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For immediate release.

CENTER THEATRE GROUP TO HOST TWO FREE COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS
FOR **LUIS VALDEZ'S "VALLEY OF THE HEART"** NOW AT TAPER

Community Conversation on November 5 at the Japanese American National Museum
Will **Have Screening of "Stand Up for Justice: The Ralph Lazo Story"**

Community Conversation on November 28 at The Music Center Annex
Will Discuss Dignity Amidst Injustice

Center Theatre Group will host two Community Conversations inspired by Luis Valdez's play "Valley of the Heart," which runs at the Mark Taper Forum through December 9, 2018. Community Conversations are a series of panel discussions that are free and open to the public and feature local thought leaders in dialogue about the context, issues and ideas finding voice on Center Theatre Group stages.

The first Community Conversation will take place at the Japanese American National Museum on Monday, November 5 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. and will include a screening of **"Stand Up for Justice: The Ralph Lazo Story"** followed by a post-screening panel discussion. The screening is a docudrama short film about Ralph Lazo, a Mexican American teen who showed his solidarity during the Japanese American internment when he voluntarily relocated to Manzanar for two years during WWII. The post-screening panel will discuss both the film and Luis Valdez's "Valley of the Heart" and how they depict this specific moment in U.S. history. The Japanese American National Museum is located at 100 N Central Ave in Little Tokyo. Panelists include "Stand Up for Justice" writer/director John Esaki, civil rights leader Miya Iwataki, Nikkei for Civil Rights and Redress (NCR) member Kathy Masaoka and redress/reparations delegate Kiyomi Emi, who is also the granddaughter of Frank Emi (co-creator of the Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee).

The second Community Conversation will take place on Wednesday, November 28 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. and is titled Dignity Amidst Injustice: From the Japanese American Internment to Today. The conversation will discuss how the Japanese American internment was not a singular, isolated incident, but part of a centuries-long history of exclusionary legislation that continues today. It will also examine how Japanese Americans maintained their dignity—for some through resistance, for others through enlistment and for many through solidarity, strength and the preservation of culture and tradition. This event will take place at The Music Center Annex building, 601 W. Temple Street,

Los Angeles, CA 90012, in Rehearsal Room A. The event will be moderated by Leslie Ishii and panelists will be announced at a later date.

The fight to maintain dignity, identity, family and faith are at the heart of this American story deeply rooted in the once-fertile farmland that is now known as the Silicon Valley. “Valley of the Heart” tells the story of the Yamaguchis and the Montañños, two immigrant families struggling to provide a future for their American-born children after the Great Depression on the farmland the two families share. The families’ oldest children secretly fall in love only to have the emotional stakes further heightened when the attack on Pearl Harbor throws these Mexican and Japanese American families into uncertainty.

When the Yamaguchis are interned along with thousands of other Japanese Americans, allegiances are tested, heroes are made, and the two young lovers must find a way to stay loyal both to their families, their country and each other.

Luis Valdez’s screen credits include “Zoot Suit” (featuring Edward James Olmos), “La Bamba” (starring Lou Diamond Phillips), “The Cisco Kid” (featuring Jimmy Smits and Cheech Marin) and “Corridos: Tales of Passion and Revolution” (with Linda Ronstadt). Awards include LA Drama Critic Circle Awards, Bay Area Critics Awards, the George Peabody Award for excellence in television, the Presidential Medal of the Arts, the Governor’s Award from the California Arts Council and Mexico’s prestigious Aguila Azteca Award given to individuals whose work promotes cultural excellence and exchange between the U.S. and Mexico. He was inducted into the College of Fellows of the American Theatre at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. In 2007, he was awarded a Rockefeller Fellowship as one of the 50 U.S. artists so honored across the United States. Valdez was recently inducted into the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences as a director.

Center Theatre Group, one of the nation’s preeminent arts and cultural organizations, is Los Angeles’ leading nonprofit theatre company, which, under Artistic Director Michael Ritchie, programs seasons at the 736-seat Mark Taper Forum and 1600 to 2000-seat Ahmanson Theatre at The Music Center in Downtown Los Angeles, and the 317-seat Kirk Douglas Theatre in Culver City. In addition to presenting and producing the broadest range of theatrical entertainment in the country, Center Theatre Group is one of the nation’s leading producers of ambitious new works through commissions and world premiere productions and a leader in interactive community engagement and education programs that reach across generations, demographics and circumstance to serve Los Angeles.

Tickets to “Valley of the Heart” are available by calling (213) 628-2772, online at www.CenterTheatreGroup.org or at the Center Theatre Group Box Office located at the Ahmanson Theatre. Tickets range from \$30 – \$99 (ticket prices are subject to change). The Mark Taper Forum is located at The Music Center, 135 N. Grand Avenue in Downtown L.A. 90012.

For more information about the upcoming Community Conversations, please visit CTGLA.org/Community. The events are free but an RSVP is encouraged. Refreshments will be provided.