

**Highlights from the 2011 National South Asian Summit
April 1–4, 2011 | Washington DC
Convened by South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)**

THE SUMMIT

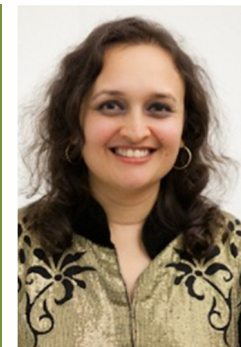
- More than 250 people—representing 17 states across the US and Canada and 29 South Asian community-based organizations—gathered in Washington, DC for the 2011 National South Asian Summit.
- Co-sponsored by South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT) and the South Asian Law Students Association (SALSA) at the American University Washington College of Law, the second National South Asian Summit brought together activists, advocates, allies and community members for four days of advocacy, peer exchange, skills-building, and more.
- The second ChangeMakers Awards reception, featuring Bhairavi Desai, honored three individuals and programs making an impact in social justice work
- The Summit enabled participants to bring local voices and experiences to the national level through roundtables with government agency representatives; a congressional briefing on the continuing impacts of post-September 11th backlash on our communities, with remarks by Representative Judy Chu; and Hill visits to 20 legislative offices.
- Members of the National Coalition of South Asian Organizations (founded in 2008 and coordinated by SAALT) met at the National South Asian Summit to continue peer exchanges, strategy development, and regional collaborations.
- The Summit was supported by South Asian law firms (The Murthy Law Firm; Kumar, Patel, Prabhu and Banerjee), foundations (the Four Freedoms Fund) and corporate sponsors (Southwest Airlines).

CHANGEMAKERS AWARDS RECEPTION

- Keeping its tradition to honor individuals and organizations who have made an exception impact on social change, this year SAALT held its second ChangeMaker Awards.
- This year's keynote speaker was Bhairavi Desai, Co-founder and Executive Director of the New York Taxi Workers Alliance. She shared moving remarks about the importance of organizing and fighting for immigrant rights.
- This year's awardees were two individuals and one organization that have truly empowered their communities and uplifted the voices of South Asians in the US. The awardees this year were:
 - Luna Ranjit, Executive Director, Adhikaar for Human Rights. Luna has been a champion for uplifting Nepali communities in New



Over 250 individuals including representatives of 29 South Asian community-based organizations gathered in Washington, DC to speak out, raise awareness, and collectively brainstorm solutions against growing xenophobia and discrimination in the United States at the third, national South Asian Summit 2011, hosted by SAALT.



"There is no other answer to organized oppression, racism, the xenophobia that we see unfold on a daily basis in this country - there is no other answer to that except organizing,"- Bhairavi Desai, keynote speaker at the ChangeMakers Award Reception.

York. Her organization runs a community center that provides legal consultations, language classes, rights trainings six days a week.

- SAMHAJ –this New Jersey-based organization works to break the barriers against speaking about mental health in South Asian communities. Dispelling the stigma of mental health, SAMHAJ – meaning “understanding” - provides resources, illness management information and educates gatekeepers, such as school leadership, care providers and law enforcement officers, among others.
- Prerna Lal, Co-founder, DREAMActivist.org Prerna is a young law student at The George Washington University, who is also a board member of Immigration Equality, and a prominent human rights blogger at Change.org. Prerna created an online youth movement supporting the DREAM Act, generating 8,000+ followers on Twitter, and over 70,000 fans on Facebook – all without any institutional or financial support. She has also developed a free legal nationwide consultation service for immigrant youth - Educators for Fair Consideration (E4FC).



ChangeMaker Luna Ranjit receiving her award from SAALT Board Member, Jayesh Rathod.

WORKSHOPS AND SESSIONS

- The 2011 South Asian Summit included opportunities for issue-based discussions, strategy sessions, and skills-building workshops.
- Issue-based sessions included: Struggle for Justice: Issues Affecting LGBTQ South Asians; Inclusive Spaces: Anti-Violence Organizations, Outreach and Organizing; From the Voices of Workers: Organizing and Advocating for Labor Rights in South Asian Communities; Gender Equity and the South Asian Community: Elevating Trends from the Front Lines; Connecting the Local to the Global: From South Asia and the Middle East, to the Border and Our Backyards; Drawing the Data, Drawing the Lines: Census 2010 and Redistricting in South Asian Communities; Equal Opportunities and Safe Spaces for South Asian Youth; South Asians Seniors: Issues of Concern and Strategies for Engagement; The Affordable Care Act: What Health Care Reform Means for the South Asian Community; A Diagnosis of Health Care Issues Affecting the South Asian Community; and The “New” Frontier: Immigration Enforcement Affecting South Asians.
- Organizational development sessions included: Building a Development Plan; Board Development and Leadership: A Hands-On Workshop; Organizations and Leadership in Transition: Tips and Strategies; Ten Years After 9/11: Best Practices from the Field to Address Bias, Discrimination, and Profiling; Getting Your Message Out Through Media; Speed Networking: Meet the Funders!; Beyond Facebook, Twitter, and Blogs: How to use social media to market your organization; and Choosing Wisely: Community Group Formalization and Other Threats to the Movement



“We learned something new in all the workshops we attended and met some incredible folks from around the country (and Canada!) doing great work. We're looking forward to putting everything we've gotten out of the Summit to use and building on these new relationships as we move forward.” – Moumita, New York



- Skills-building session included: Documenting Your Community's Stories; South Asian Generations at Work; Advocacy Training; Campus Leadership and Activism; Bringing Art to the Struggle; Insights from the Non-Profit Sector: Breaking Through, Advancing, Sustaining; Organizing Against Oppression; and Civic and Political Engagement: From Running for Office to Being a Civic Leader.
- One of the most successful Summit sessions, based on participant feedback, was Speed Networking: Meet the Funders!, in which participants selected three 10-minute timeslots to meet with representatives from Open Society Institute, Environmental Defense Fund, Proteus, A Better Chance, and Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy. The session provided an opportunity for attendees to discuss funding ideas and challenges and receive immediate feedback from a funder.



"[Advocacy Day] was a truly unique opportunity to bring forth issues in our communities to lawmakers. Most of us, even as advocates, do not get the opportunity to have access to Washington, DC the way we do through SAALT. Thanks to SAALT for making that happen and for paving the way for real change, from the community to national policy!" – Nadia, California

ADVOCACY DAY

- The Summit provided a national coordinated effort for South Asian community members to meet with policymakers in Congress and government agencies in order to raise issues affecting the community through a progressive framework and to learn about the policy priorities of various government entities.
- Highlights included a Congressional briefing on the impact of post-9/11 issues on the South Asian community; roundtables with numerous federal government agencies; and Hill visits with Congressional offices.
- As part of SAALT's *An America for All of Us* campaign on the 10-year anniversary of 9/11, participants attended a Congressional briefing featuring directly affected community members and advocates impacted by the past decade of discrimination through profiling, bias-based bullying, immigration enforcement, and increased Islamophobia. Speakers included Talat Hamdani of 9/11 Families for Peaceful Tomorrows; Manju Kulkarni of South Asian Network; Monami Maulik of Desis Rising Up and Moving; Linda Sarsour of the National Network for Arab American Communities; Gurwinder Singh, a student impacted by bias-based bullying; and Prabhjit Singh, an individual affected by airport profiling. Special remarks were also shared by Congresswoman Judy Chu, chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), and Congressman Michael Honda's office, past chair of CAPAC.
- Government agency roundtables included representatives from the Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Labor, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, and State; the Embassies of India and Pakistan; the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; the Office on Violence Against Women; and the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.



"Nine years ago, I lost my son, I lost my faith because of those hijackers, and now we are [under threat] to lose our nationality, our identity as Americans." - Talat Hamdani, September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows

- Harnessing the power of the number of community members who came from various states around the country, including California, Maryland, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Virginia, attendees participated in meetings with the staff of 20 Congressional offices, both in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. Participants advocated for much-needed policy reforms, including immigration reform, protection against racial profiling, and bias-based bullying. Participants also encouraged Congressional offices to endorse the *An America for All of Us* pledge for policymakers.



"It is so important for you to be at the Capitol at this time as we approach the 10-year anniversary of 9/11. It is so important for you to be here to fight against the worst policies that occurred due to 9/11 but also to ensure that even more egregious hate crimes do not occur as people are reminded of the horrors of that day." - Congresswoman Judy Chu (D-CA), Chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC).

MEDIA

Newspaper Hits:

- Activists Draw Attention to Bias, Discrimination. *India Abroad*, (April 15, 2011)
- Fight to Keep Bigotry at Bay. *India Abroad*, (April 15, 2011)
- A Lot Done, a lot still to be done, says SAALT leader. *India Abroad*, (April 15, 2011)
- Conference Focuses on Xenophobia, Discrimination. *News India Times*, (April 19, 2011)
- How We Lobbied for Civil Rights ... and Got Profiled by Capitol Hill Police. *The Sikh Coalition*, (April 4, 2011) (blog)
- South Asian Communities Unite At South Asian Summit, *India West* (May 10, 2011).

Blog Hits:

- #SAALT South Asian Summit. *Prernalal.com* (April 4, 2011)
- Brown people STAND UP. *The Beautiful Breakdown* (April 5, 2011)

NEXT STEPS

We anticipate that next steps will differ depending on individual and organizational interests. A range of suggestions were offered at the Summit and in evaluations, such as:

- Continuing to share information among organizations regarding best practices and organizational development.
- Launching the “We Build Community” initiative with selected NCSO organizational partners to provide technical assistance, training and subgrants to ensure that groups can better engage on issues in their communities through advocacy, organizing and communications strategies.
- Linking groups and community members to the *An America For All of Us* campaign which will mark the ten-year anniversary of September 11, 2001.
- Identifying new ways to collaborate and build bridges with South Asian organizations and allies in the broader immigrant community at the local, regional, and national levels.
- Organizing collectively around immigration, racial profiling, housing, violence against women, bullying, LGBTQ, and economic justice.
- Applying innovative approaches involving youth voices and inclusive perspectives to document community stories through narratives, film, art, and new media.
- Continuing dialogues at the local level with policymakers.
- Linking relevant government agencies with local organizations in outreach efforts and activities occurring in various parts of the country.
- Coordinating future local advocacy trainings and in-district Congressional visits to foster local relationships and increase pressure from the field on federal policy issues.
- Connecting resources and experts with community-based organizations.
- Identifying opportunities for community education around post-September 11 backlash. SAALT will be connecting with Summit participants in the months to come in various ways, including community hearings at the local level, national webinars, and opportunities for trainings and collaborations.
- Convening the fourth South Asian Summit in 2013.