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**THE PUBLIC THEATER
ANNOUNCES
ALEXA SMITH AS
SENIOR DIRECTOR OF**

**ANTI-RACISM, EQUITY, AND BELONGING**

 **Smith’s Appointment Builds Upon the Nonprofit Theater’s
Anti-Racism and Cultural Transformation Plan**

January 19, 2023 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) announced today that **Alexa Smith** has been named The Public’s Senior Director of Anti-Racism, Equity, and Belonging, a newly created position, following a nationwide search. Smith, who joins The Public on March 6, 2023, will report to and work directly with the Executive and Artistic Directors, serving as a leading voice and advocate for The Public’s commitments to equity within and outside of the organization. The creation of this role builds upon The Public’s commitment to being an anti-racist and equitable institution and is a key component of the nonprofit theater’s Anti-Racism and Cultural Transformation Plan created in 2021, which Smith will now oversee.

Smith most recently served as the Associate Vice President for Strategic Innovation and Special Initiatives at Manhattan School of Music (MSM), where she managed the creation of and led the school’s Cultural Inclusion Initiative which fosters diversity, equity, and inclusive practices throughout the school. Her appointment at The Public follows an eight-month search led by Axis Talent Partners, an agency with deep knowledge of EDI work in the arts and not-for-profit sectors. The search process engaged Public Theater staff members from across the organization at all levels, as well as Public Theater Board members.

“We are delighted to have Alexa Smith joining our team at The Public in this pivotal role. Creating this new position has always been an integral component of our organization-wide Cultural Transformation Plan, and I’m thrilled to have Alexa on our team to amplify and contribute to this work,” said Public Theater Executive Director **Patrick Willingham**. “From her deep engagement in the arts to her wealth of experience fostering inclusive and equitable practices, her values greatly align with The Public’s and our vision for the future. We know she will be an invaluable member of our senior leadership team as we continue to build an equity-centered culture.”

The Public has long operated on the principles that theater is an essential cultural force and that art and culture belong to everyone. In creating the Anti-Racism and Cultural Transformation Plan, the organization reaffirmed its dedication to being guided by a plan that is built on impactful commitments, goals, and the actions needed to achieve them. The Senior Director of Anti-Racism, Equity, and Belonging will be instrumental in implementing the organization’s plan, fostering an environment where all voices can be heard, and driving greater transparency and accountability standards across the organization. Learn more about The Public’s Cultural Transformation Plan [here](https://publictheater.org/news-items/anti-racism--cultural-transformation-plan/anti-racism--cultural-transformation-plan/).

“I have always felt a sense of belonging while in the audience of The Public Theater and I am honored that the company has entrusted me with ensuring that feeling for all members of their community, onstage and off,” said **Alexa Smith**. “The Public’s dedication to creating an anti-racist and equitable institution is exemplary. Their Cultural Transformation Plan is an innovative blueprint that most professionals in my position are tasked to create from the ground up. Walking into this role with that in place is tremendously meaningful. I can’t wait to see what we create.”

“Alexa Smith is an exciting and necessary addition to our team,” said Public Board Chair **Luis A. Miranda, Jr.** “Under her leadership, diversity, equity, and inclusion will continue to be a top priority as we build The Public for the next generation.”

Through Smith’s leadership, at MSM, the school established new performance requirements, including opportunities for underrepresented creators, and she introduced formal town hall meetings on topics centering on inclusion and equity in the arts and launched regular workshops and training for faculty and staff. Prior to that role, she worked within the President’s Office, where she served on the Executive Council and the President’s Council, worked closely with MSM’s Board of Trustees, and served as the government liaison. In 2020 she was appointed co-chair of MSM’s Pandemic Response Committee and helped enable the return of students and performances during the 2020/2021 School year. In 2021, she served as Interim Dean of Performance and Production overseeing all elements of all performances and stage productions.

She is the 2021 recipient of the Sphinx Venture Fund Award to develop the Duncan Williams Voice Competition in partnership with MSM and New York City Opera. The competition serves Black and Latinx singers and aims to eliminate barriers by providing funds to create audition materials, fully fund travel expenses, and offer cash awards. The finals of the competition will be held with orchestra on February 3 at Manhattan School of Music.

Smith holds degrees in voice from Roosevelt University and Manhattan School of Music and an MBA from Boston University. She is an alumna of the [SphinxLEAD Program](https://www.sphinxmusic.org/sphinx-lead/), a two-year professional empowerment program designed to evolve the landscape of arts leadership for leaders of color. Previously, she was Director of Marketing at New York City Opera where she oversaw marketing and planning operations and created events for the Pride Series (including Charles Wuorinen and Annie Proulx’s *Brokeback Mountain* and the world premiere of Iain Bell and Mark Campbell’s *Stonewall*) and the Opéra en Español series. She created partnerships with The LGBT Community Center, The Mexican Consulate and Mexican Cultural Institute NY, The Stonewall at 50 Consortium, Ucross Foundation, and a special feature on Bravo’s “Watch What Happens Live with Andy Cohen.” Originally from Louisville, Kentucky, she is a beneficiary of Jefferson County public schools and publicly funded arts programming.

**ABOUT THE PUBLIC THEATER
THE PUBLIC** continues the work of its visionary founder Joe Papp as a civic institution engaging, both on-stage and off, with some of the most important ideas and social issues of today. Conceived over 60 years ago as one of the nation’s first nonprofit theaters, The Public has long operated on the principles that theater is an essential cultural force and that art and culture belong to everyone. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Oskar Eustis and Executive Director Patrick Willingham, The Public’s wide breadth of programming includes an annual season of new work at its landmark home at Astor Place, Free Shakespeare in the Park at The Delacorte Theater in Central Park, the Mobile Unit touring throughout New York City’s five boroughs, Under the Radar, Public Lab, Public Works, Public Shakespeare Initiative, and Joe’s Pub. Since premiering *HAIR* in 1967, The Public continues to create the canon of American Theater and is currently represented on Broadway by the Tony Award-winning musical *Hamilton* by Lin-Manuel Miranda. Their programs and productions can also be seen regionally across the country and around the world. The Public has received 60 Tony Awards, 184 Obie Awards, 56 Drama Desk Awards, 59 Lortel Awards, 34 Outer Critic Circle Awards, 13 New York Drama Critics’ Circle Awards, 62 AUDELCO Awards, 6 Antonyo Awards, and 6 Pulitzer Prizes. [publictheater.org](http://publictheater.org/)

The Public Theater stands in honor of the first inhabitants and our ancestors. We acknowledge the land on which The Public and its theaters stand—the original homeland of the Lenape people. We acknowledge the painful history of genocide and forced removal from this territory. We honor the generations of stewards and we pay our respects to the many diverse indigenous peoples still connected to this land.

The Public also gives our respect to the people of Seneca Village, a community of Black property owners who were removed from their land and whose village was destroyed in the creation of Central Park. We recognize the sacrifice that these ancestors made and honor Seneca Village’s legacy.

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