

MEMORANDUM

TO: SSSP Board of Directors / Administrative Office

FROM: Frank Ridzi, Chair, Lee Founders Award Committee (2025–2026)

DATE: July 15, 2026

SUBJECT: Summary of Committee Work and Selection of the 2026 Lee Founders Award Recipient

Committee Roster (2025–2026)

- Frank Ridzi (Chair), Le Moyne College and Central New York Community Foundation
- James M. Thomas (Chair-Elect), University of Mississippi
- Popy Begum, Saint Louis University (was not able to participate on the committee)
- Anthony Abraham Jack, Boston University
- Kemi Johnson Pratt, Texas Woman's University
- Paul D. Steele, Professor Emeritus, The University of New Mexico
- Siyue Lena Wang, University of California, Los Angeles (had to leave the committee due to other commitments)

Committee Governance and Process

The Lee Founders Award Committee is charged with recognizing significant, career-long achievements that demonstrate a continuing devotion to the humanistic traditions of Alfred McClung Lee and Elizabeth Briant Lee. The committee conducted its work in strict adherence to the Society's operational guidelines and ethical policies:

- **Call for Nominations:** By the February 20 deadline, the committee received three online submissions representing two unique, highly accomplished, and distinguished SSSP members (two nominations were for the same individual).
- **Initial Meeting:** The committee convened via Zoom on Friday, March 6, 2026, at 9:30 AM Eastern Time to discuss the nominees.
- **Conflict of Interest Policy:** Prior to evaluating the applications, the committee reviewed the SSSP conflict of interest policy. Chair-Elect James M. Thomas (JT) disclosed a conflict of interest, abstained from voting, and did not attend the meeting.
- **Consensus and Finalization:** The attending committee members reached a unanimous decision during the March 6 meeting. To ensure full committee integrity, members unable to attend due to unexpected circumstances were subsequently given the opportunity to weigh in. The final consensus was achieved well ahead of the April 1 deadline, and the result was officially conveyed to the SSSP Administrative Office on March 20, 2026.

2026 Award Winner Selection

The committee is proud to announce Dr. David Geronimo Truc-Thanh Embrick as the recipient of the 2026 Lee Founders Award. Dr. Embrick was selected from a highly competitive field for his multi-faceted, lifelong commitment to the founding ideals of the SSSP. The committee highlighted several outstanding dimensions of his career:

- **Pioneering Scholarship & Editorial Service:** Dr. Embrick's influential body of work spans premier disciplinary outlets (including *Social Problems*, *Critical Sociology*, and *American Behavioral Scientist*), capturing 3,983 citations, an h-index of 27, and an i10-index of 45. Crucially, the committee recognized his often-thankless editorial labor as a Founding Co-Editor of *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity (SRE)*, which has become the definitive institutional home for the development of the subfield.
- **Institutional Leadership:** He has consistently stepped up to serve the Society in vital leadership capacities, including roles as SSSP Vice President and currently as President-Elect/President.
- **Campus-Community Collaboration:** As Director of Research and Community Engagement and Director of Research on Resilient Cities, Racism, and Equity (RRCRE) at the University of Connecticut Hartford, he built a nationally recognized model for public sociology. Under his leadership, the RRCRE secured substantial federal (including a major U.S. Department of Commerce grant), state, and foundation funding to directly close the digital divide and mitigate material urban inequalities.
- **Exemplary Mentorship and Humanistic Service:** Beyond metrics, Dr. Embrick embodies the humanistic heart of the Lee Founders tradition. Testimonials reviewed by the committee painted a profound picture of his hands-on community service and personal mentorship. He is celebrated as a "rock" for marginalized and working-class students navigating crises, famously providing both literal nourishment (food and shelter) and poignant intellectual guidance to those falling on hard times.

Acknowledgments

The committee extends its sincere gratitude to all the nominators for their exceptional submissions and hard work. We also thank the SSSP Administrative Office, particularly Administrative Officer & Meeting Manager Michele Smith Koontz, for her guidance and support throughout this cycle.

Per SSSP policy, non-selected nominees will remain eligible for consideration for the following two years. The Administrative Office will issue formal notification letters to all nominators, and Dr. Embrick will be mailed a recognition plaque and recognized at the upcoming Annual Meeting Awards Ceremony.