



Media Contact: Dawn Kellogg  
Communications Manager  
(585) 420-2059  
[dkellogg@gevatheatre.org](mailto:dkellogg@gevatheatre.org)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Geva Theatre Center honors **Rachel DeGuzman**

for her contribution to diversity in the  
community and in the arts.

***Geva presented Ms. DeGuzman with the 2016 Essie Calhoun Diversity in the Arts Award at a performance of To Kill a Mockingbird.***

**Rochester, N.Y., February 24, 2016** – Rachel Y. DeGuzman was honored with the **2016 Essie Calhoun Diversity in the Arts Award** at a performance of *To Kill a Mockingbird* at Geva Theatre Center on **Tuesday, February 23**.

Geva Theatre Center created the award in 2011, which was named in honor of Essie Calhoun-McDavid, Retired Chief Diversity Officer, Director of Community Affairs, Vice President of Eastman Kodak Company and Chair of the 2011 United Way of Greater Rochester Campaign. Ms. Calhoun-McDavid was the first recipient of this award, given annually to a person or organization that promotes and encourages diversity in the arts. Garth Fagan received the 2012 Essie Calhoun Diversity in the Arts Award, School of the Arts was the 2013 recipient, Thomas Warfield received the honor in 2014 and Nydia Padilla-Rodriguez was honored in 2015.

**Rachel Y. DeGuzman** is president & CEO of 21st Century Arts, a Rochester, NY based arts consultancy. She is the founder and executive producer of A Call to Action symposiums and the recently launched A Street Light Festival.

DeGuzman is the recipient of a The Field's Field Leadership Fund Arts Manager Fellowship and was recently named a 2016 Athena @Award Finalist. She is an active member at VisitRochester and Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council Tourism/Arts Work Group and is a program partner of Janklow Arts Leadership Program at Syracuse University. She serves as an ongoing pro-bono advisor to several local arts/cultural organizations and is on the Unite Rochester Challenge steering committee.

DeGuzman writes a community arts blog at [democratandchronicle.com](http://democratandchronicle.com) and is the host of a weekly radio show, "Up Close and Cultural," on WAYO 104.3 FM where she also serves on its leadership team.

Ms. DeGuzman was one of fourteen national arts professionals selected by Association of Performing Arts Presenters and New York University's Wagner School of Public Service for participation in the 2012/2013 Leadership Development Institute - where she spent a year in collective inquiry focused on the theme of Knowing and Connecting Art with Community.

Her past positions include director of advancement/external relations at Rochester City Ballet and marketing and publicity manager of Nazareth College Arts Center. She was director of development/communications at The Commission Project and director of development at Garth Fagan Dance.

Rachel served on Mayor Warren's Neighborhood: Quality of Life transition focus group; was a grant panelist for Arts & Cultural Council for Greater Rochester and NYSCA/REDC. She was a member of the Arts & Cultural Council for Greater Rochester's Cultural Diversity Initiative Committee. DeGuzman was a past member of William Warfield Scholarship Fund board.

"Rochester's arts and cultural sector remains segregated along racial and socioeconomic lines at a time when both issues are subjects of community-wide conversations," commented **Rachel DeGuzman**. "The establishment of the Essie Calhoun Diversity in the Arts Award - presented annually by Geva Theatre Center, one of our most prominent cultural institutions, is a powerful statement about the importance of fostering more inclusion in our sector. I am honored to be the 6<sup>th</sup> recipient of this distinguished award."

The **Essie Calhoun Diversity in the Arts Award** recognizes that art allows for the expression of truths and beliefs and helps us gain an understanding of one another and our world. It further acknowledges that a mixture of cultures stimulates creativity, the sharing of ideas, and the building of a common collective future, which has always been close to Ms. Calhoun's heart.

Geva's Artistic Director **Mark Cuddy** remarked, "This unique award personifies its namesake, Essie Calhoun-McDavid. Each year we are honored to present it to someone who has made a significant contribution in our community, and Rachel DeGuzman certainly has done that. Rochester is a better place because of her dedication to arts, diversity, and forward-thinking."

The Essie Calhoun Diversity in the Arts Award is designed by local artist **Nancy Gong**, one of America's foremost glass artists. Ms. Gong combines the traditional techniques of stained glass craftsmen and stone

carvers with her own style of creating texture and painting to craft pieces which are coveted by collectors from all over the world. The Essie Calhoun Diversity in the Arts Award is a stunning, circular piece of glass, with hues of sunset pink graduated to champagne and carved on one end with a diversity quilt pattern.

**Attached Photo:** Essie Calhoun-McDavid, Rachel DeGuzman, Artistic Director Mark Cuddy and Geva Board Chair Joanna Grosodonia. Photo by imaginé photography.

**For further information, please contact:  
Dawn Kellogg, Communications Manager, (585) 420-2059**

**GEVA THEATRE CENTER**

Founded in 1972, Geva Theatre Center is a not-for-profit, professional theatre company dedicated to creating and producing professional theatre productions, programs and services of a national standard. As Rochester's leading professional theatre, Geva Theatre Center is the most attended regional theatre in New York State, and one of the 25 most subscribed in the country, serving up to 160,000 patrons annually, including more than 16,000 students.

The 526-seat Elaine P. Wilson Mainstage is home to a wide variety of performances, from musicals to American and world classics. The 180-seat Ron & Donna Fielding Nextstage is home to Geva's own series of contemporary drama, comedy and musical theatre; Geva Comedy Improv; Geva's New Play Reading Series and the Hornets' Nest - an innovative play-reading series facilitating community-wide discussion on controversial topics. In addition, the Nextstage hosts visiting companies of both local and international renown.

Geva Theatre Center offers a wide variety of educational, outreach and literary programs, nurturing audiences and artists alike. Since 1995, the organization has been under the artistic direction of Mark Cuddy.

**\*ENDS\***