

BRITTNEY SESSOMS

Charlotte & Pickens

2025 Global Fellow



BIG BOLD IDEA

Revitalize food sovereignty in Black communities in Memphis by reclaiming African American agricultural traditions, foodways, and cultural practices.

ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

Charlotte & Pickens preserves and revitalizes African American agricultural traditions and foodways through intergenerational knowledge transfer. By offering skill-building workshops, community markets, cultural gatherings, and cultural documentation, Charlotte & Pickens reduces food insecurity while building sovereignty in the food system. It creates immersive, educational, and entertaining experiences through urban farming initiatives, traditional textile arts, herbal medicine practices, and cultural storytelling that reconnect Black communities to the land, kitchen, porch, table, and one another. It utilizes both cultural wisdom and practical skills to cultivate a nurturing movement of growers, cooks, artisans, storytellers, and entrepreneurs. It sustains Black Southern cultural heritage while creating pathways to health and economic well-being.

PERSONAL BIO

Brittney Shelby Sessoms is founder and executive director of Charlotte & Pickens. Raised in Memphis, Brittney developed a deep connection to African American foodways and agricultural practices through her grandparents, father, and wider family who maintained these traditions despite societal pressure. This upbringing instilled a commitment to cultural preservation as both resistance and celebration. Beginning in 2017, recognizing the urgent need to document fading traditions before they disappeared, Brittney started her cultural preservation work. Brittney actively advocates to reduce food apartheid in underserved communities through her work, embodying her signature philosophy of growing our own food, folks, faith, and fortunes. Her innovative gathering series, KEEP, and The Black Farmers Market, which highlights Black growers and makers, have been recognized for their effectiveness in cultural preservation. Her work has been featured in Tri-State Defender, Memphis Voyager, High Ground Memphis, ABC24 News, Bluff City Life, and WREG Live at 9. She is a Tennessee State University New Farmer Academy alumna, a 2024 VOQAL Fellow, and a Memphis Area Master Gardener-in-training.

Organization/Fellow Location

Memphis, United States

Impact Location

United States

Organization Structure

Hybrid