Black AIDS Institute Names a New Deputy Director

Bruce Smail is a Black bisexual man living with HIV who has worked for HIV groups in the Virgin Islands and New York state.

April 16, 2019 By Trent Straube

The Black AIDS Institute (BAI) named Bruce Smail as its new deputy director. Smail, who was diagnosed with HIV in 2003, took over the post on April 1, according to a BAI press statement.

Smail will oversee the organization's day-to-day management, its national efforts and its Los Angeles–based HIV and clinical services. What's more, he'll guide BAI in its many programs and help manage its finances and grants.

"As the former chief executive officer of Virgin Islands Community AIDS Resource and Education and executive director of The MOCHA Center, I have worked with similar communities in the Virgin Islands and in Western New York," Smail said in the press release. "This is my third position of leadership at an HIV/AIDS organization. Each of the organizations were founded by and served Black and Latinx communities."

"We are excited to add a person to the team to help lead day-to-day operations whose work has mostly dealt with issues of diversity, people of color, LGBTQ+ people and people living with HIV," added Raniyah Copeland, BAI's president and CEO. "Bruce has a wealth of executive management experience and is a critical team member who is going to help bring the vision of BAI to reality. He is adaptable, organized and detail-focused."

Smail grew up in the U.S. Virgin Islands and received a master's in counseling and personnel services from the College of New Jersey in Ewing. He has held positions in academia at the University of California at Davis, the University of Colorado at Boulder and Colorado State University at Fort Collins.

"I am very excited to join the Black AIDS Institute family," Smail said in the press release. "I know as a Black man living with HIV, our voices are not always visible. I am visible, and I give voice for my community because I know that it is not easy being open about sexual identity or HIV status. As a Black, bisexual, HIV-positive, partially deaf Caribbean man, I bring all of me—all of the time—to all of my environments. I refuse to separate or dissect who I am. I see the world from all these prisms."

In related news, read our interview with BAI’s new president and CEO, Raniyah Copeland here.

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