

YOUNG LEADERS INSTITUTE 2014

Cultivate skills. Connect with community. Create change.

Young Leaders Institute 2014 Report

On July 18-20, 2014, SAALT convened 13 university students from across the country at the third annual *Young Leaders Institute* in Washington, DC. The Institute offered young leaders the opportunity 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 was 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 Young Leaders Institute 2014 specifically focused on the LGBTQ justice and allyship within the South Asian community and broader communities of color in the US. Participants explored South Asian and LGBTQ social justice movements in the US; privilege and oppression; the intersections of LGBTQ identities, race, gender, and religion; and storytelling as a tool for social change. Students also developed projects to address LGBTQ justice and allyship on their campuses and in their communities.



“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**

YOUNG LEADERS INSTITUTE 2014

Young Leaders

13 university students representing 12 campuses and cities across the U.S. attended the 3-day intensive training.

Universities

Boston University
Boston, MA

Bryn Mawr College
Bryn Mawr, PA

Cornell University
Ithaca, NY

Emory University
Atlanta, GA

Georgia State University
Atlanta, GA

Rutgers University
Newark, NJ

Reed College
Portland, OR

Seattle University
Seattle, WA

Texas Tech University
Lubbock, TX

University of California, Los Angeles
Los Angeles, California

University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

University of Washington
Seattle, WA



“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. The Southwest Green Pass has helped me because I would not have been able to come otherwise. Thank you, Southwest!”

**- Pia
University of California, Los Angeles**

YOUNG LEADERS INSTITUTE 2014

Campus Projects

Students developed projects which they will implement on their campuses and in their communities in the 2014-2015 academic year. Examples of campus projects will seek to address LGBTQ justice and allyship in the following ways:

- Develop a contemporary anthology that elevates the experiences and voices of queer and trans* Desis. The anthology will be supplemented by a website offering practical resources for friends, family members, and other allies.
- Capture a series of interviews that focus on queer and gender nonconforming South Asian Americans and their relationships with their parents, in order to bring about changes in perception and attitudes of parental figures within the larger South Asian community and communities of color.
- Collaborate with local artists to produce a performance around the theme of “What We Carry, What We Leave Behind,” dealing with themes relating to home, crossing borders or boundaries, identity, and safety. Solo pieces using multiple art forms will tell stories grounded in personal experiences.
- Formalize a safe space network of staff and faculty for LGBTQ students on campus to turn to for support, and create a campus environment of increased awareness around issues affecting LGBTQ students.



It's opened my eyes, this weekend, to be interested and care about the things that got a person to the place they are, and that you can learn from that. You never know what you're going to hear, listening, caring, and absorbing everything around you; it's integral for your own growth and your ability to serve the community."

**- Lalita
Georgia State University**

YOUNG LEADERS INSTITUTE 2014

Next Steps

SAALT will continue to work with Young Leaders Institute students in a variety of ways:

- Support the further development and implementation of campus projects to create social change on the campuses and in local communities.
- Host monthly group conference calls to identify project support needs, share report backs, and encourage peer exchange and accountability.
- Highlight and share with SAALT supporters the work of students through social media, website, and blogging.
- Provide opportunities for students to participate in *Be the Change*, SAALT's annual national day of volunteerism that encourages communities to answer Mahatma Gandhi's challenge to "be the change you wish to see in the world".
- Provide opportunities for students to engage with SAALT's local, regional, and national work around issues such as civic and political engagement, immigration, racial profiling, and bullying.
- Provide opportunities for students to reconnect during the *National South Asian Summit 2015* and to share the change created by their projects on their campuses and in their communities.
- Conduct program evaluation to ensure continued evolution of better practices.
- Partner with Institute Fellows to develop *Young Leaders Institute 2015* to ensure a robust annual training and active participant ownership.



"I really enjoyed my time here at the SAALT Young Leaders Institute. One of the great things about it is there's already so much established community, and I really want to reach out to LGBTQ South Asians in the Pacific Northwest. I'm really excited to hear that there are already people that are doing that kind of work there, and I'm really inspired to contribute to building community in those spaces."

**- Shabab
Reed College**

The *Young Leaders Institute* was made possible with the generous support of Comcast and Southwest.

