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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundations Recognize Tuleah Palmer and the Rev. Gloria Roach Thomas as 2019 Facing Race Award Honorees

St. Paul, Minn. – Aug. 27 2019 –[The Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundations](#) (the Foundations) today announced the recipients of the 2019 Facing Race Awards honoring individuals and organizations working to eliminate racism and its effects in Minnesota. Honorees Tuleah Palmer and the Rev. Gloria Roach Thomas will be recognized during a public event Sept. 19 at the InterContinental Riverfront Hotel in St. Paul.

“The Foundations believe there is no hierarchy in human value,” said Dr. Eric J. Jolly, president and CEO of the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundations. “Addressing racism in our community is an effort that requires partnership and shared learning – Tuleah and Gloria have shown our community what is possible when agents and agencies of change work together to create a community that works for all its members. We thank them for their leadership in this work, and we look forward to celebrating their accomplishments.”

Established in 2007, the Foundations’ Facing Race Awards honor anti-racism activists in Minnesota who work to change the narrative on race and create communities where everyone feels safe, valued and respected. Each of this year’s honorees will receive a \$15,000 grant to be designated for a nonprofit of their choosing.

Palmer receives Facing Race Statewide Award

A panel of community judges selected Palmer to receive this year’s Facing Race Statewide Award. She is executive director of the [Northwest Indian Community Development Center](#) (NWICDC), a Bemidji-based nonprofit committed to closing economic disparities in the region through training and education for American Indian and low-income families. A 20-year champion for change and racial equity, Palmer and her team have been credited with transforming the NWICDC into a thriving hub serving the Leech Lake, Red Lake and White Earth reservations. Annually, more than 2,000 Indigenous people take part in NWICDC programming rooted in Anishinaabe culture and designed to provide participants education, health care, economic opportunity and equitable outcomes. Palmer also serves on the Racial Equity Committee of the Governor’s Workforce; the Department of Health American Indian Workforce Development Initiative and its Mental Health Innovations Board; and the Minnesota Department of Health and Wilder Healthcare Equity Leadership Team.

“Receiving the Facing Race Award is an incredible recognition and demonstrates the desire for the type of racial justice change that is happening in Bemidjigaamag (Ojibwe for ‘a lake with crossing waters’),” said Palmer. “Knowing that recognized grassroots leadership is in direct relationship to the extent of which injustice and oppression have dominated community narrative, the Facing Race Award is truly is the community’s award.”

Roach Thomas is the recipient of the Facing Race East Metro Award

Roach Thomas was chosen to receive the Facing Race East Metro Award. For the past 45 years, she has

worked in the areas of faith, education, health, racial equity and social services. Until her recent retirement, Roach Thomas was lead pastor at Camphor Memorial United Methodist Church of Saint Paul. For 15 years, she was program director at St. Paul's Model Cities and expanded the agency's health and human services programs to encompass issues faced by African Americans, including homelessness, infant mortality and morbidity, health disparities and low education attainment. She was instrumental in the development of Freedom School and PROJECT SPIRIT, two St. Paul-based programs founded over 24 years ago. Today, Roach Thomas works with Fiscally Fit, a program she assisted in founding to help participants develop long-term, comprehensive financial literacy and empowerment.

"It is an honor and privilege to receive the Facing Race award and to be recognized among colleagues and peers as a racial equity advocate and leader," said Roach Thomas. "I am humbled and grateful to the Foundations and community members who have supported me in working to counter the negative impact of racism. I certainly didn't get here alone. I stand on the shoulders of others, including my father. He showed me what it means to make a difference by addressing inequities stemming from racial discrimination. His advocacy work during the time of Jim Crow could have put his life at risk, but he did not allow fear to stop him."

North Dakota Rep. Ruth Buffalo will serve as keynote speaker for the awards program. In 2018, Buffalo became the first Native American Democratic woman elected to North Dakota's legislature, representing south Fargo (District 27).

Founded in St. Paul in 1940, the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundations is Minnesota's largest community foundation and the partner of choice for thousands of donors, professional advisors, nonprofits and community organizations. The Foundations support more than 2,000 charitable organizations and donor funds and manage nearly \$1.5 billion in assets, including F. R. Bigelow Foundation and Mardag Foundation.

The Foundations' impact is broad. Last year, in partnership with donors, the Foundations made nearly 8,300 grants to support community needs in 71 of 87 Minnesota counties. Additionally, the Foundations support 17 affiliate community foundations—from Hibbing to Waseca—which provide regional granting strategies and local donor involvement opportunities.

Editor's note: Find event information, photos and bios for Palmer, Roach Thomas and keynote speaker Ruth Buffalo on the SPMF website: : <https://www.spmcf.org/tuleah-palmer-and-rev-gloria-roach-thomas-named-2019-facing-race-award-honorees>

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About the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundations

The Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundations believe 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 Foundations inspire generosity to make Minnesota better for all who call it home. Learn more at [spmcf.org](https://www.spmcf.org)

