FY23 Request (or max request): \$8,000
FY23 Award Calculation: \$7,300
Formula: 91.25%
Rank: 7
Prog Score: 76.00
Financial: 3.5
Total: 79.5
Point Difference from rank above: 1.17
FY23 Recommendation: \$7,300
FY22 Award: 5,450
Increase: \$1,850

ALIAS Chamber Ensemble

FY22 Award: \$8,192
FY23 Request (or max request): \$9,043
FY23 Award Calculation: \$8,252
Formula: 91.25%
Rank: 7
Prog Score: 72.5
Financial: 7
Total: 79.5
Point Difference from rank above: 0
FY23 Recommendation: \$8,252
FY22 Award: 8,192
Increase: \$60

Circle Players, Inc. (previously in Basic 3)

FY22 Award: \$11,800
FY23 Request (or max request): \$16,000
FY23 Award Calculation: \$14,320
Formula: 89.5%
Rank: 8
Prog Score: 72.75
Financial: 5
Total: 77.75
Point Difference from rank above: 1.75
FY23 Recommendation: \$14,320
FY22 Award: \$11,800
Increase: \$2,520

Tennessee Arts Academy Foundation (New)

FY22 Award: N/A
FY23 Request (or max request): \$20,000
FY23 Award Calculation: \$17,790
Formula: 88.95%
Rank: 9
Prog Score: 69.20
Financial: 8
Total: 77.20
Point Difference from rank above: 0.55
FY23 Recommendation: \$17,790
FY22 Award: N/A
Increase: N/A

Native American Indian Association of Tennessee

FY22 Award: \$15,139
FY23 Request (or max request): \$19,800
FY23 Award Calculation: \$17,127
Formula: 86.5%
Rank: 10

Prog Score: 68.75
Financial: 6
Total: 74.75
Point Difference from rank above: 2.45
FY23 Recommendation: \$17,127
FY22 Award: 15,139
Increase: 1,988

Nashville Philharmonic Orchestra

FY22 Award: \$8,700
FY23 Request (or max request): \$9,808
FY23 Award Calculation: \$8,450
Formula: 86.15%
Rank: 11
Prog Score: 67.40
Financial: 7
Total: 74.40
Point Difference from rank above: 0.35
FY23 Recommendation: \$8,450
FY22 Award: \$8,700
Increase: \$(250)

Unscripted

FY22 Award: \$2,910
FY23 Request (or max request): \$4,774
FY23 Award Calculation: \$4,113
Formula: 86.15%
Rank: 11
Prog Score: 68.40
Financial: 6.00
Total: 74.40
Point Difference from rank above: 0
FY23 Recommendation: \$4,113
FY22 Award: \$2,910
Increase: \$1,203

Tennessee Youth Symphony

FY22 Award: \$9,062
FY23 Request (or max request): \$7,842
FY23 Award Calculation: \$6,756
Formula: 86.15%
Rank: 11
Prog Score: 70.40
Financial: 4.00
Total: 74.40
Point Difference from rank above: 0
FY23 Recommendation: \$6,756
FY22 Award: \$9,062

Increase: \$(2,306)

Poverty and the Arts (Daybreak Arts)

FY22 Award: \$20,000

FY23 Request (or max request): \$20,000

FY23 Award Calculation: \$17,100

Formula: 85.50%

Rank: 12

Prog Score: 66.25

Financial: 7.50

Total: 73.75

Point Difference from rank above: 0.65

FY23 Recommendation: \$17,100

FY22 Award: \$20,000

Increase: \$(2,900)

chatterbird

FY22 Award: \$8,806

FY23 Request (or max request): \$12,999

FY23 Award Calculation: \$11,017

Formula: 84.75%

Rank: 13

Prog Score: 69

Financial: 4

Total: 73

Point Difference from rank above: 0.75

FY23 Recommendation: \$11,017

FY22 Award: \$8,806

Increase: \$2,211

COOP Gallery

FY22 Award: \$1,600

FY23 Request (or max request): \$3,342.60

FY23 Award Calculation: \$2,816

Formula: 84.25%

Rank: 14

Prog Score: 71.5

Financial: 1

Total: 72.5

Point Difference from rank above: 0.5

FY23 Recommendation: \$2,816

FY22 Award: \$1,600

Increase: \$1,216

MOVE Inclusive Dance

FY22 Award: \$14,772

FY23 Request (or max request): \$20,000

FY23 Award Calculation: \$15,070

Formula: 75.35%
Rank: 15
Prog Score: 59.60
Financial: 4
Total: 63.60
Point Difference from rank above: 8.9
FY23 Recommendation: \$15,070
FY22 Award: \$14,772
Increase: \$298

Vox Grata Women's Choir

FY22 Award: \$5,794
FY23 Request (or max request): \$7,257
FY23 Award Calculation: \$5,381
Formula: 74.15%
Rank: 16
Prog Score: 57.4
Financial: 5
Total: 62.40
Point Difference from rank above: 1.2
FY23 Recommendation: \$5,381
FY22 Award: \$5,794
Increase: \$(413)

The Fort Houston Artisan Support Project (New)

FY22 Award: N/A
FY23 Request (or max request): \$20,000
FY23 Award Calculation: \$14,450
Formula: 72.25%
Rank: 17
Prog Score: 55
Financial: 5.5
Total: 60.5
Point Difference from rank above: 1.9
FY23 Recommendation: \$14,450
FY22 Award: N/A
Increase: N/A

Make Music Nashville

FY22 Award: \$1,887
FY23 Request (or max request): \$3,074
FY23 Award Calculation: \$2,144
Formula: 69.75%
Rank: 18
Prog Score: 55
Financial: 3
Total: 58
Point Difference from rank above: 2.5

FY23 Recommendation: \$2,144
FY22 Award: \$1,887
Increase: \$257

Music Neighbors, Inc.

FY22 Award: \$1,050
FY23 Request (or max request): \$964.92
FY23 Award Calculation: \$630
Formula: 65.25%
Rank: 19
Prog Score: 50
Financial: 3.5
Total: 53.5
Point Difference from rank above: 4.5
FY23 Recommendation: \$630
FY22 Award: \$1,050
Increase: \$(420)

Total Request Amounts, Core Operating:

FY22 Award: \$162,382
FY23 Request (or max request): \$279,942.52
FY23 Award Calculation: \$227,652
FY23 Recommendation: \$244,875
FY22 Award: \$162,382
Increase: \$18,765

Total Request Amounts, All Categories:

FY22 Award: \$2,407,582
FY23 Request (or max request): \$5,558,110.52
FY23 Award Calculation: \$2,500,435
FY23 Recommendation: \$3,063,127
FY22 Award: \$3,828,482

From: Gavin Crowell <gavinacw@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 18, 2022 8:22 AM
To: Arts (Arts) <Arts@nashville.gov>
Subject: Public Comment

Good morning,

I am writing to you today to share my experience and opinions regarding the work to be done within Metro Arts. I interned with the department for over a year, and while the experience was part-time and during the pandemic, I believe I learned a good deal about the department during my tenure.

My direct supervisor was Janine Christiano. From the day I arrived, it was clear that Janine was working towards transformative change within the department. She was relentless in her quest to dismantle white supremacy and other systems that oppress and harm the most marginalized. Janine regularly challenged whiteness; as a white male, however, I never once felt as though she was challenging **my** whiteness (or me for being white), but rather the system of whiteness and white supremacy. This is an important distinction to make, I believe. Janine remains one of the best supervisors I've ever had. I learned, grew, and became a better person because of her.

I was excited when I first came to Metro Arts - the department was diverse, had lofty goals surrounding equity, and seemed like an exciting place to work. Throughout my time there, I personally received nothing but positivity and kindness from staff. However, it became clear that the department was stuck in some ways regarding the difference between promoting diversity vs. enacting lasting, structural change.

Quoting an article by Ben Hecht, "it's clear that the suite of diversity and inclusion tools and practices that went mainstream in the '90s are grossly insufficient for racial equity work. Instead of driving fundamental changes in organizations, they largely focus on "velcro-ing" new guidelines, practices, or programs onto the existing structures and culture of the workplace in an attempt to help employees of color better "fit in" and succeed."

This is the space that many organizations find themselves in. But trying to have people of color 'fit in' and 'succeed' within systems that are at their core couched in whiteness is a losing battle that upholds structures of oppression. To promote change within these systems is hard, because they are designed to protect themselves in a number of nefarious ways.

Even talking about race makes many white folks uncomfortable, and there exist many contradictions between public rebuttals of racism and the racist practices that nonetheless persist both in personal relationships and within institutions. While Metro Arts had a number of anti-racism trainings and diversity workshops, it never quite felt as though these learnings were fully absorbed into practice.

I do not pretend to have the answers to Metro Arts problems. However, I do know that there are some within the organization pushing to hold it accountable to the promises it makes; Janine is one of those people, and I urge the commission to support her however it can.

Respectfully,
Gavin Crowell-Williamson
Litton Ave, Nashville, TN, 37216

From: Sarah Bounse <sarah.bounse@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 18, 2022 3:45 PM
To: Arts (Arts) <Arts@nashville.gov>
Cc: Christiano, Janine (Arts) <Janine.Christiano@nashville.gov>
Subject: Public Comment

Hello there,

I'm reaching out to confirm my interaction with Janine Christiano regarding a comment that former ED Caroline Vincent made last year, I believe. While serving on the Committee for Antiracism and Equity (CARE), I was also part of the people of color (POC) caucus for members and staff who were part of or supported CARE. During that meeting, Janine shared her frustration regarding a comment that Ms. Vincent made. She relayed that Ms. Vincent, in describing an encounter with a Black individual during the grants application process, said, "Is part of Black culture to not follow the rules?" I remember that particular language and feeling shocked and upset by that statement. I appreciated Janine sharing that information with the POC caucus so we could address those concerns within CARE. I wanted to make sure that you, as the Board of Commissioners, were aware of this information. Thank you.

Best,
Sarah Bounse

--

Sarah Bounse
p: 865.385.4047
e: sarah.bounse@gmail.com

From: Gualtieri, Gillian <gillian.gualtieri@Vanderbilt.Edu>
Sent: Thursday, May 19, 2022 8:27 AM
To: Arts (Arts) <Arts@nashville.gov>
Cc: Christiano, Janine (Arts) <Janine.Christiano@nashville.gov>; Alfaro Frazier, Natalie (Arts) <Natalie.AlfaroFrazier@nashville.gov>
Subject: Public Comment

May 19, 2022

To Whom It May Concern,

I write to express my unequivocal faith in and support for the brilliant Janine Christiano. I have known Janine for about 12 months, working collaboratively on the Racial Equity in Arts Leadership program as part of the ongoing collaboration between the Curb Center for Art, Enterprise, and Public Policy at Vanderbilt University, where I am employed as a postdoctoral researcher studying inequality in the arts, and MetroArts. During my time working with Janine, I have found her to be a fierce and creative advocate for all voices, especially those voices that are historically neglected and ignored. Janine is professional, kind, and wildly knowledgeable. She is a leader in the arts space, the diversity space, and their woefully underdeveloped intersection--no small feat! Truly, MetroArts, Nashville, and the arts community at large are lucky to count Janine among our community and to collectively benefit from her advocacy, her compassion, and her brilliance.

What I find most remarkable about Janine is her unwavering desire to empathize. Even when faced with the most infuriating situations of injustice and mistreatment, Janine finds a way to express empathy and understanding for all parties involved. This is not to suggest that Janine is unwilling to fight for what she believes in; rather, what I am suggesting is that Janine is an incredibly thoughtful person and professional, and when she identifies a problem, a situation of harm, or a moment of injustice, Janine is to be BELIEVED. She has assuredly thought extensively about the moving parts of any situation on which she chooses to comment, and she has carefully and logically chosen her language, her arguments, and her approach. This care is rare, especially after enduring and observing mistreatment and racism at work, and Janine inspires me every day with her thoughtfulness and poise under undue duress.

Finally, I'd like to take this moment to acknowledge Janine's immense talent for community engagement and mentorship. Above all, Janine is a brilliant thinker, kind teacher, patient mentor, and committed citizen of the Nashville arts community, the diversity, equity, and inclusion thought leader space, and the social world at large. Janine has ensured that I and countless others feel important, valued, and enormously grateful for her time, generosity, and support. She is a model of mentorship, compassionate leadership, and creative thinking around all things social justice for new professionals like myself, and MetroArts is truly lucky to count her as one of their own. She is more than deserving of recognition for her efforts, and she is to be believed, supported, and encouraged—not critiqued, silenced, or dismissed. I hope that I can have as much faith in MetroArts and the arts community in Nashville as I have in Janine, and I truly hope that others realize what I know to be true—that Janine is a capable, kind, and just thought leader and human, and all who encounter her are lucky to benefit from her many talents.

Thank you for your time and attention,

Dr. Gillian Gualtieri, PhD

From: Lauren Fitzgerald <lauren@strategize619.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 11:58 AM
To: Arts (Arts) <Arts@nashville.gov>
Cc: Myers, Ian (Arts) <Ian.Myers@nashville.gov>; Blackman, Andrea (Finance) <Andrea.Blackman@nashville.gov>; jim@schmidtgovsolutions.com
Subject: Public Comment and Witness Statement Supporting Janine Christiano and the Allegations Against Her

Dear Metro Arts Commission and Concerned Parties,

I hope all are doing well. I am unsure where to send this or if there are any rules pertaining to the submission of these types of letters. However I am writing to provide a witness statement (and trust that it will be included in anyway appropriate way) on behalf of Janine Christiano and provide clarifying context around the comment:

"Telling Ms. Fitzgerald that the rest of her employment would be unpleasant without providing healthy opportunities for change, could be considered behavior that creates an intimidating environment. Ms. Fitzgerald believed her only recourse was to resign."

and why I think that this is an unfair statement of blame to Janine Christiano for encouraging my resignation and how we all know this is not true. The below statements outline how a culture of toxicity and microaggressions developed around my employment and how that was what led to my decision to leave Metro Arts.

If we consider my initial Performance Improvement Plan and fact finder report, you will see several micro-aggressions (that are also outlined in the fact finder report that was developed per my complaint against Metro Arts) developed towards me regarding upper management's judgement of my professionalism. These judgments, as outlined in the report, had nothing to do with the reason I was placed on the Performance Improvement Plan. These accusations/observations of unprofessionalism were not based on my job performance. There is nothing that indicated unprofessionalism on my record.

However, one can only deduce that this inflation of my performance improvement plan and the choice to extend it, was based on the ignorance of my colleagues towards my ability to communicate fluidly with our community to help them achieve funding goals. I was often praised for bringing in new funders but coached on maintaining boundaries with the community to protect the community from seeing too much, like when I would tell them when their invoices were filed and could expect payment or providing lengthy one-on-one coaching to help an applicant with an application.

There were two incidents that I knew were going to be used punitively against me, however were never discussed with me to develop a common understanding prior to the decision to extend my PIP:

a) *being tardy to a CARE meeting: I was asked by Councilperson Sharon Hurt as the Community Engagement Coordinator to show up for community at a lunch service engagement the day after the March 2020 tornado. I took my lunch break to attend this and the plan was for me to attend the CARE meeting after. Due to several roadblocks, I was late to this meeting. This incident was brought up as a reason to extend my PIP. However, I had communicated all of this to my supervisor and that was still not accepted.

b) *The Soccer Stadium Public Art Selection Panel: I had no idea that people felt as if I was being disruptive, as my only aim in this scenario was to help the artist. When I finally was able to look up after trying to quickly help the artist, I saw Caroline glaring at me as if I had done something wrong and with that energy I brought it back into the office with several insecurities.

*These incidents occurred while I was on my initial PIP

No one talked to me about any of these incidents after the fact. I only heard about these things when the decision was made to extend my PIP. Janine was not there for any of these incidents and being new in her role and the only person of color, she was placed in the position by the person who had the most complaints about me, to "coach" me.

I should also add that Janine ran off a list of other reasons why my PIP was being extended:

- incident where a member of the public was behaving racist towards me and several arts colleagues of color (one of which being Omari Booker, Public Art Commission) complained about me
- Incident where I was at the library and lost my composure after another racist incident
- * Not communicating to Caroline about DIAL: Which was unfair and not true. Caroline, had been out of town for business and had taken weeks of vacation. She called me yelling at me upon her return, blaming me for not communicating about the program when I was representing Metro Arts at an Opportunity NOW convention at Goodwill. I remember having to take an extended lunch to upmanage her unprofessionalism and irritation towards me.

Also, after the lack of support that I received in comparison to my white colleagues when I participated in professional development, made me feel extremely unappreciated:

- Rebecca Kinslow and I were accepted into grad school at the same time. When she was allowed to take work time to support her success in school, I inevitably did not complete my program to keep up with my Metro Arts workload. I was met with irritation when I shared with Caroline that I had been accepted.
- When encouraged to apply and awarded a fellowship with the Intercultural Leadership Institute, that award was met with irritation from Caroline.

I also felt several micro-aggressions from Caroline if I had unexpected emergencies that did not place me in a position to communicate immediately. After receiving dental work and having an unexpected procedure, I was forced to call my mother to pick me up from the dentist. As I was sleeping, I did not communicate that I would not be returning from the procedure. I communicated after I woke up and that was met with irritation. For the following procedure, I believe I took off the remainder of the day the next time.

My relationship with Van Marravali was positive until I was placed on a Performance Improvement Plan right as she was coming off of her first maternity leave. After that, I felt very distanced from her regarding our collective work that had not yet been completely transferred to the strategic initiatives team. One relevant conversation that I remember prior to that time that alludes to Caroline's aggression towards me was when I was pulled into Van's office after an artist and I had gotten our calendars mixed up, where Van accused me of taking advantage of our friendship when it came to my attendance and communication. I had never done that, and I explained to her that it was a miscommunication. As we were friends at the time, when she came at me with a terse tone, I responded with just as terse of a tone letting her know that the scenario she was outlining was not the case. She then responded letting

me know that Caroline has something against me and she doesn't know why. That is when I realized that this could be a cultural microaggression and that this might not be fixable, no matter how much I try.

What disappoints me most about this, is that I had really strong relationships with everyone I worked with including Ian and Van. Both of which I had intentions on maintaining relationships with post Metro Arts. However, when our HR Manager, Ian Myers, never showed up to any of my internal HR hearings as a third party listener, and showed up for me as a "dead possum" (a term the office called Ian that was initiated by upper management when he would provide vague responses that needed deepened clarification); and when Van Maravalli, distanced herself from me when coaching and advice would have been helpful from a trusted colleague to protect the status quo while Caroline wielded her power to unfairly make false accusations rooted in either cultural ignorance or ignorance of the circumstance, I felt alienated and left with no allies that could help bring reason to my case.

All of the accusations to extend my PIP were made by the white upper management and the person of color, Janine Christiano, a person who was not employed for any of my accusations, was placed in the unfair position to hand me my punishment by herself. Janine shared that, moving forward, she would have documented my every move, although I had already developed a community engagement log to track my appearances. She explained to me that she felt that all of the work that we had done was not acknowledged and was not enough and what was coming would feel like a toxic work environment.

Because of my experiences already, I knew that she was right. I made the decision to leave after she confirmed that there were no solutions offered to me and that the white upper management had nothing but unfair criticisms concerning. There was no way of her knowing about any of the details they brought up without them having discussed it in a meeting.

There is one aspect of her accusation letter that I would like to touch on as well. As a member of Metro Arts staff, we were all REQUIRED to attend the Crossroads Anti-Racism Training, until Atilio Murga joined our staff. When we engaged in discourse around cultural equity, within our training curriculum we developed a common language and analysis to engage in the work of undoing systemic issues. If that common language and analysis is not shared, it will not be possible for colleagues to understand the different aspects that need developing. This analysis and language is developed through collective education. As a director for a fellowship program that builds curriculum and develops analysis, I would say that if there is a person (white brown black or chartreuse) who is not educated in the space of cultural equity, they do not have the capacity to develop culturally equitable practices and policies that can be sustainably codified in organizations. You will not know how to avoid blindspots through collectivism and research. No matter the intention, there is a greater probability that you will cause harm through individualized behavior. Fear is what caused this to no longer be a requirement and it's shameful.

Sincerely,

Lauren Fitzgerald

From: Giraffe Giggles <giraffegiggles@icloud.com>

Sent: Friday, June 3, 2022 9:59 AM

To: Henderson, Angie (Council Member) <Angie.Henderson@nashville.gov>; Shulman, Jim (Vice Mayor) <Jim.Shulman@nashville.gov>; Mendes, Bob (Council Member) <Bob.Mendes@nashville.gov>; Hurt, Sharon (Council Member) <Sharon.Hurt@nashville.gov>; Allen, Burkley (Council Member) <Burkley.Allen@nashville.gov>; Suara, Zulfat (Council Member) <Zulfat.Suara@nashville.gov>; Maravalli, Van (Arts) <Van.Maravalli@nashville.gov>; Myers, Ian (Arts) <Ian.Myers@nashville.gov>; Christiano, Janine (Arts) <Janine.Christiano@nashville.gov>; Arts (Arts) <Arts@nashville.gov>

Cc: Myers, Ian (Arts) <Ian.Myers@nashville.gov>; jim@schmidtgovsolutions.com; lakishiaharris@gmail.com; nikicoffman@gmail.com; dianamarcelaperez84@gmail.com; info@cegallery.co; campbellwesttn@gmail.com; starrah1979@gmail.com; clay@onepublicsquare.com; mmb49@mac.com; ilovebucy@yahoo.com; dexter.sutton@gmail.com; ellenangelico@gmail.com; jane@alviscompany.net; will@willcheek.com; O'Connell, Freddie (Council Member) <Freddie.OConnell@nashville.gov>; PaigeP@wpln.org; eiccarone@nashvillescene.com; Styles, Joy (Council Member) <Joy.Styles@nashville.gov>; Hurt, Sharon (Council Member) <Sharon.Hurt@nashville.gov>; metro.council@nashville.gov; Arts (Arts) <Arts@nashville.gov>; Taylor, Brandon (Council Member) <Brandon.Taylor@nashville.gov>; Global Education Center <ellen@globaleducationcenter.org>; aaron@aaronhokedoenges.com; Blackman, Andrea (Finance) <Andrea.Blackman@nashville.gov>

Subject: Metro Arts Disciplinary Action against Janine Christiano

Attention: This email originated from a source external to Metro Government. Please exercise caution when opening any attachments or links from external sources.

To All of You Who Have an Opportunity to Support Justice in our Metro Arts Nashville Leadership,

Simone Boyd has been made aware of the disciplinary actions brought against Janine Christiano by Ian Myers supported by Jim Schmidt who is responsible for holding Ian accountable when he is not upholding the stated values of equity set for our Metro governing organizations. I believe Simone when she says that Ms. Christiano is an exemplary employee and this disciplinary action is retaliation by Ian Myers who was ignoring complaints about his leadership using intimidation and retaliation and holding a dual standard of performance for employees of color.

Then I heard from Simone about the hearing for Ms Christiano May 31, where Ian was allowed to be part of the panel judging Ms Christiano. Where is the panel judging Mr Myers for his accused misbehavior? I am aghast at how this process is also showing signs of inequity and injustice.

Please, we have to listen and believe our POC when they complain about injustice and mistreatment by white leaders. As I understand this situation, Jim Schmidt is supposed to hold Ian, Interim Executive Director of Metro Arts, accountable when complaints are brought against him. He has not.

I have also heard from Alan Fey, someone who is upset about this process against Ms Christiano. He was at the hearing and as disappointed by the process as I am. I will be following Alan and Simones' lead as this unfair process, so it seems so far, continues.

Our Nashville Metro Government has decades of white leadership ignoring and abusing the civil rights of our POC. This must stop now.

Please, I want to see the hearing happen that judges both Ian Myers and Jim Schmidt accountable for their poor performance holding equity and justice policies as a first priority with their power.

Thank you,
Chrissy Washburn
5025 Hillsboro Pike 22F
37215
503 780-3776

Myers, Ian (Arts)

From: Myers, Ian (Arts)
Sent: Wednesday, June 8, 2022 11:18 AM
To: Arts (Arts)
Subject: FW: Public Comment for June Meeting

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

From: Jim Schmidt <jim@schmidtgovsolutions.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 8, 2022 11:17 AM
To: Myers, Ian (Arts) <Ian.Myers@nashville.gov>
Subject: Public Comment for June Meeting

Attention: This email originated from a source external to Metro Government. Please exercise caution when opening any attachments or links from external sources.

Ian: I am submitting the comment below for the next Commission meeting. Thank you. -Jim

PUBLIC COMMENT RESPONSE TO CALLS FOR MY REMOVAL

“Commissioners, I am sorry to not join you today but a previously planned family trip conflicted with our June meeting. To those in the public who have called for for my removal as Chairman of the Arts Commission, I will restate what the role of each party within Metro Arts is—the whole Commission provides oversight of the ED, not just the Chair, and we are not the disciplinary body for staff of the agency. As Chair, I am included on notifications of the HR processes but I am not a decision maker to the actions nor the responsible party to initiate those hearings. I serve at the pleasure of the Commission members and my term as Chairman is complete in September, at which point I hope Vice Chair Powell will take over. The Commissioners will decide that as a body. The Chair runs the proceedings of Commission meetings and is provided regular updates from the ED but they are not a member of the day-to-day staff—though over the course of the last year, it has felt that way. Due to professional and personal responsibilities, I have for some time tried to pass the baton early, but given the ongoing struggles of the agency staff, I have stuck it out. Thank you to each of you for your support and participation in the discussions during a difficult time. I am hopeful with Metro DEI leadership’s work with the staff, the Commission’s approved improvement items, selection of a new Executive Director and the development of a new strategic plan, that Metro Arts will finally have the reset that is required to move forward and continue serving our artists and Nashville.”

-Jim Schmidt

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Jim Schmidt
President, Schmidt Government Solutions LLC
511 Union Street, Suite 710
Nashville, TN 37219
Office (615) 248-3621
Cell (615) 394-3991

Hello, Colleagues and Commissioners,

6/9/2022

I am sure everyone is exhausted by what Metro Arts has been through over the past year. I know I am. I wanted to offer my own explanation for the complaints I filed against Janine Christiano in the report that you have received. I hope that by sharing this explanation, I can give voice to those who have been strategically silenced through slanted, one-sided media coverage, aggressive personal campaigns for public comments and gossip.

Art is about individual expression. But because I expressed views different from Janine's, she elected to undermine my work performance, question my education and qualifications, criticize how I choose to identify, and even falsely claim that I said racist remarks. Her acts threatened my working relationships with artists, colleagues, the success of my projects, and my job with Metro Arts.

To use someone's very identity as a weapon against them – whether that identity is their background, their ethnicity, their country of origin, their own self-identity, or your perception of it – is discrimination. To do it under the banner of equity work is manipulative, dishonest, and an insult to true practitioners of DEI work, such as Andrea Blackman and Razel Jones, who have worked so thoughtfully to try to heal what's left of our staff. As we continue to bleed staff members, Andrea and Razel have been a refuge for those of us who remain. Despite feeling so depleted by the lies and constant manipulation of those who seek personal vengeance on us, they have been a source of calming stability and support.

I want to be VERY clear that what I experienced at the hand of Janine Christiano and her acquaintances is blatant discrimination. Discrediting sixteen-plus years of relevant professional experience and someone's education and entire career because it doesn't match your entitled idea of "qualified" is an act of discrimination. You cannot claim a desire to uplift people from places of challenge and hardship while simultaneously claiming your colleague does not deserve his job because he has not been afforded the same privilege in life. While I may not have master's degrees from an elite private university, I have worked just as hard to get where I am today. I am proud of my journey and I believe it gives me a unique perspective and valuable skill set that I apply to my work at Metro Arts.

What's more, these acts of discrimination cannot even be disguised as true acts of concern: Ms. Christiano did not hire me, did not manage me, and was not even on the same workplace team as me. It was literally none of her concern why I was hired or whether I was qualified, and if I am indeed not "educated" or "qualified," I am not her problem. She later admitted as much: that she only invented these "concerns" to discredit former Director Vincent, which is more evidence that she twists her standards of discrimination and equity work to advance her personal agenda.

Falsely accusing a coworker of making racist statements is harmful. Janine Christiano has caused harm to our agency, to our standing in the community and in Metro government, to coworkers who chose to leave their jobs rather than indulge her dishonesty, and to coworkers who were taken in by her deceit. I chose not to let her continue to harm me, and that is why I filed my complaint.

Even if she didn't email Metro Council, the Mayor's office, and the whole Commission about her lies about me (like she did with Caroline Vincent), Ms. Christiano attempted to purposely harm my reputation by inventing words I never said in a staff meeting and assigning a racist meaning to them. Janine Christiano was compelled enough, with 100% certainty, to alert Metro Human Resources and

members of the arts community to the lie that I used a derogatory term against Asians. I was just lucky enough that a coworker mistrusted Janine enough to record meetings and had evidence that exonerated me. To date, I have never received an informal or formal apology - even if it was submitted through HR or Metro Arts management. Also, when a different coworker, who had left the department, spoke up to correct Janine's "recollection" of what Caroline Vincent supposedly said, and Janine then admitted that she had made it up or misremembered it, where were the emails to Council or the press conferences on the courthouse steps to announce the mistake?

I do want to point out the irony of it all. In our office, no one has more kinship or similar story than Janine and me, on paper. We're cut from the same cloth: we both come from minority families, we are of the same age, are from Los Angeles, lived in adjoining cities, grew up in the same neighborhoods, went through the same CA school system, and more than likely, shopped in the same malls as kids. But most importantly, growing up, we both experienced the same structural societal challenges in our region. For Janine to state "He [Murga] has no solidarity with me [Christiano]" is only proof that her definition of solidarity is distorted and only applies if you only agree with her agenda and point of view. To her, solidarity means you must agree with her, and if you don't seize on anything different about yourself and weaponize it against you. It's sad to see an individual who comes from a similar background as mine, who has worked very hard to obtain the best education possible from distinguished universities but chose to completely disregard our shared history. I question, what has she learned? Whether Janine Christiano wants to admit it or not, we do share a bond and a form of solidarity that not many can claim.

I want to share a story, one that is extremely personal to me, to show that we as individuals are more alike than we sometimes know.

To be accused of using "yellow" as a derogatory term towards Asians was very painful for me to hear and beyond ignorant on Janine Christiano's part! What many people do not know about me is that one of the most influential father figures in my life was my step-grandfather, Guillermo Abarrientos, who is Filipino and from Tayug, Pangasinan. He took on the role of father to my mother and aunts, and grandfather to my siblings and cousins for over 30 years. Because of this man, my parents were able to get situated in the United States, providing us with a new opportunity in life. It is very hurtful to be accused of purposely trying to offend a person of Filipino descent because my grandfather brought so much Filipino influence into our entire family. From food, songs, history, and culture, to even giving us the perspective of his experience as a Filipino-American during WW2, when he was placed in an internment camp. Even though he has passed, we still love and credit our grandfather for providing our entire family with a solid foundation from which to build our lives. Even though I came to the United States as an immigrant from Guatemala, I had the privilege to have had a foundation already built for me off of my grandfather's struggles and success. It's sad that my private life and personal experiences were never considered in not only my qualifications in equity work but also in painting me as a racist.

It is disheartening to claim you are a champion of equity when you purposely try to harm a person such as myself, who took a different route in life. Yes, I only have an Associate of Science in Multimedia-and Interactive Design, but my extensive years of experience in the private sector, which started in 1999 as a graphic designer, does not make me any less qualified to pursue any position I desire. I may not have a degree in equity and racial injustice, but I have lived it and learned from my life's journey. I won't apologize for not having a degree to prove I obtained valuable insight, perspective, and the ability to recognize blind spots when it comes to equity and civic practice! I am very proud of who I am and what

it took to get where I am. I would expect more from Janine Christiano, because she knows better, and she has the “education” to prove it. She would have been a great story and role model for our community.

I do want to bring up the term “harm.” Through all of this, we all have heard the word harm, over and over again and how we as a department should be accountable for the “harm” caused to the community.

However, what about the intentional harm created through lies, manipulation, and Janine Christiano’s ability to use a tabloid to discredit our department and commission in the name of equity? What about the intentional harm Janine Christiano has done to my former coworkers, Caroline Vincent, and myself in the name of equity? Shouldn’t we focus on “that” harm first before we try to approach the community? What good are we as department staff if we purposely harm each other? How can a community trust our staff if we have no internal trust?

This has all been a waste of time, and the most unfortunate thing is that we all lost. No one ever wins in a situation like this. We’ve all been damaged; staff, commission, the city, and its people. Let this experience be a lesson to us all, and remember that regardless of identity, color, or creed, we need to consider that others have unique, valuable experiences that aren’t obvious and apparent, and just because someone doesn’t agree with you, it doesn’t warrant the opportunity to harm them without remorse or consideration.

Due to everything mentioned above, the accurate reports released, and my professional opinion, an individual such as Janine Christiano clearly does not possess the capacity or the understanding of equity work and social service, even after completing courses in the space of cultural equity. I have heard the argument that by not taking equity courses you will not know how to avoid blindspots through collectivism and research. It’s one thing for humans to have natural blind spots, but to know you have blind spots and completely ignore the practices you have learned to purposely cause harm is immoral.

We cannot change the past, but I urge the Metro Arts Commission to use this situation as a guide to find—and stand behind—a director who will be able to maneuver the challenges that equity work and artwork bring. We will need a leader that will be able to help build a team that will strengthen our community, and not tear it down.

Thank you,

Atilio Murga
Public Art Project Coordinator
615.862.6733
contact@atiliomurga.com

Myers, Ian (Arts)

From: Lauren Pearce <loumichelle@comcast.net>
Sent: Tuesday, June 14, 2022 9:34 AM
To: Arts (Arts)
Subject: Statement for the Commission

Attention: This email originated from a source external to Metro Government. Please exercise caution when opening any attachments or links from external sources.

Dear Metro Arts Commission,

I lived in Nashville for most of my life. I began working for the Metro Nashville government as a student intern before I could drive a car, again as a college intern, and continued as an employee. It broke my heart to leave that employment and it breaks my heart now to see that this discrimination has extended as far as Arts as well, a department I always had high hopes for and believed to be above the racism and sexism issues myself and other coworkers experienced and saw in other departments. Internally, Arts department is frequently looked to as a vanguard for the way other departments could better themselves. You really have a chance here to change this government and this city, leading it in innovative and equitable directions. But that has to start with supporting your BIPOC employees and limiting the power that discrimination has on the department and Metro Nashville as a whole. Please take the constructive and restorative steps of removing discriminatory leadership and supporting Janine Christiano in any way you can. It is people like Janine who make up and move forward the Metro Nashville government; it is never too late to lend them your strength, your ear, and your belief.

Thank you,
L. Pearce

Myers, Ian (Arts)

From: Layla Haynor <laylahaynor@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 14, 2022 7:53 PM
To: Arts (Arts)
Subject: Statement on Janine Christiano's Termination

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Attention: This email originated from a source external to Metro Government. Please exercise caution when opening any attachments or links from external sources.

Good Evening,

My name is Layla Haynor and in the summer of 2020 from June to September I interned with Metro Arts: Nashville's Office of Arts + Culture as a Diversity in Arts Leadership & Cultural Policy Intern. I was recently alerted to the situation with Metro Arts and was very upset to hear of Janine Christiano's termination.

During my time as an intern I worked closely with Janine as she was one of my mentors and was my supervisor. Two of the projects I worked on with Metro Arts were assisting in the construction of two grant committees and creating a presentation that evaluated the racial diversity and equity of various organizations in the Nashville area that worked closely with Metro Arts. While taking on these projects I was reminded several times of Metro Arts' own statement of cultural equity and used it as a reference to guide me in my work. To hear that Metro Arts leadership struggles to hold itself up to these same standards they use to evaluate other organizations is troubling to say the least. Staying true to their own statement and leading by example is the bare minimum in my opinion. It is disheartening, as a woman of color, to feel like those I looked up to are being treated unfairly within Metro Arts - when Metro Arts should be the leading force in Nashville against this kind of treatment.

Even though my time as an intern at Metro Arts was short I greatly enjoyed working with Janine. She was a very welcoming presence and was always willing to listen to any concerns I had. I felt very well supported and hate to see her terminated for speaking up against the unfair treatment of women of color within the Metro Arts community.

In general, I feel comfortable saying that my time at Metro Arts was pleasant. I enjoyed working with everyone and I felt very happy with the projects I was given. In group Zoom meetings with the full staff, I can't say that I ever felt intimidated by any employees but especially not by Janine. Objectively, 2020 was an especially hard year for people of color in America. This sentiment was frequently talked about in said group meetings and I felt that, as a whole, everyone's commitment to ensuring equity and encouraging a sense of safety for people of color in the Nashville area was strong. That's why this situation comes as a huge shock to me. Words are wonderful tools, but are weak without action. I would love to see Metro Arts follow through with their supposed support of people of color in the community by internalizing their own criticisms; by truly questioning whether they are exhibiting the kind of behavior and standards they require of others.

In conclusion, I have nothing but positive words for Janine Christiano. She is dedicated to her job and takes her responsibility seriously. She does not deserve to be treated as she has, nor does any other woman of color in any position with Metro Arts - whether in leadership or in the general community. To fully trust in the words and the dedication to equity Metro Arts states, I want to see them uphold their own standards. I would love to see Janine reinstated to her position as I cannot think of anyone who better fills that role. I hope the concerns of the community will be taken seriously.

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Sincerely,

Layla Haynor

June 14, 2022

Metro Arts Commissioners:

Metro Arts is truly at its lowest point in the agency's history. Your staff is crumbling, the leadership has failed (repeatedly), and the community doesn't trust you. The situation is dire to say the least. I am sure you don't see it that way, of course. You will try to hire the most capable, experienced, innovative new director imaginable to come fix all of this, but it won't help. There is so much mistrust that it may take years, maybe decades, for the community to regain its confidence in Metro Arts. Last week I learned that Janine Christiano was terminated from her position. Her crime? Pointing out the hypocrisy of this department that claims to uphold racial and cultural equity, claims to engage in hard conversations and claims to be interested in accountability. Unfortunately, Metro Arts is only interested in accountability if it doesn't require you to hold up a mirror. What happened to Janine Christiano last week was whistleblower retaliation. She brought concerns to your attention time and time again and you dismissed them. Then, you gave Ian Myers the authority and permission to use Metro HR to take care of the problem. You gave him permission to silence Ms. Christiano permanently. This is not a new tactic. No, Metro Arts is actually pretty good at using intimidation and threats to get what they want from their employees. It is a pattern. The play goes something like this: employee doesn't promote and support the approved narrative, Metro Arts leaders accuse the employee of creating a "toxic work environment," the employee is given some kind of punitive threat, then leaders begin the process of "coaching the employee out" by making the problem employee's work environment so miserable that the employee resigns. This process is called constructive discharge. Metro Arts has successfully utilized this strategy on more than one occasion.

In the case of Janine Christiano, however, she didn't cower under this manipulative HR-approved strategy. She stood up for herself and Nashville's arts community by continuing to voice real concerns. Once Metro Arts leaders realized that constructive discharge wasn't going to work on Ms. Christiano, they escalated the issue. Complaints, interviews and reports flew even to the point of former Executive Director Caroline Vincent claiming she was a victim of Ms. Christiano's persecution. I find that claim to be completely baffling. I observed Ms. Vincent's leadership style myself and I can assure you that she was NEVER a victim. I even noted this in my exit interview by stating that Ms. Vincent might do better as a leader if she were to inspire her team instead of demand their respect using intimidation and threats.

These Fact Finding Reports conducted by Metro HR have been fraught with inconsistencies and I believe there has been critical information strategically left out of each of them. This should not come as a surprise though. Metro HR is interested in protecting Metro's best interest. Metro is not interested in admitting that they have caused harm to employees or to community members. Metro is not interested in holding its leaders accountable for their actions. Metro is not interested in changing. Why on earth would they allow Ms. Christiano's claims to prove any of these things to be true? It is not in their best interest and apparently the Arts Commission feels the same way.

I do hope that one day this agency will regain some level of professionalism and be able to provide value to our community again. As I mentioned in my email to the mayor last week, the way it stands right now, this city is better off without Metro Arts. I'd rather see these funds go to more pressing issues instead of being grossly mismanaged by this department. Good luck untangling this disaster. Nashville's arts community is looking to you to say something, do something, be something better than this.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laurel Fisher". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Laurel" and "Fisher" being significantly larger and more decorative than the rest of the letters.

Laurel Fisher
Former Metro Arts Employee
District 13 Resident

To the Committee for Antiracism and Equity, the Board of Commissioners, Metro Arts Staff and Metro Human Resources;

I am writing to urge you to look at these charges laid against Janine Christiano by Atilio Murga through an antiracist lens. If there is not one on the committee to judge these charges who has been through the two and a half day Crossroads Antiracism training who can bring that sort of rigorous analysis, I strongly encourage you to find such a person. I also urge you to make sure there is a person of color on that committee.

I also want to state what is obvious; that Mr. Murga has now filed complaints against two different women of color who were encouraging him to fellowship with people of color, deepen his professional development, and/or deepen his own understanding of racism. I also want to point out that these complaints were filed at a time when these women of color were in deep difficulty with the organization. The timing is deeply suspicious and I urge you to unravel the lies and falsehoods that are being told.

I will say that in the complaint against me that was filed in 2019, I had no knowledge of a complaint until my attorney and Metro Arts' attorney were in negotiation for about a month over my departure. In fact, on the complaint you can see where the date was changed — scribbled out — from July, after my departure, to June, before my departure. I don't want to imply that Mr. Murga's complaint was not valid — because if he was truly offended that I assumed that he identified as a person of color and would want to build community to survive an organization that had been tokenizing, toxic and psychologically violent to myself and other people of color, I apologize. I wish he had spoken up in the moment, "I don't identify as a person of color." However, as one for whom racial equity education was fully inside of their job description for grantees, artists, and staff — it should have been explained to him that I was doing my job by making the invitation.

As one who is outside now, but working with Ms. Christiano along with the Curb Center for the Racial Equity in Arts Leadership as a contracted consultant, in her capacity as the Strategic Funding and Initiatives Manager and member of CARE, it would seem like it would be in her purview to encourage a colleague who had not gone through a training course that had once been mandatory to complete the afore mentioned training. If the benchmark of making sure every employee has access and has completed training as a part of achieving the equity goals that Metro Arts once set for itself had shifted, that shift should have been made clear to Ms. Christiano. I'm curious and troubled about what might have changed the goal post.

I am curious how the work that Metro Arts has been chartered to do get done. Grants. Public art, THRIVE, REAL — all of that is extra. Grants are core to the mission and charter for the commission. The program has already be bogged down and plagued changes of knowledgeable staff and lack of community trust. With the employee now terminated who had been holding the work of funding initiatives — how will Metro Arts do the basic work of the charter?

As a former employee who worked very hard to secure and build a relationship with Crossroads, I am disappointed that their contract was willfully allowed to expire — as it is apparent that their consultancy is much needed now more than ever. A question that I ask executives and board members during my current work is: "Knowing we've all been socialized to protect whiteness and white normative values, how is white supremacy informing your decisions?" Perhaps the more pointed questions here would be, how have white normative values informed the decision to file charges against Ms. Christiano? And how have those values shaped the decisions to file complaints when the only Asian American employee and only Manager of color in the institution's history is challenging the practices, policies and white

entitlement to comfort? How is white supremacy and alignment with those values causing this process to be biased against those who have been calling for accountability and racial equity?

By continuing to dig in and reinforce white cultural values, Metro Arts is squandering this opportunity to be truly honest about where it actually is on the continuum of antiracism, and not living up to the ideals of its equity statement. This is an opportunity to rewind, reflect, and do some hard work of disentangling itself from the norms into which we have all been socialized. That takes work. That takes training. That takes accountability. That takes a contrite heart, mind, practice to repent for the racialized and gendered harm caused to staff in the present and past and to communities of color. This is an opportunity.

I write this knowing this will hurt my chances to compete for the Executive Director position; however I'm writing this because I still desire to see Metro Arts live into what it could be. Boldface retaliation is not living into what Metro Arts should be and professes to be.

I truly hope Metro Arts can get right sooner than later, if at all.

Waning, yet hoping for better,

Cecilia Olusola Tribble
Cultural Equity Consultant and Coach
Former Metro Arts Employee
Current Applicant for Executive Director of Metro Arts
District 1

Myers, Ian (Arts)

From: Rosie Forrest <rosie@ozartsnashville.org>
Sent: Wednesday, June 15, 2022 2:25 AM
To: Arts (Arts)
Subject: Statement on Recent Metro Arts Actions

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Attention: This email originated from a source external to Metro Government. Please exercise caution when opening any attachments or links from external sources.

Metro Arts Commission:

I'm writing to you today not only in deep and unwavering support for Janine Christiano, Strategic Funding and Initiatives Manager with Metro Arts, but also with that sinking gut feeling one has when witnessing misuse and abuse of power and blatant tactics of retaliation based in fear and wrong doing.

Metro Arts is currently on the wrong path. This latest move is further evidence of broken structures and egregious mishandling of a very real and very damaging toxic culture within our city's most necessary arts funding resource. The action to terminate Janine Christiano is yet another example of Metro Arts turning a blind eye to the prevalent culture of white supremacy that has permeated the commission and its acting body. The problems do not end by silencing and removing those brave enough to articulate them; my faith in Metro Arts and its ability to navigate these troubled waters is shattered.

I call upon the commission and Metro Arts HR to recognize the gross discrepancy between your actions and the agency's own cultural equity statement. We in the arts community do not view these attempts to move forward as anything of the sort. Progress is never won by striking out at those most capable of leading the necessary change.

I believe in the City of Nashville. I believe in the arts and artists who are the creative backbone of a city reckoning with social justice in every corner, every zip code across the county. Choose differently, Metro Arts Commission. Act in support of your most valuable and valued employees, who can see the way forward. Allow leaders such as Christiano to lead us there. It's the right thing to do.

Sincerely,
Rosie Forrest

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ROSIE FORREST *(she/her/hers)*
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
OFFICE: [\(615\) 350-7200](tel:6153507200)
CELL: [\(773\) 412-5828](tel:7734125828)



www.ozartsnashville.org



Myers, Ian (Arts)

From: M. Simone Boyd <msimoneboyd@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 15, 2022 6:17 AM
To: Arts (Arts); Myers, Ian (Arts)
Cc: Taylor, Brandon (Council Member); Blackman, Andrea (Finance); Hurt, Sharon (Council Member); Porterfield, Delishia (Council Member); Mendes, Bob (Council Member)
Subject: Public Comment: Witness Statement - Ms. Janine Christiano (Metro Arts Hearing)

Attention: This email originated from a source external to Metro Government. Please exercise caution when opening any attachments or links from external sources.

Ian,

Please add my witness statement for Janine Christiano to the Public Comments and Public Record for the Metro Arts Commission meeting on Thursday, June 16th.

Thank you,
Simone

----- Forwarded message -----

From: M. Simone Boyd <msimoneboyd@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, May 30, 2022 at 4:12 PM
Subject: Witness Statement - Ms. Janine Christiano (Metro Arts Hearing)
To: Myers, Ian (Arts) <Ian.Myers@nashville.gov>
Cc: Blackman, Andrea (Finance) <andrea.blackman@nashville.gov>, Aaron Doenges <aaron@aaronhokedoenges.com>, Ellen Gilbert <ellen@globaleducationcenter.org>, Taylor, Brandon (Council Member) <brandon.taylor@nashville.gov>, <arts@nashville.gov>, <metro.council@nashville.gov>, Hurt, Sharon (Council Member) <sharon.hurt@nashville.gov>, <joy.styles@nashville.gov>, Erica Ciccarone <eciccarone@nashvillescene.com>, Paige Pflieger <PaigeP@wpln.org>, Christiano, Janine (Arts) <Janine.Christiano@nashville.gov>, O'Connell, Freddie (Council Member) <freddie.oconnell@nashville.gov>, Bob Mendes <Bob.Mendes@nashville.gov>, <jim@schmidtgovsolutions.com>, <will@willcheek.com>, <jane@alviscompany.net>, <ellenangelico@gmail.com>, <dexter.sutton@gmail.com>, <ilovebucy@yahoo.com>, <mmb49@mac.com>, <clay@onepublicsquare.com>, <starrah1979@gmail.com>, <campbellwesttn@gmail.com>, <info@cegallery.co>, <lakishiaharris@gmail.com>, <dianamarcelaperez84@gmail.com>, Niki Coffman <nikicoffman@gmail.com>

Dear Ian,

I'm writing to request the dismissal of the disciplinary actions that Metro Arts is currently seeking against Ms. Janine Christiano. Based on her performance evaluations, Ms. Christiano is an exemplary employee. **I believe the disciplinary actions against her are solely in retaliation for attempting to hold Metro Arts accountable for its stated values of equity.** While I regret that I cannot attend Ms. Christiano's hearing on Tuesday, May 31st at 9:30am, I have shared my concerns regarding Metro Arts with my councilman. And I will be following up with Metro Council members regarding my concerns of:

- Metro Art's pattern of [intimidation and retaliation](#)
- Metro Art's [dual standard of performance for employees of color](#)
- Metro Arts and the Commission's [search for a new Executive Director](#)

As a Black woman artist, I have watched from the sidelines as the allegations and *admitted* harm to staff of color have continued to mount. Yet for two years, **I have personally managed the ineptitude of Van Maravalli, Metro Arts Public Arts Manager, in order to advance the Arthur Avenue Underpass Lighting project.** In August of 2020, we almost missed a grant deadline to apply to the National Endowment for the Arts. Due to Van's failure to gather approval from the Mayor's Office and to submit the required Metro Council resolution, I had a meeting with Van and former executive director Caroline Vincent to address Van's lack of performance and Caroline stepped in to write and submit the grant. (I have email documentation of these facts.) Since [the project was awarded](#), it has failed to make any meaningful progress due to Van's lack of attention to detail, failure to complete tasks and failure to coordinate with the Tennessee Department of Transportation. I spoke with two members on the Committee for Anti-Racism and Equity, but nothing ever came of it. In addition, I worked on the project for almost a year without being compensated. On March 3, 2022, Van promised to expedite payment for my project management work over the previous year. On March 24, 2022, I wrote to follow up regarding the status of my payment. On March 25, 2022, you, Ian, wrote to me confirming that the "the invoice was expedited yesterday once we determined it had not been processed. (I have email documentation of these facts.)

There is a dual standard of performance for employees of color, and Metro Arts has been emboldened to continue this pattern due to the lack of meaningful action by The Metro Arts Commission Chair, Jim Schmidt. In addition, despite a year of turmoil, chaos and lack of accountability, Metro Arts has requested a budget increase. While Metro Nashville Public Schools is being asked to reduce its budget request by \$10-12 Million. Based on Metro Arts pattern of intimidation and retaliation, I fully expect my current and future projects with Metro Arts (and probably, Metro Government) to suffer. But this is a risk that I am willing to take.

I'm Bcc'ing artists and others concerned with issues of equity, and I invite them to share their concerns with you directly.

In Solidarity,
M. Simone Boyd

Myers, Ian (Arts)

From: Banning Bouldin <banning@newdialect.org>
Sent: Wednesday, June 15, 2022 8:13 AM
To: Arts (Arts)
Subject: Public Comment: Arts Commission

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Attention: This email originated from a source external to Metro Government. Please exercise caution when opening any attachments or links from external sources.

For public comment:

I'm writing to support the remaining staff at Metro Arts Commission and to request the immediate removal of Ian Myers as interim Executive Director.

Myer's failure to complete mandatory Title VI training the past three years as Title VI Coordinator and discrimination against Metro Arts staff according to their race, ethnicity, and gender, are allowing the toxic culture of inequity fostered by former Metro Arts leadership to flourish. Ian Myer's is unfit to lead Metro Arts Commission as interim Executive Director.

Thank you,

Banning Bouldin
Artistic Director, New Dialect
She/her
Banning@newdialect.org

--

Banning Bouldin
Founder + Artistic Director
she/her
[New Dialect](http://NewDialect.org)
banning@newdialect.org
(615) 482-2433

May 30, 2022

To whom it may concern:

I have been asked to comment on an exchange between Janine Christiano and one of her co-workers, as reported to me by Ms. Christiano. Specifically, I've been asked whether the question at the heart of the exchange betrays an inappropriate and worrisome level of racial insensitivity. I am happy to aid the inquiry to which this statement will contribute, though the occasion for the inquiry is unfortunate and my thoughts on it are not heartening.

There may be some value in starting with a quick summary of my credentials and of the perspective that I bring to this question. I am a professional philosopher whose scholarly work most often involves the study of race and racism. I am one of the founding editors of the scholarly journal, *Critical Philosophy of Race*. My book, *Race: A Philosophical Introduction*, is one of the core texts in this field. (It has gone through three editions and has been translated into Korean, Arabic, and Turkish.) And I have developed a course on the philosophy of race and racism for Vanderbilt University and will teach a graduate-level version of the course in the fall.

If the exchange that Ms. Christiano reports happens as she says it did (I have no reason to think otherwise), then it appears very clearly to involve troubling patterns of invidious racial reasoning that scholars of race and racism have been documenting for decades. Ms. Christiano says that a co-worker, frustrated by the way two African-American applicants for Metro Arts funding had interacted with her office, asked her the following: "Is it part of Black culture not to follow the rules?" (Ms. Christiano reported this to other parties who appear to remember her precise wording somewhat differently, but the differences leave the basic import of the question unchanged.)

This question – which seems more like an accusation than a request for information – fits at least two of the worrisome patterns that define invidious racial reasoning.

First, it reduces a social problem – in this case, an organizational workflow problem – to the failures of a problem human type. Instead of noting the various considerations that could explain the suboptimal paths the applications took, the questioner leapt to the conclusion that something was wrong with the applicants. The questioner then leapt to the further conclusion that this something had to do with their blackness. This is a familiar chain of reasoning, and one that has caused no end of difficulty in policy debates around drug use, poverty alleviation, crime prevention, and much more.

The second pattern has to do with the familiar approach the questioner seems to take to the ostensible problem of blackness. Accusing someone of being unable or unwilling to follow rules, especially in official contexts involving governmental functions, is very close to accusing them of criminality. The assumption that blackness is bound up with criminality has been a basic feature of anti-black racism since at least the end of the civil war (in its most familiar forms, anyway; other forms are even older). The prevalence of implicit biases based on this assumption could help explain the speed with which the questioner leapt from noting a problem to worrying about problem *people*.

One could say a great deal more about the sensibility that seems to animate Ms. Christiano's interlocutor in their exchange. But in the interest of brevity, I'll conclude by noting just that our government exists to serve the needs of its citizens, and that it cannot do this when its officials treat the citizens themselves as problems in accordance with age-old racist scripts.

Sincerely,
Paul C. Taylor

Ian Myers, Acting ED
Metro Arts: Nashville Office of Arts + Culture
Metro Southeast Campus
1417 Murfreesboro Pike
Nashville, TN 37217

Shannon Hall
Metro Nashville Government
Director, Human Resources

Dr. Robyn Henderson-Espinoza, PhD
1481 Doubletree Ln
Nashville, TN 37217
robyn@iroybyn.com
312-823-6626

29 May 2022

Dear Ian Myers, Shannon Hall, and Metro Nashville Government:

I am writing to you out of deep personal and professional concern that punitive action has been taken against Janine Christiano. As a professor of ethics, someone of Mexican heritage and who identifies as Latinx, and a person committed to helping my Nashville community be and become a place where every person thrives and flourishes, I write with deep conviction that the kinds of punitive complaints lodged by a person of Latinx / Hispanic descent and subsequent action that has been executed and deployed against Janine Christiano is what some might refer to as ‘reverse racism.’

Racism is a social construct that operates as a malevolent system of dominance that privileges white bodied people over and against everyone else. It is important to note that we are all swimming in the waters of white supremacy and each and every one of us are conscripted into the politics of white supremacy. Therefore, we often internalize policies and practices that harm ourselves and each other without knowing, also without embodied awareness.

As a person of Latinx heritage and Hispanic descent, I had to address the ways in which I was and still am conscripted into the body politic of white supremacy. Each and every institution in this country and likely around the globe is complicit in white supremacy, including the Metro Nashville Government. That is not an indictment, but a reality that with which we are all dealing and navigating. Unfortunately, most often, the impact of these harmful systems comes down hardest on women and femmes of color. A person of Latinx heritage or Hispanic descent can still subscribe to white supremacist politics. I believe that is the case in this complaint, which was lodged against Janine Christiano.

It is important to note that in almost every system women of color are implicitly expected to hold everything together and manage everyones emotional needs. When a woman of color refuses to be an “emotional mammy,” they are often punished. When a woman of color establishes a boundary for her own mental health and professional well-being, she is often punished and scapegoated, as is the case here with the complaint lodged against Janine Christiano.

In my professional capacity as an ethicist and professor, it is important for me to honor everyone's agency and to advocate for a relationality that is composed of a trauma-informed, harm-reduction, consent-based approach. In other words, this is an invitation to a relationship that embodies a power differential that is framed by the work of boundaries. As a manager, Janine Christiano, embodies that kind of orientation with everyone, including the community. Janine Christiano honors everyone's agency and stewards a relationality composed of important boundaries; she is trauma-informed, invites consent, and continues to invite people to be their best self.

Punishing Janine Christiano, a woman of color, for erecting boundaries in a collegial setting with another person of color is wrong in my professional opinion. Not only does it violate the agency of Janine Christiano, but it reinforces white supremacist politics. Furthermore, the ethics of boundary making ensure functional healthy relationships so that power doesn't erode the relationship in harmful ways. Yet, the punitive action resulting from this complaint accelerates the politics of white supremacy and the logic of white supremacist institutions.

I can no longer stand by and remain silent as a Latinx resident of Nashville, TN and allow women of color and in this instance, Janine Christiano, to be harmed by the Metro Nashville Government. I ask that you reinstate Janine Christiano to her position without delay. I also request that you look closely at the policies and practices that undergird the Metro Nashville Government. The current policies and practices are encumbered and entangled with the logic of white supremacy, and as a result the Metro Nashville Government will continue to escalate harm accelerated against the most marginalized, and especially women of color.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robyn Henderson-Espinoza". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Dr. Robyn Henderson-Espinoza, PhD
Visiting Professor, Duke Divinity School
Metro Nashville Resident

Myers, Ian (Arts)

From: Robyn Henderson-Espinoza <robyn@irobyn.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 15, 2022 8:38 AM
To: Arts (Arts)
Cc: Alfaro Frazier, Natalie (Arts)
Subject: Public Comment

Attention: This email originated from a source external to Metro Government. Please exercise caution when opening any attachments or links from external sources.

To Whom it May Concern: I am deeply distressed at the sudden termination of Ms. Janine Christiano. I believe any sort of reaction to non-white employees of Metro Nashville they results in undue process and termination on the basis of “reverse racism” is, in fact, retaliation for establishing healthy boundaries in the workplace.

The moral framework used to justify the sudden termination of Ms. Janine Christiano is, I believe, rooted in a form of supremacy culture that is using the logic of whiteness to dispose of anyone who questions the system.

I am unhappy and disappointed at Metro Nashville’s history of excising and disposing of any non-white employee by & through retaliation.

Saludos,
-Dr. Robyn Henderson-Espinoza.



Dear Metro Arts Commissioners,

On May 27th, the Friday before Labor Day weekend, after wrapping up an organizers' meeting for the REAL (Racial Equity in Arts Leadership) program at around 11 am, I was walking into team unity focused DEI session, when Ian Myers stopped me and said he needed to speak to me. He then handed me a letter dated May 26th that listed charges I would be facing at disciplinary hearing set for 9:30am the Tuesday after Labor Day, giving me basically half a business day to prepare. Inside my car, in the parking lot outside of the Metro Office Building, as I was scrambling to contact my union rep and going down the list of Tennessee employment attorneys, I realized I had several meetings I needed to update or cancel and should set an out of office message alerting people of my leave. When I logged on to do that I found out I was already shut out of my email, calendar, and all shared staff communication channels. Over the past couple of weeks, several people have tried to contact me unsuccessfully through my work email and phone including partners from the Mayor's Office, Tennessee Arts Commission, grant and funding contacts, community members, and contract employees. None of these people were aware of my situation and were left wondering about our shared work.

I was stunned and heartbroken when I learned I was "terminated effective immediately" on Thursday, June 9th. Throughout my entire time at Metro Arts, my goal has been to work with my colleagues, the community, and the Arts Commissioners to uphold Metro Arts' stated beliefs on equity and restorative practices through our grants practices, programming, and also internally within the organization. When I noticed instances and patterns of behavior that went against our stated values, I felt I needed to bring them up. I knew that it was my responsibility (especially as a person who staffed the Committee for Antiracism and Equity and the manager who oversaw the equity programs at that time). I thought that because "We commit to exposing and unraveling [inequities] through our own leadership, practices, and policies." and we "Commit to frequent and on-going, agency-wide honest conversations about race," it was necessary to address the instances when leadership acted in ways that were harmful and unfair to people of color on staff and in the community. It has been hard and emotionally draining experience with absolutely no personal benefit to me, but I felt compelled that speaking out in support of my former colleagues and bringing attention to unfair practices leadership engaged in was the right thing to do. Even now I'm holding on to hope that this can be resolved with an equity lens and through restorative practices, which is why I am planning on filing an appeal against the decision.

Throughout this Metro Human Resources and the Department Head have held all of the power in the process. Hours long interviews and meetings, scheduled directly after other meetings, are added to my schedule without prior notice. My words and actions have been twisted and distorted. No one who works on my team and no one in the community I work with was interviewed, even though I gave HR suggestions. Assumptions are presented as facts by the Fact Finders. Atilio Murga has now filed two complaints against women of color who facilitated

racial equity work, but that fact, and the leadership and environment that empowered him to do that, are not questioned. Comments submitted that refute claims HR makes are disregarded. What is included, and not included, in the Fact Finders reports does not provide a complete picture, these editorial choices only serve to support the narrative Metro HR and Metro Arts leadership have decided to promote. Throughout the time, Metro HR Fact Finders present themselves, as independent and unbiased (a claim that both the Interim Director and Commission Chair also make), this is not true.

I recognized that my decision to file a Metro HR complaint against Metro Arts' leadership would probably not be successful or beneficial to me, since at the end of the day the Department Head (Executive Director) makes the final decision, but it was a risk I was willing to take because of my values and the stated values of the agency. During the disciplinary process, Ian has basically served as the prosecutor, jury, and judge. He made the decision to write the charge letter, served on the panel that made recommendations during my disciplinary hearing and made the final decision to terminate me. I believe my termination is retaliation. I am not sure how my removal creates a safer, more equitable, more productive environment for staff.

When I first heard about Atilio's complaint in April, months after he had filed it in February, I asked for a chance to speak with him and resolve any hurt feelings and misunderstandings there might be through a restorative circle proces, but was denied and reprimanded by Metro HR for even asking for that. I am sorry that in my attempt to support my complaint against agency leadership, Atilio felt harmed. It was not my intention. Throughout this process, when I have unintentionally made mistakes, I've done my best to be accountable and make amends. My goal was always to model the outlook and actions needed for DEI work to be impactful and effective. However, all of my attempts to correct my mistakes have been used against me to attack my character.

I do not believe that the agency will heal unless I am reinstated and staff has the conversations, and does the work needed, to truly and deeply work through these issues. I believe my current colleagues and future Metro Arts staff may be afraid and unwilling to speak out and question any unfair or harmful practices within the agency, or implemented by the agency in the community as a result of the way the agency has treated me. If staff feel unwilling to discuss or question potentially inequitable practices, this will certainly have negative consequences for all of Nashville, especially artists and creatives of color in the community.

Thank you,

Janine Christiano

Myers, Ian (Arts)

From: Alex Wong <alex@highceilingsmusic.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 15, 2022 8:51 AM
To: Arts (Arts)
Subject: public statement from Alex Wong re: Janine Christiano

Attention: This email originated from a source external to Metro Government. Please exercise caution when opening any attachments or links from external sources.

Dear Metro Arts,

I'm writing to voice my strong support for Janine Christiano in this time of her unjust termination, and to voice my strong condemnation of the discriminatory practices demonstrated by Metro Arts that led to Ms Christiano's initial complaints, the retaliatory process by which they conducted their investigation, and their unconscionable decision to fire Ms Christiano. I demand that Metro Arts reinstate Ms Christiano to her position and this disciplinary action is expunged from her record, and remove interim director Ian Myers and commission chair Jim Schmidt from their positions.

I am a professional artist and member of the Nashville arts community which Metro Arts serves. I volunteered to participate in your Metro Arts REAL program, where I met Ms. Christiano for the first time. She led the cohort with sensitivity, compassion, and an open mind and ear, observations that directly contradict the accusations leveled against her by Ian Myers. It is deeply unsettling to the public why Mr. Myers, one of the persons named in the complaints, was allowed to sit on Ms Christiano's disciplinary panel to determine her fate.

As BIPOC members of Nashville our voices are often overlooked, dismissed and unaddressed by the city, where the white power structures often refuse to hear when we call out inequities in order to protect their ego and the status quo. Sadly Ms Christiano's termination seems to be one more example in a long line of incidents where BIPOC members have been punished for calling out discrimination.

I can tell you from eight years of experience that Nashville has a LONG way to go on the road to creating an equitable environment for its BIPOC community members, specifically in the arts. Racial equity is a stated mission of Metro Arts and Ms Christiano was vital to that work. If Metro arts refuses to remedy their vindictive actions against Ms Christiano, they must immediately take down their demonstrably false statement of equity displayed on their public facing website.

Sincerely,

Alex Wong

June 15, 2022

Dear Metro Arts Commissioners,

I am writing you today to ask you to make one, if not two, motions at the June 16 Commission Meeting:

1. Move to immediately remove Ian Myers as Interim Executive Director
2. Move to remove Jim Schmidt as Commission Chair.

Despite being Metro Arts' Title VI coordinator, Interim E.D. Myers has not completed the Metro Government's Title VI training any of the past three years (according to the 2021 Title VI report [linked here](#)), one of only three (3) out of twenty-one (21) departments. In addition to Title VI, he may be in violation of Title VII for both gender discrimination (he and Metro HR only believed discrimination complaints by a male employee) and whistleblower retaliation for terminating Janine Christiano's employment.

I imagine the latter motion will be more difficult to convince two-thirds of the Commission, especially as I understand that Mr. Schmidt's term as Chair will end later this Fall. I have also now heard from more than one commissioner that vouch for Chair Schmidt's intention in listening to the community, and I do indeed trust these commissioners to be telling the truth as they see it. My concern however is what appears to be Chair Schmidt's blanket support of both Caroline Vincent and Ian Myers, based on his multiple responses to (and often a lack of desire to publicly engage with) public comments, individual letters, and public press.

While the Metro Arts Commission is not legally responsible for the well-being of Metro Arts staff, it is indirectly responsible for the entire department by way of the Executive Director role. I know you understand this and do not treat that responsibility lightly, and I understand that you are not legally able to have a direct impact on individual employees despite your desire to see that they are successful in their work. However it has been hard to watch as Chair Schmidt has been more concerned with the public perception (including voicing his disappointment that the Press was involved), than with the actual concerns of the department staff and the arts community. If you can't get help inside your own house, you have to leave the house.

Attached you will find the petition with over 180 signatures asking for the above actions.

I also look forward to hearing how the six action items from the February 3 Commission Meeting are being implemented:

- Hiring an additional, outside consultant experienced in the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) field to work with agency staff in collaboration with the efforts already underway
- Continuing work with Metro HR equity personnel and with Ms. Andrea Blackman, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Office for Metro, to lead internal conversations with staff
- Reviewing and recommending additional management and leadership training for all management-level employees
- Conducting a specific review, with Metro HR, of the use of Metro's standard Performance Improvement Plans (PIPs) to ensure they are utilized appropriately, and involving the Commission's Committee for Antiracism and Equity (CARE) in this process
- Utilizing the agency's upcoming strategic planning process to better define our racial equity and antiracism work to ensure community needs are being met
- ***Review the progress on these action items in three months' time***

Sincerely,

Alan Fey, district 17 resident
arts administrator (of multiple MA grant recipients)
Managing Director, ALIAS Chamber Ensemble
Operations Manager, Nashville Philharmonic Orchestra
Executive Director, Make Music Nashville

Save Metro Arts

To: Metro Arts Commission

Metro Arts leadership has failed at following its own cultural equity statement by creating a toxic workplace for staff and discriminating against women of color.

We are calling on the Metro Arts Commission

- to remove Interim Exec. Dir. Ian Myers from his position, and
- to vote to remove Chair Jim Schmidt from his office on the Commission.

If the Commission is unable to hold its own leadership accountable for their actions in perpetuating systemic inequity, Metro Arts must IMMEDIATELY remove the Cultural Equity statement from its website and all related materials.

Why is this important?

Metro Arts was Nashville's first gov't dept. to have a cultural equity statement written to guide its work. It is thorough, and yet Commission and Staff leadership have failed at following the statement for its own staff, including that Metro Arts will "commit to exposing and unraveling [inequity] through our own leadership, practices and policies," and that Metro Arts will specifically "Commit to frequent and on-going, agency-wide honest conversations about race, class, age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age and income status."

Multiple allegations of intimidation and discrimination have been made against former leadership as well as current Interim ED Ian Myers.

In the meantime, Mr. Myers has retaliated against a current employee for filing a complaint about this discrimination by threatening her with termination using the "official channel" of a disciplinary hearing.

Commission Chair Jim Schmidt has provided unwavering support of former ED Vincent and current Interim ED Myers, never questioning their roles in these allegations and elevating Myers to ED while being named in multiple complaints.

This discrimination only highlights the hypocrisy of the Metro Arts Commission requiring cultural equity statements and work from grant recipients (which is important) when they don't hold their own leadership accountable for their treatment of their staff and the artists they fund.

The Arts Commission has fully lost the trust of the arts community. It is hard to believe they can carry out the important work of - as the mission statement says - "ensuring that ALL Nashvillians have access to a creative life," when that does not even apply to Metro Arts Staff.

We will deliver the signatures to the Metro Arts Commission meeting on June 16, 12:00

Alan	Fey	37210
M. Simone	Boyd	37208
Chrissy	Washburn	37215
Jennifer	Wang	37206
Jennifer	Ancevski	37203

Alayna	Anderson	37209
Saran	Thompson	37208
Eleanor	Fleming	37064
Lea	Williams	37076
KT	Ewing	37218
Lacey	Wilson	12210
Austin	Wille	37207
Catie	Thomas	37128
Anne Malin	Ringwalt	37216
emily b.	khan	37216
Maren	Bishop	37115
Pauletta	Geeter	37115
Carleen	Sabusap	37203
Lauren	Sublett	37209
D	B	37203
Safara	Parrott	37211
Rachel	Privett	37013
Marie-Reine	Velez	90012
CJ	Ochoco	37013
Jan	Ramos	37013
Arthur	Wong	90012
Blair	Prescott	37211
Rae	Rae Posch	37212
Zach	Douglas	37211
Toby	Deaver	37216
Melissa	Cherry	37207
Cassie	Jackson	37209
Kelly	Chieng	37208
Lauren	Scarborough	37208
Monica	Shriver	37206
Tony	Youngblood	37203
Ingrid	McIntyre	37211
Vonda	McDaniel	37218
Natalie	Cox	37206
Marguerite	Beane	37214
Ry	Evans	37115
Ian	Castro	37211
Samantha	Morgan-Curtis	37221
Allen	Dennis	37204
Valerian	Riddle	37013
Maya	Roman	37214
Brenda	Waybrant	37215
Leah	Sherry	37216
April	Kosakoff	37209
Abigail	York	37115
Christina	Loucks	37215
Riley	Noonan	37206

Ellen	Thornton	90804
Sara	Wigal	37206
Marsha	Williams	37189
Danielle	Myers	37128
Raymond	Tate	37204
Elisabeth	Schechter	37215
Janelle	W	37221
Mbaye	Seck	37013
Awa	Sane	37167
Christina	O'Connell	90808
Dara	Tucker	07103
Meghan	ODell	90803
Meghan	Calahan	97233
Martha	Guiditta	90242
Amber	Rose	37115
Gracie	Rule	37212
Cheryl	Mitchell-Haynes	37013
Lanie	Gannon	37209
Donna	Woodley	37208
Jessica	Rich	37013
Emmanuel	Echem	37013
Jumoke	Carr	37207
Louis	Vargas	37013
Corey	Bean	37211
Jill	Palm	37209
Jessica	Powell	37214
Emily	Habeck	2138
Rebekah	Childers	37138
Engel	Ellis	30038
Hayatt	Adem	37013
Mac	McFadden	37214
Willow	Scrivner	37212-4327
Antonia	Schatte	37215
Courtney	Leggett	37208
Gregor	Taylor	37207
Joyce	Torres	37013
Dana	Culver	90803
Rich	Karg	37211
Saya	Santaquilani	37311
Elizabeth	Hengen	37211
Kaitlin	Costello	37216
Bridget	Campos	90803
Rena	H.	90035
Jonathan	Williamson	37208
Chris	S	37206
Madeline	Guiditta	90242
Laurel	Fisher	37214

Angela	Dillon	37211
Christine	Farwell	37211
Daina	Storey	37204
Allison	Plattsmier	37211
Stephanie	Pruitt-Gaines	37214
Drew	Lamb	37208
Valeria	Matlock	37212
Ashley	Street	37209
Milah	Lockett	37218
Kellie	MacDougall	37216
Molly	Meinbresse	37207
Amina	Trotter-Lockett	37206
Kaylah	Lockett	37218
Diana	Falchuk	98144
Kate	Roseglass	37115
Jasmine	Lucas	37216
Alex	Wong	37207
Emma	Supica	37206-1116
Timothy	Hughes	37115
Bridget	Caldwell	37216
Alyson	Starks	37072
Lee	Myers	37204
Andrew	Krinks	37208
Courtney	Crawford	37355
Erica	Cullum	37209
Barbara	Gunn Laetey	37076
India	Pungarcher	37207
Maxine	Spencer	37203
Anna	Carella	37207
Clare	Fernandez	37013
Melanie	Tomlyn	37209
Gillian	Gualtieri	37212
Erin	Boddy	37206
Suzi	Gonzales	93428
Lauren	Bufferd	37209
Wilna	Taylor	37215
Amber	McCullough	37064
Alexia	Altshule	91723
Abigail	Inglis	37013
Daniel	Jones	37207
Hannah	Jones	55407
Paige	A	37205
Brandy	Blackwell	78660
Shea	Madison	10030
McKinley	Merritt	37916
MandA	Hackney	37115-2715
Celine	Thackston	37217

Allison	Inman	37212
Rose	Robertson	37204
Kathryn	Bennett	37205
Andrés	Bustamante	37015
Rosie	Forrest	37207
Beth	Gudis	37220
Arnika	Carter	38305
Kent	Lindsey	37128
Arianella	Myers	37128
Laura	Walker	37076
David	Walker	37218
Dr. Robyn	Henderson-Espinoza	37217
Aaron	Roston	37203
Elizabeth	Meadows	37203
Erin	Bloom	37207
Eileen	Sanderson	37204
Joseph	Gutierrez	37207
Kristen	Parke	37209
Julie	Dunlap	37072
Chloe	Little	33837
Layla	Haynor	37174
Audrey	Bragg	38401
Kyle	Hanners	38401
Olivia	Lee	11360
Alex	Rodabaugh	11225
Pratik	Dash	37217
Terry	Vo	37210
Lauren	Pearce	4538
Diana	King	37206
Omari	Byrd	37208
Margaret	Wilson	37216-2219
Frances	Brent	37216
Abby	Siegel Hyman	37138
Sarah	Gorman	37207-5731
Leah	Haynor	78665
Daisy	Okoye	22201
Spencer	Mullins	37221

Myers, Ian (Arts)

From: Leah Sherry <leahrenaesherry@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 15, 2022 8:58 AM
To: Arts (Arts)
Subject: Public Comment: Arts Commission

Attention: This email originated from a source external to Metro Government. Please exercise caution when opening any attachments or links from external sources.

Good morning,

I am writing as a concerned arts leader, artist, and resident who believes racial equity practices should be held to the highest standards - especially in government agencies which represent and make decisions that impact our diverse community.

Reading through the details of what led to the termination of Janine Christiano are deeply concerning. Working with Janine in several capacities, including the Racial Equity Arts Leadership program through Metro Arts - it is disappointing to learn that the racial equity education we were receiving and working to implement as leaders in our community were not being practiced by our very own Metro Arts.

Through this program and other projects I have worked on with Janine for years, it was shocking to read descriptors of the "intimidating" work culture she created. Janine has had nothing but respect from the other arts leaders and artists in our network, and I have seen her show up for our community countless times. She is knowledgeable about a great deal of subject matter, one of those being racial justice, and as a woman of color she is incredibly courageous to speak her truths and to do her job of calling out inequities when she sees them.

The contrast of Janine going above and beyond to do her job in the name of equity makes the fact that Ian Myers has been the Title VI coordinator for years and has not even taken time to complete the training himself the last 3 years even more infuriating. The dangerous imbalance of power and privilege at play is clear.

In order to live up to their DEI statements, Metro Arts should acknowledge that the optics of this situation that community members like me are seeing are based in unjust and racist actions. In an attempt to try to more deeply understand, reading through the details of the case and the fact finder reports, it unfortunately made it even more clear that this is indeed what is happening. Metro Arts can and should do better.

Metro Arts has an opportunity to be listeners and learners right now. They have an opportunity to be allies and change the narrative that has been going on for far too long and has harmed not just Janine and other staff at Metro of color, but community members and artists who are seeing how the gatekeepers make decisions that result in punishing marginalized people who speak up.

I would like to request the following actions be taken:

- Move to immediately remove Ian Myers as Interim Executive Director
- Move to remove Jim Schmidt as Commission Chair.

I look forward to continuing working alongside Metro Arts as a fellow listener and learner in our arts ecosystem. As a non-profit leader, we are similar in that our jobs are to listen to our community and serve them. It requires us giving up space and privileges we have become used to, and we are all in the positions we are in because we are absolutely capable of doing this work.

Thank you.

Leah Sherry

Myers, Ian (Arts)

From: Celine Thackston <celine.thackston@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 15, 2022 9:53 AM
To: Arts (Arts); Bradford, Russ (Council Member)
Subject: Public Comment: Arts Commission

Attention: This email originated from a source external to Metro Government. Please exercise caution when opening any attachments or links from external sources.

To the Arts Commission:

My name is Celine Thackston. I am the Founder/Artistic Director for chatterbird, Executive Director of the Hello in There Foundation, and a resident of District 13. Russ Bradford is my Council Member.

I am writing in support of Janine Christiano and other women - Olusola Tribble, Lauren Fitzgerald, and Laurel Fisher - who have come forward to name the toxic working environment they have endured at Metro Arts. It is incredibly disappointing that an organization which has done so much externally to promote equity and anti-racist practices among its grantees and the arts community would be so terrible at building a safe workplace where women (particularly BIPOC women) felt safe in naming harmful practices and speaking up for themselves.

With the internal promotion of a white man to be Interim ED of an organization where he witnessed blatant mismanagement and destructive, racist practices taking place - it seems impossible and unfair that he would be able to place *anyone* on administrative leave or recommend termination when it relates to whistleblowing around allegations that resulted in his promotion to the role. As a grantee of Metro Arts, I have worked with Janine since she started in her role and she has always been responsive and helpful. While I am obviously not privy to the day-to-day working environment at Metro Arts, this action against Janine appears to be retaliatory and serves to silence others from speaking up about their experiences or the harm that they witness.

The actions to date of Metro Arts make it impossible for me to believe that they are acting in good faith when it comes to promoting racial equity and inclusion. They continue to fail the arts community and Nashville as a whole. I am asking the Commission for the following:

- 1) To launch a true external investigation into the dynamics of Metro Arts, rather than the internal fact finding that has happened to date;
- 2) To immediately demote Ian Myers in his role of Interim ED until an external investigation is complete;
- 3) To reinstate Janine Christiano in her role until external investigation is complete.

Thank you. The arts community appreciates your thoughtful consideration of this matter.

Celine Thackston

15 June 2022

Metro Arts: Nashville Office of Arts + Culture
1417 Murfreesboro Pike
Nashville, TN 37217

Dear Metro Arts Commissioners,

API Middle Tennessee recognizes the important work Metro Arts has done in advancing racial equity in Nashville, but we are submitting this comment as we believe that the organization has failed to live up to its own commitment to equity and must acknowledge the racial harm that has been done.

As an organization representing the Asian and Pacific Islander community, we know that the places we work continue to be a place of hate and discrimination for our community. In a survey we did last year, we found that over 60% of respondents did not feel welcomed or supported in their racial identity at work. In order to not perpetuate this harm, we ask that Metro Arts listen to the appeals of other community organizations advancing equity and commit to the following:

- The immediate reinstatement of Janine Christiano and a complete dismissal of charges from her personnel file.
- Recommit to the Metro Arts Cultural Equity Statement by all Arts Commissioners and Metro Arts staff OR a removal of the Equity Statement from the Metro Arts website.

These are just the first few steps to beginning the ongoing restorative work necessary to heal and restore community trust. API Middle Tennessee is open to being a part of this process as we collectively work towards making this a more just and welcoming city.

Sincerely,

Joseph Gutierrez
Executive Director



73 White Bridge Road
Suite 103-328
Nashville, TN 37205