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## News Release

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### **St. Paul Foundation to honor FLAG's Hli Xyooj, and four others, for "leadership and courage" working to end racism in Minnesota**

ST. PAUL, MINN. – Hli Xyooj of Farmers' Legal Action Group (FLAG) will be among the honorees this evening when The Saint Paul Foundation recognizes five anti-racism advocates at its seventh annual Facing Race Ambassador Awards.

"We are proud to host this annual event that celebrates the leadership and courage of individuals working to end racism in Minnesota," Carleen Rhodes, president and CEO of The Saint Paul Foundation said in announcing the awards. "We believe their work is vitally important to helping to end Minnesota's racial disparities and to ensure equal access and opportunity for all."

Xyooj, a FLAG Staff Attorney and Hmong Community Outreach Coordinator, will receive an Honorary Mention Award for Demonstrated Leadership in Creating a Racially Equitable Community for her work on behalf of immigrant farmers in Minnesota.

The Ambassador Awards, at the Prom Event Center in Oakdale, will go to Dr. Josie Johnson, University of Minnesota Regent Emeritus, and Ellen O'Neill, Executive Director of the YWCA of Duluth. Other Honorable Mention awardees are Corinth Matera, teacher at Minneapolis South High School, and Oluwaseyi Daniel Oyinloye, independent filmmaker and African American Students Program coordinator at the University of Minnesota Duluth. The Facing race initiative of The Saint Paul Foundation, was created to recognize anti-racism leaders and promote the need for productive and open community-wide conversations about race.

Xyooj joined FLAG in 2006 as Hmong Community Outreach Coordinator before she became a Staff Attorney. She was born in a refugee camp near the Laotian border in Thailand; her family brought her to St. Paul when she was a toddler. Today, Xyooj is a practicing attorney with an MBA degree. Her role at FLAG is part lawyer, part social worker, and part extension agent as she builds bridges between Hmong American farmers and the agencies with which they interact. She provides training and information, and tackles farmers' problems with colleagues at FLAG and at other farm and community organizations. She also oversees the production and translation of guides and other educational materials and resources that the Hmong American farming community needs to reclaim its traditional roots in farming and build a life here.

Xyooj earned her undergraduate degree with majors in International Relations, Political Science, and Asian Studies from the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 1999; graduated from Hamline University School of Law in 2007; and completed her Master of Business Administration degree from Hamline University School of Business in December 2008.

“We are thrilled that Hli is receiving this well-deserved recognition,” said Susan Stokes, FLAG’s Executive Director. “During her seven years at FLAG, Hli has been a very effective advocate for the Hmong American farming community. She builds bridges and confronts racism where she sees it by using her legal skills, diplomacy, communication, and by building bridges—all so that Hmong American farmers have equal opportunities to succeed and thrive in our local foods economy.”

*Farmers’ Legal Action Group is a nonprofit law center dedicated to providing legal services and support to family farmers and their communities in order to help keep family farmers on the land.*

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