



Updates as of November, 2022

## **Our Commitment to Anti-racism**

Revised 9-16-21

Updated 11/3/22

In 2020, Geva began to chart an anti-racist path forward for the theatre. While this process has often been difficult, it has also been invigorating. The work ahead of us is significant, and we know that it will lead to a stronger, more exciting and inclusive theatre. We are exhilarated by the prospect of the Geva Theatre Center we seek to create.

**Our Ongoing Commitment:** We, the staff and Board of Trustees at Geva Theatre Center, commit to becoming actively anti-racist and to building a transformative theatre that is intentionally inclusive and welcoming for all staff, theatre makers, and audiences alike. We define racism as a combination of policies, practices and ideas that produces and normalizes racial inequities in opportunity and representation. Anti-racism is the practice of disrupting and dismantling those practices and structures in order to create equity and inclusion.

This new commitment provides Geva with a fresh sense of purpose and focus. We also recognize that anti-racism requires consistent and conscious action, and that this work is lifelong. As we continue this journey, we commit to providing transparent updates.

### **We commit to the following Action Areas:**

1. Disrupting Inaccurate Histories and Exclusions
2. Revising Policies and Practices to Adhere to Anti-Racist Values
3. Creating Greater Equity in our Artistic Process
4. Building Inclusive Community Relationships

The current Action Plan is below.

### **OUR HISTORY**

We are proud of a 48-year history of theatre making here in Rochester and have innovated in many ways. At the same time, Geva's staffing, leadership, and storytelling have always been predominantly white. To explore this, we recently completed a racial equity audit of our history.

- Over our 48-year history, 92.3% of all playwrights and composers on the Wilson Stage were white, and on the Fielding Stage, 83% of all playwrights and composers were white.
- 83% of plays developed through our new play programming have been written by white playwrights/composers.
- The overwhelming majority of creative teams (directors, designers, choreographers, dramaturgs) over the last 20 years have been white, including a three-year period where only white artists were hired to direct and design Geva productions. The last fully-produced season, in 2019-20, showed an increase to 25% of all creative team members being BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color).
- Until 2017, the principal actors in the cast of Geva's celebrated *A Christmas Carol* were 100% white.



- In the past few years, we have made efforts to increase representation on our stages: since 2017, principal actors on our stages have been 52% white. That’s a large shift from our history, and yet we recognize that this work is ongoing.
- As of August 1, 2021, Geva’s Board of Trustees was 25% BIPOC.
- As of August 1, 2021, Geva’s full-time staff was 10% BIPOC.

This data does not reflect the ways in which we have not proactively included or prioritized other marginalized communities – those that are not straight, cis-gendered, able-bodied and neurotypical – nor the way that we have left out certain BIPOC communities even more than others.

We want to acknowledge that significant effort and courage have been required of anyone, especially BIPOC staff, artists, and community members, who wanted to provide feedback to Geva. We acknowledge the consequences of our actions and inactions. We are grateful to everyone who has generously demanded that we do better, particularly our own Black and Iranian-American staff members and the We See You White American Theatre authors and signatories. We acknowledge our role in perpetuating these systems, and take responsibility for repairing the harm caused. This is the critical work that we must do, that we are ready and eager to do, and we acknowledge that we are late in beginning the work.

## OUR ANTI-RACIST ACTION PLAN

### 1. Disrupting Inaccurate Histories and Exclusions

Original Plan Language	Status
<p>We have investigated the history of the land on which Geva sits, and acknowledge that it is the ancestral and unceded territory of the Onöndowa’ga, known in English as the Seneca. We offer gratitude and respect to their elders past and present, and we pledge to disrupt our comfort in the colonizer’s story of how that land was taken from them. We have shared this story on our blog, on our website and in our playbills. We commit to offering land acknowledgements in our public and internal gatherings, and we are beginning a dialogue to identify the ways in which we can be of service to the Indigenous communities in and around Rochester, which is only a first step towards a right relationship with the people who have stewarded this land from time immemorial.</p>	<p>We have deepened our relationship with Ganondagan, and are building a new partnership, exploring possible artistic collaborations and planning for the future.</p>
<p>We also acknowledge that the founding of the regional theatre movement mirrored social constructs of a time that afforded privilege to some and excluded others on the basis of factors including (but not limited to) race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, class and ability. We commit to actively disrupt the vestiges of those structures through our anti-racist policies and practices at our theatre.</p>	



## 2. Revising Policies and Practices to Adhere to Anti-Racist Values

Original Plan Language	Status
<p>We have begun the process of articulating new institutional statements of our mission, vision and values to make sure they honor our anti-racist ethos. We commit to evaluating these statements on an ongoing basis.</p>	<p>This was completed in 2021, and a new evaluation of those statements will happen again during our strategic planning process.</p>
<p>We have made a commitment to comprehensive anti-racism training for our staff, volunteers and board, with a budgetary and time commitment.</p>	<p>We have hired ArtEquity to lead us in this training and are beginning the process of building a core team and setting training times for both staff and board, to happen concurrently.</p>
<p>We are creating new policies to enshrine anti-racist hiring practices. These include: reevaluating job descriptions/postings to eliminate any unnecessary requirements that could limit who may apply; including pay ranges in job postings; expanding our networks to promote opportunities; and, evaluating candidates' commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion and anti-racism work.</p>	<p>We have created these policies and these practices are in effect.</p>
<p>We are developing a 360-degree feedback process for executive leadership that will include surveying staff, trustees and artists.</p>	<p>The Board completed this plan in May, 2022, and the plan is to implement these reviews in spring, 2023</p>
<p>We are evaluating partnerships, sponsorship arrangements, and advertising relationships with media outlets and will engage with organizations that are committed to becoming anti-racist. We are seeking out BIPOC vendors and those who share our anti-racist values.</p>	<p>We ended paid advertising with media companies that did not share our anti-racist values and have built on our relationships with Blaque/Out Magazine and CNY Latino media, specifically</p>
<p>We are examining our policies around the scheduling and platforms for media appearances of guest artists to protect their time and avoid problematic media interactions.</p>	<p>We no longer ask actors to present Prologue before performances, or make any other appearance before a performance (including toasts). They are paid when they participate in Sunday Salons or other Education programming. Artists are not currently being asked to participate in Advancement activities. And we do not send artists to appear at media outlets who do not share our values. And when issues have occurred with specific media hosts, we have addressed those issues in real time. We are also trying to be mindful of time – not asking too much of any one artist, and being careful about the timing of media asks (not during tech, for example)</p>
<p>We are revising our formal paid holiday recognitions, which will now include Native American Heritage Day, Martin Luther King Jr. day, and Juneteenth. Also, in recognition that our staff comes from a variety of cultural and religious backgrounds, we will add two additional floating holidays to our official holiday policy to allow for individuals to observe holidays that are not recognized within our current calendar.</p>	<p>We have made this revision to our holiday recognitions.</p>



### 3. Creating Greater Equity in our Artistic Process

Original Plan Language	Status
<p>We will continue to compile our racial equity data annually and be transparent with the results.</p>	<p>Data about creative teams - in the 21-22 season, casts were approximately 27% white, 73% BIPOC. As of August 1, 2022, our Board of Directors is 28% BIPOC, our full-time staff is 10% BIPOC and our part-time staff is 21% BIPOC.</p>
<p>We created an Artistic Council to incorporate the invaluable perspectives of a broader range of underrepresented communities into the season planning process.</p>	<p>The Artistic Council was invaluable in the planning of our 21-22 and 22-23 seasons. We are currently evaluating how we want to proceed, and have added Director of Engagement Rachel DeGuzman and Playwright in Residence Harrison David Rivers to our season planning process in the meantime.</p>
<p>We have committed to producing on our stages at least one play written by each of the four playwrights from the Recognition Radio festival celebrating Black stories over the coming years.</p>	<p>In '21-'22, we produced Christina Anderson's play <i>How To Catch Creation</i>. In '22-'23, we are producing Harrison David Rivers' play <i>we are continuous</i>, and Harrison is our Playwright in Residence.</p>
<p>We commit to assembling dynamic, inclusive and equitable creative teams addressing the cultural competency needed for each project. Our teams will include a range of artistic, cultural and identity perspectives with BIPOC artists and female artists in each team. To be transparent in our efforts we commit to annual reporting on our creative team demographics.</p>	<p>From August 2021 to July 2022, creative teams for our subscription shows were 51% BIPOC (adding in <i>A Christmas Carol</i> brings the percentage to 43%). And 63% of creative teams were female-identifying (adding in <i>A Christmas Carol</i> brings the number to 57%). In this same period, the writers and composers were about 32% BIPOC and about 23% female-identifying.</p>
<p>Over the past 25 years, Geva has fully produced 29 world premieres on our stages, 17% of them authored by BIPOC writers. In order to build new relationships that might lead to future premiere productions, we commit to focusing on commissioning and developing the new plays of BIPOC writers. For the next five years Geva will dedicate funding of no less than three quarters of our commissioning and workshop budgets to developing the plays and musicals of BIPOC writers.</p>	<p>In '21-'22, we produced one workshop of <i>Somewhere Over the Border</i>. In 22-23, we are producing 4 new play workshops, 3 of which are developing plays by BIPOC writers. Our commitment to Harrison David Rivers as playwright in residence also contributes here. And we are continuing to develop new relationships with BIPOC writers as well as Deaf writers.</p>
<p>We have created an anti-racist code of conduct for the rehearsal room and the theatre at large, which articulates a process for responding to acts of bias, thereby prioritizing the needs of people over product.</p>	<p>This is shared in actor packets in the apartments, and is posted in the rehearsal room and in the theatre.</p>
<p>We commit to examining and eliminating production practices that disproportionately impact BIPOC artists. These practices include the industry-wide standard of requiring overly long days during technical rehearsals.</p>	<p>As a general rule, we have tried to eliminate 10/12s, but this is still an area we need to continue focusing on.</p>



#### 4. Building Inclusive Community Relationships

Original Plan Language	Status
<p>We are re-imagining our front of house and ushering policies and procedures, as well as our approach to audience engagement, to ensure that our space is a welcoming space for all.</p>	<p>We are exploring barriers to access, specifically around language, and have begun an exploration of this with Somewhere, providing a synopsis and credits in Spanish, with a full Spanish language playbill online. This will be re-visited.</p>
<p>We have articulated Geva’s Invitations to Play, which recognizes the many and diverse ways that audiences experience theatre together, and makes clear the expectation that all will be welcomed and respected in our spaces. This will be shared with all audiences.</p>	<p>These are posted in our lobby, in our playbills and on our website.</p>
<p>As a non-profit organization incorporated for the public good, and with our center city location that has served as a gathering place for the region since 1868, we continue our longstanding commitment to supporting peaceful social justice demonstrations. For example, in 2020 we opened our lobby for respite and medical supplies, and we will remain responsive to local social justice organizers in the future whenever possible.</p>	
<p>We will establish a Board Working Group dedicated to our engagement activities, as part of prioritizing that work throughout our season, not on a show-by-show basis.</p>	<p>Director of Engagement, Rachel DeGuzman will be making reports to the IDEA committee this season.</p>

While these commitments represent a significant shift for Geva, we recognize that they are only the beginning of becoming an anti-racist organization. Our actions and policies will evolve as we work to prevent future harm and repair harms of the past. We will make mistakes, and we will actively listen and make corrections. Our staff and board are wholeheartedly committed to this anti-racist journey, through which Geva will contribute to a more just and equitable society. We humbly ask that you join us in this work and hold us accountable for fostering an anti-racist culture within Geva Theatre Center.