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## **Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation Taps Veteran Executive Shadawn Smith to Lead Billie Holiday Theatre and Arts & Culture Programming Amid Major Campus Expansion**

*Smith brings over 20 years of experience fostering inclusion in cultural and political spaces underrepresented by Black and brown communities, including senior roles at major establishments like The Metropolitan Museum of Art and NYC Department of City Planning*



**Brooklyn, NY (May 9, 2023)** – [Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation](#) (Restoration), the nation’s first community-economic development corporation, today announced it has selected Shadawn Smith as its next Executive Vice President for Arts & Culture and Executive Director of [The Billie Holiday Theatre](#) (The Billie). In this role, Smith will oversee all arts and cultural initiatives and activities on Restoration’s campus as well as helming the iconic Billie Holiday Theatre, which was recently awarded the National Medal of the Arts by President Biden.

A natural communicator and accomplished professional, Smith has spent the majority of her 20-year career in government affairs roles that touch upon her love for arts and culture, gravitating towards work that intersects with community, arts, and economic development, which is why this role means so much to her. She has dedicated her personal life to service in uplifting the African diasporic communities in NYC. Prior to joining Restoration, Shadawn held senior roles at NYC & Company, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC Council and the NYC Department of City Planning.

“I am humbled by this opportunity to join Restoration and offer a new vision for artistic and cultural expression in the Central Brooklyn community. Anchored by the Billie Holiday Theatre, Restoration’s cultural initiatives function as an important introduction to the world of arts for local community members, delivering world-class performances and exhibitions right in the heart of Bed-Stuy. As we scale our offerings into Brooklyn’s premier performing and cultural arts center, I am eager to further deepen our ties to the community and to uplift the nation’s next generation of Black talent,” said **Shadawn Smith, incoming EVP for Arts & Culture at Restoration.**

As Executive Vice President for Arts & Culture, Smith will oversee the day-to-day administrative and operational management of all arts activities on Restoration Campus, as well as work in partnership with senior leadership to create and execute a comprehensive cultural plan that advances the work of the institution and leads it through its next chapter of growth.

Smith will also oversee The Billie Holiday Theatre's programs including Youth Arts Academy, Skylight Gallery, Black Arts Institute, as well as subsequent events held on Restoration Plaza.

Smith will play a crucial role in advancing Restoration’s plans to reimagine its longtime Fulton Street headquarters into [Restoration Innovation Campus](#). The 800,000 square foot mixed-use hub will center a completely updated Billie Holiday Theatre with upwards of 70,000 square feet of studio, educational and programmatic space for the arts. With Innovation Campus, Restoration plans to build the most comprehensive, visionary space for African American artists, audiences and students in the country.

“Shadawn is a talented cultural leader and experienced community organizer with the requisite skills to usher in the next chapter of Restoration’s cultural offerings,” said **Blondel Pinnock, President & CEO of Restoration.** “A proven bridge-builder, Shadawn’s breadth of experience engaging with communities across New York City will ensure that we continue to deliver the thought-provoking and culturally representative experiences our community wants to see. I look forward to working closely with Shadawn to deliver the cultural resources Central Brooklyn deserves.”

“Shadawn is precisely the leader The Billie requires amid these exciting times of growth and expansion. Her strategic expertise and deep relationships across New York’s political and cultural landscapes will help ensure our beloved institution is well-resourced to continue reaching the families we have served for generations,” said **Toni Yuille Williams, Chair, The Billie Holiday Theatre Board.** “I am eager to partner with Shadawn to continue growing our cultural offerings and I am excited to see how The Billie will flourish under her leadership”

Smith will officially assume her new role on June 1, 2023. Soon after, she will kick off a listening tour to better understand what the Central Brooklyn arts community would like to see in Restoration’s cultural programming. In the coming months, Restoration will unveil the details of its cultural plan and the exciting opportunities the community can expect to see when the Innovation Campus is completed.

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### **About Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation**

Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation is the nation's first community development corporation. Created in 1967 through grassroots activism and the bipartisan support of Senators Robert F. Kennedy and Jacob Javits, Restoration serves more than 60,000 annually as an advocate, coalition-builder, and direct service provider with a focus on the predominantly minority and low-income communities of Central Brooklyn. Restoration's mission is to relentlessly pursue strategies to close gaps in family and community wealth to ensure all families in Central Brooklyn are prosperous and healthy.

### **About The Billie Holiday Theatre**

The Billie Holiday Theatre is the artistic anchor to the largest African American community in the nation—Central Brooklyn and one of the last remaining theaters forged in the aesthetic and sociocultural kiln of America's Civil Rights/Black Arts Movements. It is a recipient of the National Medal of Arts and AUDELCO and Obie awards. Founded in May 1972, The Billie Holiday Theatre is a beacon for world class art rooted in racial justice in the heart of Bed-Stuy: producing, presenting, and commissioning new and classic works and festivals in theater, dance, music, visual arts, and film; providing artistic and institutional residencies; and serving ages 3 to 103 with educational programming. For bold and daring artists and audiences from around the corner and around the world who look to The Billie as a rigorous artistic space that tackles racial injustices, presents new and unapologetic voices, and imagines a world where all people can flourish...welcome home.

### **CONTACT:**

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