

2015-2016 YOUNG LEADERS INSTITUTE

Cultivate skills. Connect with community. Create change.

2015–2016 Young Leaders Institute Overview and FAQ

Young Leaders Institute

“One thing that YLI has inspired me to do is to act on my ideas. It’s hard for me to put my ideas into action and follow through on the logistical steps, and being able to meet people that share identities with me, doing this work has really helped me put my ideas into action.”

- Sasha
University of Washington
2014 YLI Fellow



2015–2016 Young Leaders Institute Addressing and Confronting Anti-Black Racism

SAALT’s Young Leaders Institute (YLI) is an opportunity for undergraduate students and other young adults in the US to build leadership skills, connect with activists and mentors, and explore social change strategies around issues that affect South Asian and immigrant communities in the US. The Institute is designed to cultivate skills to deepen knowledge and awareness; strengthen and nurture relationships with diverse communities; and empower young leaders to be agents of change.

The 2015–2016 Young Leaders Institute theme is: Addressing and Confronting Anti-Black Racism. Students will develop and implement projects to address anti-Black racism through civic engagement on their campuses and in their communities.

SAALT is seeking 15–20 outstanding, diverse young leaders to join the 2015–2016 Young Leaders Institute. Please review this FAQ for more information about the Young Leaders Institute, this year’s theme, who can apply, and how to apply.

Application deadline: May 31, 2015

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Frequently Asked Questions

What is SAALT?

South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT) is a national, nonpartisan, non-profit organization that elevates the voices and perspectives of South Asian individuals and organizations to build a more just and inclusive society in the United States.

SAALT is the only national, staffed South Asian organization that advocates around issues affecting South Asian communities through a social justice framework. SAALT's strategies include conducting public policy analysis and advocacy; building partnerships with South Asian organizations and allies; mobilizing communities to take action; and developing leadership for social change. To learn more about SAALT, please visit www.saalt.org.

What is the Young Leaders Institute?

SAALT's Young Leaders Institute is a unique opportunity for 15–20 young leaders in the US to explore issues that affect South Asian American communities; engage in peer exchange; hone leadership skills; and learn strategies and approaches to social change. The 2015–2016 Institute will be the fourth time this annual leadership development program will be hosted by SAALT.

Who can apply for the Young Leaders Institute?

US undergraduate students and other young adults 18–22 years of age* interested in creating change among South Asian Americans on their campuses or in their communities.

***Note:** Priority consideration is given to young adults 18–22 years of age in the US. SAALT welcomes applications from young leaders who may not have access to undergraduate studies, as well as those who are enrolled in undergraduate programs. Applications of young adults who are older and/or in graduate school will be accepted and considered.

Why is the Institute important?

SAALT is committed to the leadership development and support of young adults as agents of progressive change among South Asians in the US. The Institute encourages participants to explore their current leadership qualities, challenge themselves to evolve their leadership skills, learn from fellow young leaders, and commit to advancing social justice in real ways on their campus and in their community.

What is the 2015–2016 theme?

The 2015 Young Leaders Institute theme is “Addressing and Confronting Anti-Black Racism.” As we have seen in recent days, weeks, and months, Black Americans, particularly Black men, are disproportionately the targets and victims of violence, structural inequities, and policies that reinforce many forms of structural racism in American society. SAALT believe all individuals of the US, including South Asian Americans and particularly South Asian American youth, have much at stake in addressing the impact of structural racism. Youth, including many South Asian Americans, have been at the forefront of activism and social justice movements for decades, if not centuries, in the US. More specifically, South Asians and Black activists have a long history of supporting each others' struggles for liberation. Engaging South Asian Americans to address racism, specifically anti-Black racism and its effects in our communities, is critical and a precursor to South Asian Americans being in unity with Black communities and broader liberation struggles of communities of color in the US. For more information on how South Asian and

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Black activists have supported each others' struggles for liberation, check out [Black Desi Liberation](#), curated by Anirvan Chatterjee of the [Berkeley South Asian Radical History Walking Tour](#).

What is civic engagement?

This year's Institute and theme folds in a critical civic engagement component. Civic engagement is defined for the current purposes by an interest and willingness in individuals, residents, and constituents to engage with decision-makers, stakeholders, and peers (both appointed and elected, campus-based and outside) as well as decision-making processes to make their voices, opinions, and priorities heard. Civic engagement is not limited to or predicated upon activities or efforts that involve voting or the voting process, or US citizens (who are generally, apart from some exceptions, the only individuals who can vote in the US). At its essence, civic engagement is individuals who choose to organize themselves and others toward collective action to weigh in, engage, and voice their opinions on how to address pressing issues that either need to be improved, replicated, or addressed in their community. This could involve activities and engagement at the campus, local, regional, state, or federal level on a number of issues or priorities ranging from the theme for a campus event to municipal budget priorities to campus-based policies that reinforce structural inequities and/or discrimination.

For the purposes of campus-based projects around addressing anti-Black racism in South Asian and campus communities, civic engagement can involve a variety of actions. Please note, the following are examples only. *Applicants are encouraged to submit their own innovative and creative project ideas, including but not limited to projects that promote civic engagement through art!*

- Organizing students to partner with local community-based organizations on addressing problematic local school policies that reinforce the criminalization of Black men and youth.
- Raising concerns with the campus administration on campus police actions and policies that disproportionately target students of color regardless of their activities or behavior.
- Organizing a speak-out for students to voice how they see anti-Black racism and oppression manifest on their campuses and in the actions of administrators.
- Organizing letter-writing or postcard campaigns in support of local anti-profiling policies.
- Hosting forums/ town halls for campus community members to share their experiences of campus policies and discuss how to advocate for change.
- Engaging with campus administration officials on how to ensure campus policies don't reinforce structural anti-Black racism.

Note: *Competitive applications will reflect detailed project proposals that include action-oriented civic engagement ideas for addressing and confronting anti-Black racism among South Asian Americans on your campus or in your community.*

How does the Institute work?

The Young Leaders Institute requires full participation in the following commitments:

- On-site 3-day intensive training in the Washington, DC metro area on July 24–26, 2015
- Creation of a project addressing anti-Black racism through civic engagement on your campus or in your community that meet specific education/awareness and social change objectives
- Completion of campus or community projects by April 15, 2016
- Monthly group report-back, peer exchange, and support calls (August–November; February–April)
- Completion of written report-back, program evaluation, and additional requested materials

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What is your graduation policy?

Participants must be able to commit to and fulfill all above requirements in order to graduate from the Institute. Participants who complete all requirements will be considered 2015–2016 Young Leaders Institute Fellows and have the opportunity to further engage with SAALT’s work.

Note: SAALT recognizes that many young leaders have work, family, and other important obligations that may be connected to income, health, and so forth. SAALT is committed to working with each young leader accepted into the program to support their fulfillment of commitments or to work together on alternatives in the event of extenuating circumstances.

Why do I want to be a 2015–2016 Young Leaders Institute Fellow?

Participants will develop leadership skills; understand key issues affecting South Asian American communities in a social change context; and connect their campus and community with South Asian organizations and leaders. A few examples of the work of fellows after graduating from the Institute:

- Serving as an AmeriCorps Public Allies program at the Florida Immigrant Coalition
- Interested in seeking public office to enact policy change at the local and national level
- Served as a summer intern at SAALT and various South Asian organizations
- Organized a fraternity community service project serving public schools
- Completed an anthology highlighting the experiences of queer Desis in the US

How much does this cost? What does SAALT provide?

SAALT will provide the following to accepted candidates:

- Round trip air, train, or bus fare to the July 24–26 on-site training. Mode of transportation will depend on your departure point and will be chosen by SAALT (round-trip fare is restricted to traveling from a city to DC and returning to the same city).
- Hotel accommodation (shared room) for the nights of July 23, 24, and 25
- On-site training on July 24–26
- Breakfast, lunch, and dinner on July 24 and 25; breakfast and lunch on July 26
- Monthly group calls for report backs, peer exchange, and support
- All other expenses, such as public transportation and taxi fares, additional meals or activities, and extended hotel stay are the participant’s responsibility

How do I apply? What is the application deadline?

Interested applicants should review information about SAALT, the Institute, and complete an application packet found [here](#). *All applications should be submitted as one PDF document to YLI@saalt.org with the subject line “YLI 2015–2016 application.”* Completed application packets are due no later than **May 31, 2015**. Final candidates will be announced by June 5, 2015 on our website. Due to the volume of applications, only final candidates will be contacted directly.

What does a competitive applicant look like?

A competitive applicant will have a demonstrated interest in effecting progressive change on their campus or in their community. They will be committed to addressing anti-Black racism through civic engagement in the South Asian American community. They will have ideas about realistic, scaled projects to enact this change and have the initiative, commitment, and resourcefulness to implement those ideas. They will be open to sharing their experiences and learning from trainers and peers.

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How does the Institute support diversity?

The 2015 Institute welcomes diversity in regard to race/ethnicity, country of origin, immigration status, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, and religion.

“One of the things that YLI has inspired me to do is to be more honest from where I’m coming from terms of gender identity, my sexuality, and to be honest with folks around me, and to be open and to talk about it. That wasn’t necessarily something I was taught how to do, so being able to have a space that feels safe enough and comfortable enough, and I feel like I’ve been given the tools to articulate what’s really going on with me has been really empowering.”

*- Pia
University of California, Los Angeles
2014 YLI Fellow*