

## Facing Race Idea Challenge produces winning ideas for reducing racism

Written by  
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Some 49 Minnesotans submitted fresh ideas to reduce racism in their communities for the 2011 *Facing Race Idea Challenge*

. A panel of judges comprising community volunteers, short-listed five finalists whose ideas were then put to public vote at the *Facing Race Idea Challenge* website, hosted in partnership with InCommons.

"We were very pleased with the quality and creativity of the ideas submitted to the *Facing Race Idea Challenge*

," says Carleen Rhodes, president and CEO of The Saint Paul Foundation. "Congratulations to our winning grant recipients and to all who participated in this important effort to reduce racism in Minnesota."

The *Facing Race Idea Challenge* generated many inspiring ideas for creating communities where everyone feels safe, valued and respected. Citizens can view and discuss all the submissions, including the two winners at [www.incommons.org/facingracechallenge](http://www.incommons.org/facingracechallenge).

The two winning ideas had two things in common: both engaged youth and both had a connection to Hamline University.

"It doesn't surprise me that the two winners of the Saint Paul Foundation's *Facing Race Idea Challenge* are both Hamline students—one an alumna and one a current student—but it certainly delights me to hear that they have received this level of recognition for their embodiment of Hamline's commitment to social justice, civic responsibility, and inclusive leadership and service," said Dr. David Stern, vice president for academic and student affairs at Hamline University.

The Facing Race Idea Challenge will award \$2,500 implementation grants to fund the two winning ideas:



**Project s.t.a.r.t. Leadership**

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*by Kate Towle (Minneapolis)*

Kate Towle, a Hamline University alumna, is an active racial justice facilitator for the YWCA and consults with the Minneapolis Public Schools. Through Project s.t.a.r.t. Leadership, Towle sees herself as an "adult ally", providing students the support and training to act as young equity leaders and "bridges" between cultural groups. s.t.a.r.t., named and created by students at South High School, stands for "students together against racial tension."

Towle will apply her \$2,500 Facing Race grant to support curriculum development, outreach and the ongoing work of Project s.t.a.r.t. Leadership—a youth-driven initiative that engages Minneapolis Public School students as leaders in racial equity work.

"The heart of Project s.t.a.r.t. is that we can't just rely on the adults in our schools to create the environment we want," says Towle. "We have to engage students in making our schools safe, respectful and culturally-competent."



### **Youth Peacekeepers**

*by Jake Branchaud-Linsk (Saint Paul)*

Jake Branchaud-Linsk, a philosophy and political science major at Hamline University, will use his grant to provide conflict resolution and communication training to groups of diverse high school students for facilitating conversations about race with younger peer groups. The

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inspiration for his idea of youth engagement developed from his work at the Dispute Resolution Center in Saint Paul, made possible by a Phillips Family Foundation scholarship.

"I want to help youth apply good communication and mediation skills to discussions about race," says Branchaud-Linsk. "Working with youth on this topic is exciting because we can make an early impact. They have their whole lives ahead of them to use the skills they'll acquire through Youth Peacekeepers."