



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**In Commemoration of Women’s History Month  
651 ARTS  
Presents**

***The Art of Making Space:  
Black Women Cultural Leaders in Conversation***  
**Spotlighting and Celebrating Black Women Leaders in the Arts**

**Panelists Include Emily Anadu, Cynthia Gordy Giwa, Erica  
Harper and Fatima Jones  
Moderated By Robyne Walker Murphy**

**Live at the  
Center for Fiction in Downtown Brooklyn  
*Thursday, March 28<sup>th</sup> at 7PM***

**(BROOKLYN, NY – March 18, 2024)** – 651 ARTS - Brooklyn’s premier institution for the African Diasporic performing arts – will present a special conversation commemorating Women’s History Month and spotlighting Black women in the performing arts with “*The Art of Making Space: Black Women Cultural Leaders in Conversation.*” Free and open to all with registration, the discussion will be held at The Center for Fiction in Downtown Brooklyn on Thursday, March 28<sup>th</sup> at 7PM.

With opening remarks from 651 ARTS’ Executive Director Toya Lillard, “*The Art of Making Space...*” will feature an empowering and interactive discussion with four Black women leaders and changemakers in the arts and entertainment industry sharing their stories, challenges, and hopes and will center around the question of “How do Black women hold and create space for one another while navigating systems where, too often, individualism and hyper-competitiveness are rewarded?” Under that umbrella, the conversation will address concepts of engineering places at tables that weren’t necessarily built for you, charting a path for those who

may follow, resource sharing and storytelling and redefining what is possible from a place of abundance.

Moderated by nationally-recognized art and social justice educator and arts administrator **Robyne Walker Murphy**, the esteemed collective of panelists will include: Founder and CEO, The Lay Out **Emily Anadu**; Founder and Co-Creator, Black-Owned Brooklyn **Cynthia Gordy Giwa**; Vice President of Learning and Engagement, Weeksville Heritage Center **Erica Harper** and Chief Marketing and Communications Officer, Dance Theatre of Harlem **Fatima Jones**.

“As the world celebrates and acknowledge Women’s History Month, we wanted to use this opportunity to dig a little deeper and go beyond the surface to explore a specific area – in this case the arts - to which women have greatly contributed and look at it through the lens of the Black women who are currently the creators, the change agents and groundbreakers in the field,” said Lillard. “I am incredibly proud that 651 is hosting this event and providing a safe space for an open and honest dialogue for and by Black women. Ultimately, we want for women from many walks of life to share in conversation as a way to uplift one another.”

Ticket Information: This is a free event but registration is required. To find more details and to register, please click [HERE](#) .

For additional information about 651 ARTS, please visit: [www.651arts.org](http://www.651arts.org)

### **About the Panelists**

**Emily Anadu** - a visionary in global brand and data-based marketing - with the help of 4 friends, founded **The Lay Out** in June 2020, a Brooklyn-based community platform dedicated to centering Black joy through Black expression, social impact and cooperative economics. With a career spanning diverse industries including confectionery, wearable technology, and gaming, Emily is renowned for leveraging authentic cultural connections to drive brands growth. Notable roles include Senior Product Manager and Director of Marketing for the Dragon Ball and Street Fighter videogame franchises, respectively, and Nike’s Global Product Marketing Director for the SNKRS app, where she helped introduce groundbreaking initiatives. Emily’s commitment to community building extends beyond her role as CEO of The Lay Out; she serves on Brooklyn’s Community Board 2 and was a founding board member of NY Forever, a post-pandemic recovery non-profit. Based in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, Emily enjoys boxing, cooking, and nurturing her plant collection. Her journey exemplifies a profound dedication to community building, empowerment and social impact.

**Cynthia Gordy Giwa** is a writer, filmmaker and co-creator of the online publication **Black-Owned Brooklyn**. Founded in 2018 as a small act of service journalism, *Black-Owned Brooklyn* has blossomed into the premier documentation of local Black business, culture and history. Alongside her husband, film director and photographer Tayo Giwa, Cynthia also writes and produces documentaries. Their 2022 feature *The Sun Rises in The East*, now streaming on Amazon Prime Video, chronicles The East, a pan-African cultural organization built by young people in 1970’s Bedford-Stuyvesant. Their 2000 documentary short, *Soul Summit: Doin’ It in the Park*, tells the story of Fort Greene’s iconic Soul Summit house music party. In addition,

Cynthia and Tayo curate and produce large-scale community events. Their installations have included a holiday pop-up at Atlantic Center featuring 50 local Black businesses and an annual Juneteenth Food Festival with Weeksville Heritage Center. Cynthia has written extensively about issues at the intersection of race, culture and politics. With nearly a decade of experience in journalism, she served as *Essence*'s first ever White House correspondent and the magazine's news editor, in addition to senior political correspondent at *The Root*. Her work has also appeared in *Slate*, *The Washington Post* and NPR.

**Erica Harper** is currently the Vice President of Learning and Engagement at **Weeksville Heritage Center** in Brooklyn, NY. In her role, she is responsible for the vision, strategy, and implementation of both the education and programming departments. Previously Erica served as Head of PK12 Initiatives at The Phillips Collection, a museum of modern and contemporary art in Washington, DC where she provided vision and strategy for the museum's school partnerships. Central to her work was ensuring that these programs were culturally responsive and supported diversity, equity, access, and inclusion. She managed Phillips' team of educators who provide engaging experiences across museum audiences – including students, families, and older adults. Her passion for education was deepened during her decade-long tenure at a local DC non-profit called “Live It Learn It,” which focused on experiential learning. There she developed an intimate understanding of the DC educational landscape, particularly its schools, museums, and monuments. She also cultivated partnerships and relationships with professionals locally, regionally, and nationally. Erica received her bachelor's degree in sociology from Duke University in 2005 and was raised in Memphis, Tennessee.

**Fatima Jones** is an accomplished cultural strategist and a seasoned marketing, public relations, and reputation management leader. Recently appointed Chief Marketing and Communications Officer at **Dance Theatre of Harlem**, she oversees all facets of integrated marketing and communications, including advertising, social media, press, audience development, and design. With a track record of success, Fatima previously held the position of Chief Marketing and Communications Officer at **The Apollo**, where she spearheaded numerous impactful campaigns for the renowned institution, including the opening of The Apollo Stages at The Victoria. As the former Director of Communications at the **Brooklyn Museum**, she led media relations and social media efforts for high-profile exhibitions such as *David Bowie Is*, and *We Wanted A Revolution: Black Radical Women*. She has extensive arts management experience spanning nearly a decade at **BAM** and consultancy work with esteemed organizations like **651 ARTS** and **Ronald K. Brown/Evidence Dance Company**. She is a former Bessies Dance and Performance Awards voter and has served on many granting panels, including NYSCA and the Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation. She has been recognized for her contributions to the field, with features in *Essence*, *PRSA*, and *PRNet*, and has been a guest on various podcasts, including *Smart Communications* and *Deep in The Work*.

### About the Moderator

**Robyne Walker-Murphy** is a nationally recognized art and social justice educator and administrator. From 2016-2022, Robyne served as the Executive Director at Groundswell, a social justice youth development program that uses the transformative power of public art-making to ignite personal and societal change. During Robyne's tenure at Groundswell the

organization produced 126 murals, serving approximately 2,000 young people, and collaborated with 150 community organizations receiving national recognition for its excellence in youth development, public art, and social justice pedagogy. Previous to her position at Groundswell, Robyne held positions at the National Guild for Community Arts Education, Cool Culture, and Dream Yard where she served as the director of the DreamYard Art Center in the Bronx. Under her leadership, DreamYard Art Center was recognized by the Obama White House as one of the top programs in the nation. Robyne accepted the award from First Lady Michelle Obama. Robyne has conducted workshops and delivered keynotes at conferences and institutions across the country on art and social activism at institutions such as Harvard University, Lincoln Center, Seattle Art Museum, University of Chicago, American University and a host of others. She is a member of New York City's Cultural Advisory Committee and a Metropolitan Museum of Art Women's History Month Honoree.

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### **About 651 ARTS**

Since its founding in 1988, 651 ARTS has become a trusted convener of contemporary African Diasporic artistic expression, a champion and nurturer for emerging artists and their work and a vital cultural resource for its surrounding community. As it moves forward, part of 651 ARTS' mission is to preserve the legacy of Black culture in Brooklyn, celebrate the eclecticism of Black performance and to pioneer new visions of African Diaspora artists. This year – the transition year – is integral for the institution as it continues to lay the framework that will further help to reinforce 651 ARTS' role as a leader of African Diasporic culture while also establishing it an incubator for artistic innovation in the 21st century.

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