


BEST of WASHINGTON

We are a town of beautiful ideas, of course, and all of the big ones—from the arts to design to food—take center stage throughout the next 12 pages. Bonus: Our readers choose their favorites in everything from fabulous retail to dining. Here's to a new year of discoveries.

*BY KATIE BIANCO, EMILY FLAMM, NEVIN MARTELL,
MICHAEL MCCARTHY AND JENNIFER SERGENT*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GREG POWERS

SHOT ON LOCATION AT MASON & ROOK



HER ARENA
Seema Sueko makes
her Arena Stage
directorial debut with
Smart People in April.

THE STORYTELLER

If she has learned anything in life, **Seema Sueko** says it's this: Creative expression brings communities together. "I've sought ways to foster my passion for both theater and politics as a way of affecting change and making a difference in the world," says the Hawaii-raised Sueko, who's the new deputy artistic director at Arena Stage. She arrives after a successful stint at Pasadena Playhouse. She's also responsible for creating the Mo'olelo Green Theatre Choices Toolkit—a way for theaters to make smarter decisions on processes and materials for productions—which is now used on five continents. Sueko has landed in the right city at the right time. Politics have always been a part of her life; her father is Pakistani, and her mother is Japanese-American, and she was raised in a "progressive Muslim-American household—we were always talking politics at the dinner table. [Which is why] I love Washington. The audiences and supporters are smart, critical thinkers who like to be challenged and enjoy engaging their minds and hearts with art." Her directorial debut at Arena is this spring's *Smart People* by Lydia Diamond. It's a story that echoes quite loudly these days: Race, sex and demographic perceptions hamper progress. "I love this play because it's deliciously human in its examination of how we see one another," she says. Sounds like Sueko and DC are a match made in theatrical heaven. *April 14-May 21, 1101 Sixth St. SW, 202.488.3300, arenastage.org*