



National Coalition of South Asian Organizations

Member Handbook

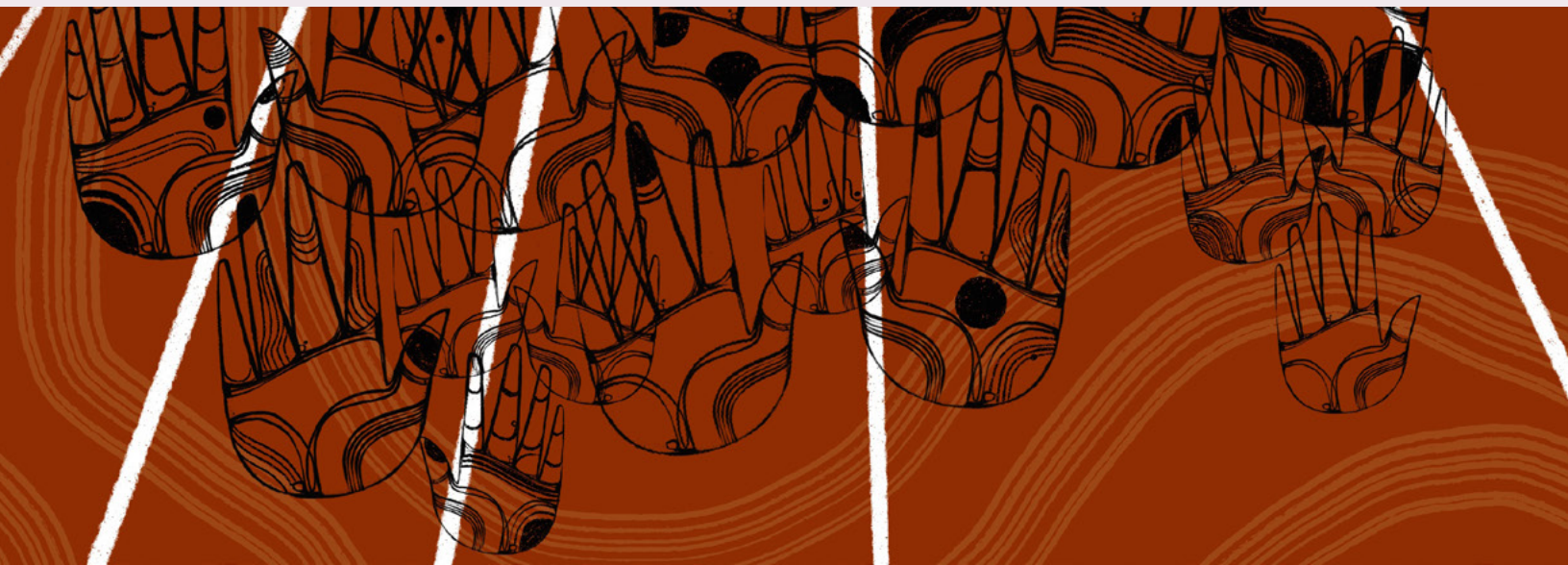


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The New NCSO

In SAALT's first year, 20 years ago, 9/11 and the subsequent Islamophobic targeting of our communities through state and interpersonal violence shook South Asians across the U.S. In the midst of that crisis, SAALT rose both to meet the needs of the moment and to help build the National Coalition of South Asian Organizations (NCSO) as an infrastructure of organizing for South Asians so that the next time a crisis struck, we would have a network in place to come together and organize, act, and advocate for ourselves and our rights.

Today, the world looks different, yet so many of the underlying, structural injustices remain. The COVID-19 pandemic is raging, devastating people's lives across the U.S., and disproportionately impacting Black and brown working-class communities. Climate change is no longer a distant theory, but a lived reality that transcends borders, which themselves are already witnessing unprecedented militarization, surveillance, and occupation. The rise of right wing authoritarian governments are threatening the livelihoods and rights of people across the world, leading to occupation of regions in South Asia, which impacts the U.S. Diaspora. And Islamophobic policies, rhetoric and white supremacist hate violence continue to endanger the lives of South Asians both in the U.S. and globally.

After nearly 12 years the NCSO remains a crucial space for our constellation of organizations. A values alignment process is necessary to evolve the NCSO to fit this ongoing reality. We hope that the NCSO will be a valuable space for organizations to build power with one another and activate community members on issues ranging from racial justice to caste abolition.

THE NCSO





About the NCSO

Since 2008, the National Coalition of South Asian Organizations ([NCSO](#)) has been a constellation of organizations around the U.S. that provides support to, organizes, and advocates on behalf of South Asian communities. It has been coordinated by South Asian Americans Leading Together ([SAALT](#)) with goals including:

- Advancing policy issues and principles articulated in the [National Action Agenda](#) and related documents at the national level;
- Identifying opportunities for joint program and policy work.

Mission

The NCSO envisions a multi-issue coalition that is working toward a world with economic, social, and political justice. Our theory of change is one that prioritizes the leadership, experiences, and demands of communities to inform our organizing and advocacy.

- Advance progressive policy change and principles articulated in the [National Action Agenda](#);
- Provide a unified voice for organizations who identify as or serve South Asian Americans;
- Exchange information, resources and expertise that can deepen and expand the impact of our work by identifying intersections and points of commonality;
- Raise awareness among community members, the general public, policymakers, media, grant makers, and other stakeholders about the needs and issues facing South Asians in the U.S. and transnationally;
- Deepen and broaden our work by learning about various strategies such as community organizing, advocacy, social service provision, and coalition-building.

Values

As organizations that serve, work with, organize, and advocate for South Asians in the U.S., we share common values and beliefs. Read our commitments below:

We are people centered:

- Our coalition honors trust, collaboration, and inclusivity.
- We create leadership pathways, recruit members, and hire from communities who are most impacted within the South Asian American community. This includes religious minorities; caste-oppressed populations (Dalit, Adivasi, Bahujan); individuals with disabilities; LGBTQ communities; those with vulnerable immigration status; working class individuals; and those with limited English proficiency understanding that we all benefit from this approach.

We believe in caste abolition:

- We recognize that caste hegemony inflicts violence on South Asian religious and ethnic groups here and abroad and are committed to working towards caste abolition.

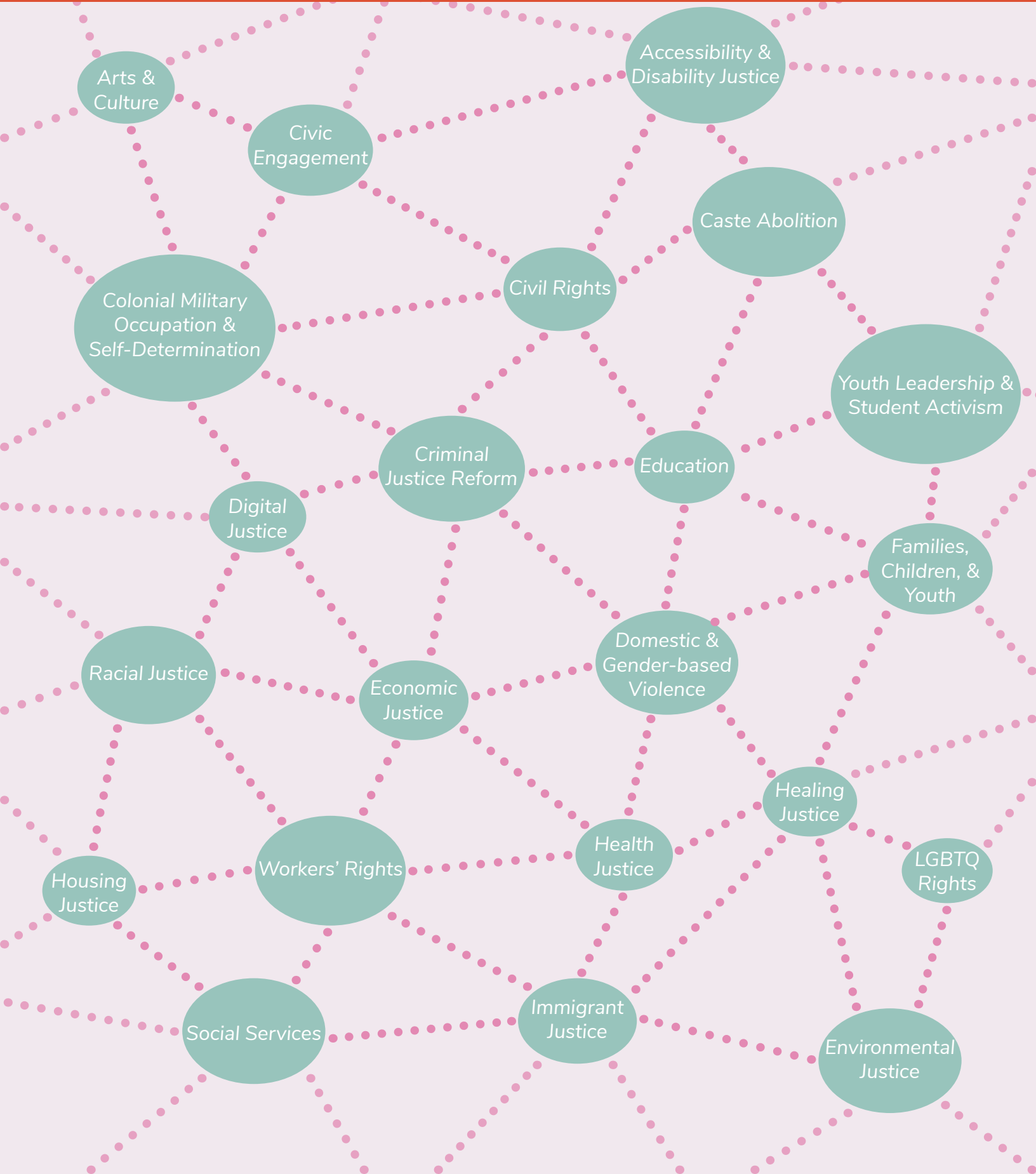
We believe in racial justice:

- We recognize the role that non-Black South Asians play in perpetuating anti-Black racism and colorism. We as a coalition have a duty to address and fight anti-Black racism on both systemic and interpersonal levels.
- We support policies and actions that promote equity among all racial and ethnic groups.
 - This can look like dedicating a specific budget to create leadership pathways and hire from Black and Indigenous communities.
 - This can look like partnering on campaigns led by the Movement for Black Lives, BYP100, or other Black led organizations.
- We support reparation and rematriation policies that promote restorative justice for all Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC).
 - If you're interested in learning more about this, SAALT will be offering a training on how organizations can manifest this as an action.

We honor growth and building community power:

- We recognize that NCSO organizations have varying roles to play in the struggle for liberation and that we will achieve this through community education; elevating local and international voices and experiences; and alliance-building with non-South Asian communities of color.
- We understand that NCSO organizations enter with varying levels of political education, and that widespread political education will bring people with varying experiences and backgrounds of political engagement together to continuously learn from, heal with, and reflect on each other's shared histories to better organize for collective liberation.
- We support investing in South Asian leadership development through funding, advocacy, and healing from intergenerational trauma of casteism, colonialism, white supremacy, and other harmful institutions.
- The NCSO will provide a space for us to mobilize quickly and effectively when threats or needs emerge that impact any one of us, prioritizing those most marginalized with critical compassion.

Areas of Work



MEMBERSHIP



Membership Structure

Tier One

Who:

South Asian organizations and APIA organizations doing work in South Asian communities.

Benefits:

Access to learning spaces, webinars, and weekly digests.

Commitment & Role:

Values in alignment with NCSO Vision, Mission, and Values, and Goals, and [National Action Agenda](#).

Governance:

No governance responsibilities.

Tier Two

Who:

South Asian organizations and APIA organizations doing work in South Asian communities.

Benefits:

Access to learning spaces, webinars, weekly digests; gatherings (including annual NCSO convening, and SAALT Summits); grants and funding opportunities.

Commitment & Role:

- Values in alignment with NCSO Vision, Mission, and Values, and Goals;
- Payment of \$35/year membership fee (*Encouraged, but optional based on organizational resources*);
- Endorse and sign-on to the [National Action Agenda](#) (A Tier Two organization is not required to work on all issues reflected in the NAA, but is required to support and publicly endorse the complete Agenda, reflecting the shared NCSO core values);
- Participate in quarterly coalition calls and trainings;
- Attendance at the National South Asian Summit and/or NCSO Summit (When possible, SAALT will provide support for 1-2 people to attend NCSO trainings or convenings).

Governance:

- Participation in 15-30 minute one-on-one check-in call with SAALT each quarter, in addition to any call/training commitments for NCSO program cohort members, as scheduled with SAALT;
- Participation in coalition campaigns, as capacity permits, identified and implemented in partnership with NCSO members;
- Optional service on the NCSO Steering Committee: sets practice and method by which the working group operates; collaboration when determining the themes of NCSO gatherings, and when allocating grant funding received for the NCSO.

Membership Decision Making

SAALT actively seeks the input of NCSO members around coalition campaigns, joint actions, and infrastructure. If member organizations have proposed actions or changes they can reach out to SAALT's Partnerships Manager or other SAALT staff to discuss further.

Steering Committee

Organizations that opt in for Tier 2 membership are invited to join the Steering Committee to shape:

- The [National Action Agenda](#), which will be updated, offering recommendations for internal and external scopes of work for South Asian organizations in the U.S.
- Visionary and rapid response campaigns housed within the NCSO, with administrative and communications support provided by SAALT.
- Quarterly funding and media strategy sessions to help move money and media opportunities to grassroots organizations, with administrative and networking support provided by SAALT.

Membership Application, Renewal, and Deactivation

Membership Application Process

For any new organization, you will receive a request to connect with SAALT's Partnerships Manager after you [submit an application](#). After discussing any questions or concerns you will be invited to the NCSO listserv and introduced as a new organization and listed on our website. You will be requested to share an organizational image and description to be added to SAALT's website.

Membership Fee

- If your [application](#) as a Tier 2 organization is accepted, your organization is encouraged to submit a \$35/year membership fee [here](#).
- The membership fee will be used exclusively for NCSO activities and campaigns.
- You must list your organization name in the "Company Name" field portion of the [application](#).
- The membership fee is encouraged, but optional based on organizational resources. Please reach out to the Partnerships Manager by emailing partnerships@saalt.org if you have any questions.

Membership Renewal

- While we are all committed to the long-term journey toward collective liberation, NCSO membership must be renewed annually in the Fall.
- You will be invited to renew your membership every year during the month of September. This helps us to keep track of who is actively invested in the NCSO. Given the rapidly changing nature of our work and our surroundings, this will help us to continuously grow and realign on the direction of the NCSO's work.
- If your membership is not renewed it is considered lapsed.

Membership Grievances and Deactivation

We acknowledge that there have been incidents within the NCSO, including programmatic work, email exchanges, and office culture that have enabled harm against caste oppressed communities, religious minorities, LGBTQI people, and women.

As lead facilitators and organizers of the NCSO, SAALT has not historically provided sufficient leadership or accountability to address this harm. Moving forward, the NCSO will be governed by the guidelines below and process for conflict mediation and deactivation. By deactivating groups who continue to cause harm, we are preserving the space for a constellation of organizations that honor accountability, growth, and healing.

The process will be as follows:

- Members are encouraged to bring grievances to SAALT's Partnerships Manager or staff. SAALT commits to timely and direct communications as conflict arises and to not undermine each other's leadership and experiences. SAALT staff has the right to exercise discretion on a case by case basis depending on the nature of the conflict.
- If conflict continues or a resolution is not reached with the support of SAALT staff, NCSO members are encouraged to hire consultants versed in conflict mediation and transformative justice. Please reach out to us for recommendations, if desired.
- If a conflict cannot be resolved and/or when NCSO members consistently violate the NCSO principles and membership core agreements, their membership to the NCSO may be deactivated.

SAALT also commits to the same process of accountability. If your organization has a grievance, please reach out to SAALT's Partnerships Manager, partnerships@saalt.org, to initiate this process.

Membership Activation Points

NCSO Membership Provides Organizations with...

- Values aligned kinship;
- Tools, training, and curricula;
 - “Re-Alignment” Trainings to support NCSO members becoming more aligned in their work to broader NCSO values and mission;
 - Systemic racism 101 with a focus on anti-Black racism;
 - Domestic violence and the carceral system;
 - Caste equity and abolition;
 - Transnational solidarity;
- Gatherings and convenings;
- National and local advocacy support;
- Policy analysis;
- Tier 2 will receive access to grants and funding opportunities.

NCSO Listserv

The NCSO listserv is the primary mode of communication about NCSO events (e.g., sub-grant programs, trainings, conference calls, campaigns) and activities (e.g., joint statements). Please contact partnerships@saalt.org if you have questions.

Communications Process

- All coalition based information and deadlines will be shared via the coalition listserv;
- Your organization will have the opportunity to provide input and suggested revisions and/or request to NOT be added to a sign-on statement by the deadline;
- If SAALT has not received input, revisions, or a request to not be included on a joint statement or campaign, it will be assumed that you support the proposed policy/procedure;
- Note: Often, the NCSO must employ rapid response to best address issues and events in the community in a timely, relevant manner. In these instances, the deadline will be short.

Membership Sample Activities

The first ever stand-alone NCSO summit was held in April 2018 as an opportunity to network and build power within a broad range of member organizations serving South Asian American communities. The summit began with a convening followed by a Congressional Briefing on Capitol Hill and lobby day. NCSO members met with nearly forty Members of Congress to advocate on policy priorities relating to domestic violence, immigration, health, and more.

Frequently Asked Questions:

What if we do not complete the 2020 Renewal Application?

- If your membership is not renewed it is considered invalid until renewal occurs.

How do I submit the Membership Fee?

- If your organization was accepted as a Tier 2 organization please submit your annual \$35 membership dues [here](#).
- You must list your organization name in the “Company Name” field portion of the [application](#).

Who can I reach out to propose a NCSO campaign?

- Please reach out to SAALT’s Partnerships Manager or SAALT staff directly.

What do I do if a conflict arises amongst NCSO members?

- We encourage groups to follow a harm reductionist approach that includes direct one-on-one dialogue.
- We believe the survivors of abusive power should not be tasked with educating those who have caused the harm.
- If conflict continues members are encouraged to speak with SAALT’s Partnerships Manager or SAALT staff.

How do I add someone from my organization to the NCSO Listserv?

- Please contact SAALT’s Partnerships Manager or staff member to add additional members.

Contact:

SAALT's Partnerships Manager - partnerships@saalt.org

NCSO Listserv - southasiancoalition@googlegroups.com



Illustrations by [Shyama Kuver, Heart Over Crown](#)



saalt

