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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**THE SAINT PAUL & MINNESOTA FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES 19<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL FACING RACE AWARD RECIPIENTS**

*This year's awards recognize five recipients challenging absent and harmful narratives on race and building solutions that unite instead of divide from St. Paul and Minneapolis to Duluth and Winona.*

St. Paul, Minn. – September 17, 2025 – The Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation (the Foundation) is proud to announce the recipients of its [2025 Facing Race Awards](#), honoring five Minnesota-based anti-racism advocates who have made incredible strides toward fostering a state where all communities and people thrive. This year's award recipients are Alexis Pate, Nate Smith, Kathy Sublett, Sai Thao and Patricia Torres Ray.

Nominations for the Facing Race Awards are open to the public each year. The 2025 recipients were chosen by a selection committee made up of community members, including past Facing Race Award recipients.

"This year our Facing Race Award recipients share a common thread – they are all working to dismantle systemic barriers and build systems where all people can thrive," said Chanda Smith Baker, President & CEO of the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation. "Their work stretches from the Twin Cities to Winona to Duluth. And while their work is as unique as the communities they call home, each is meeting this moment in time with a vision to create a brighter, more equitable future for us all."

**About the 2025 Facing Race Recipients:**

**Alexis Pate**

Alexis Pate is president and CEO of Innocent Technologies and creator of the Innocent Classroom. In 2012, he launched the teacher-training initiative that puts into action his ideas on building relationships and dismantling racial bias in education. This effort has trained more than 10,000 educators across the U.S. His work centers on rejecting racial stereotypes and fostering environments where the humanity and potential of people of color are assumed and nurtured.

**Nate Smith**

Nate Smith, whose spirit name is Mino Animikiikaa, meaning Good Thunder, is an Anishinaabeg Ojibwe community leader, traditional medicine gatherer, cultural educator and father. He is the founder and Executive Director of Good Thunder Collective, an Indigenous-led initiative focused on traditional wellness and community education. Through this work, he helps reconnect people with sacred medicines. Previously, Nate served as the Education Equity Coordinator for Duluth Public Schools, where he played a pivotal role in reshaping the district's approach to equity and inclusion.

**Kathy Sublett**

Kathy Sublett is a powerful force for racial justice and community healing in southeastern Minnesota. In 2020, she founded Let's Erase the Stigma (LETS), a nonprofit rooted in her own lived experiences. Its programs focus on restoring self-worth, respect and confidence to underserved communities of color. Her organization was the first in her community to offer an expungement workshop and clinic.

**Sai Thao**

As a Hmong American woman and parent to four children, all with special needs, Sai Thao's leadership emphasizes education equity and justice, ensuring students and families are at the center of all decision-making. As a media artist, Sai uses digital tools to inspire communities to confront the effects of racism and strengthen community bonds. She is co-chair of [In Progress](#), a nonprofit art organization she co-founded 30 years ago to pave the way for new voices in digital media.

**Patricia Torres Ray**

Patricia Torres Ray has devoted 35 years of public service to our state and is recognized locally and nationally for her dedication to dismantling disparities and creating opportunities for women, immigrants and marginalized communities. In 2006, she became the first Latina elected to the Minnesota Senate. During her tenure, Patricia held various leadership positions and advocated for policies addressing inequality. After serving in the Senate for 16 years, Patricia opened her own firm, PTR Associates.

The 2025 Facing Race Awards celebration will be livestreamed on October 16. Attendees can register for the livestream at [FacingRace.org](#). From October 17 on, videos featuring each of the Facing Race Award recipients will be available to watch at FacingRace.org.

For more information on each recipient, including photos and full bios, please view [the Facing Race Awards press kit](#).

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**About the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation**

The Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation believes in the best of Minnesota and the power of its communities. With roots in Saint Paul and partners across the state, it is Minnesota's largest community foundation and the partner of choice for thousands of donors, nonprofits and community organizations. The Foundation aspires to create an equitable, just and vibrant Minnesota where all communities and people thrive by inspiring generosity, advocating for equity and investing in community-led solutions. Visit: [spmcf.org](#)