

**2021**  
IMPACT REPORT

**DEMOCRACY**

**NEEDS US**

**NEW**  
**AMERICAN**  
**LEADERS**  
**ACTION**  
**FUND**

New American candidates had historic wins in 2021, from small towns to major cities. They did so despite facing pandemic restrictions, racism, misogyny, and unprecedented dark money. Unfortunately, the local or national Democratic party did not always support BIPOC candidates nor invest in outreach to New American voters.

The New American Leaders Action Fund (NALAF) recognizes the strength of these political trailblazers and their potential to inspire voters. New Americans hold enormous political power and can be the key to progressive victories, but only with meaningful, sustained investment. This year, NALAF continued to build a critical mass of progressive leaders in office ready to change policies and politics. Thanks to the leadership and organizing of our candidates, New American communities are more engaged in elections than ever.

## Endorsements

NALAF endorsed 45 candidates at local and state races in seven states. Endorseees were first and second generation candidates who demonstrated commitment to a diverse coalition of voters, a history of advocating for immigrants, and support for democratic and immigration reforms. We also focused on women running for legislative bodies with substantial gender gaps.

Endorseees received check-in calls, referrals to other endorsing organizations, weekly emails listing campaign resources, and access to NALAF's educational webinars. Top needs cited were funding, volunteer recruitment, self-care resources, and independent expenditures for voter turnout. No endorsee reported corporate PAC contributions. We were also pleased to see previous endorseees advance to party leadership positions and mayorships this year.



# NALAF Endorsees Leading the Way

In 2021, many NALAF endorsees made history, becoming 'firsts' in their communities, including:

- Abdullah Hammoud was elected to become the first Arab American and first Muslim American mayor of Dearborn, Michigan.
- Coco Alinsung was elected to serve on the Lynn City Council, becoming the first Filipino American elected in Massachusetts.
- Ukeme Awakesien Jeter became the first person of color and the first immigrant elected to serve on the Upper Arlington City Council in Ohio.
- Liliana Bakhtiari was elected to the Atlanta City Council, becoming the first out queer Muslim in elected office in Georgia.

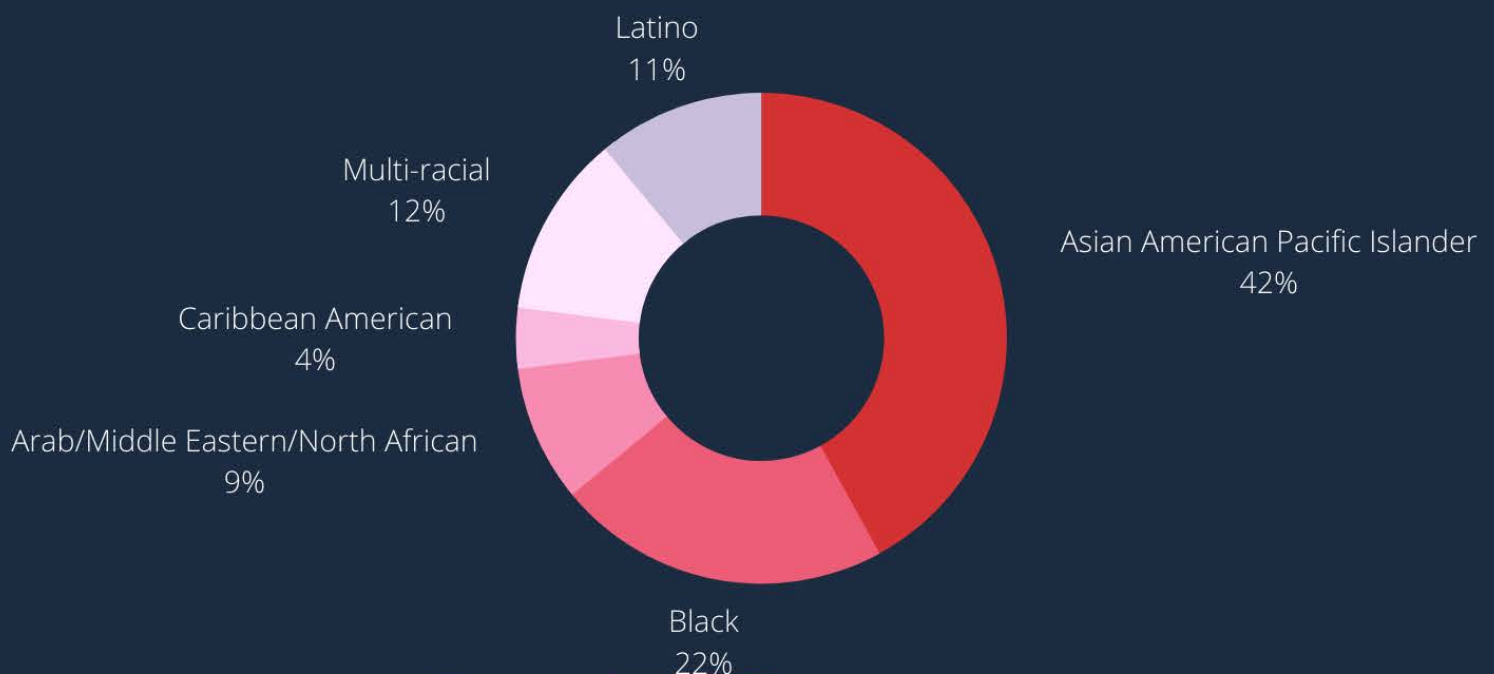
**45**   
**Candidates**

**37**   
**races in  
nine states**

**65%**   
**of races won**

**13%**   
**LGBTQ+**

**60%**   
**women**



## Reaching New American Voters

NALAF launched its first voter engagement efforts to turn out voters in critical districts with one phone bank and six text banks. Testing the immigrant predictive voter model in partnership with the Movement Cooperative, NALAF identified voters who supported immigration reform and resided where New Americans could make a significant difference. The results can help sharpen targeting in other states in 2022.

NALAF volunteers texted more than 40,000 voters in New York City and Virginia. Despite disappointing statewide results in Virginia, endorsees Kathy Tran and Elizabeth Guzman won re-election to the Virginia House of Delegates. Guzman received 54% of the vote, an increase from 2019.

“ I was the only candidate for the City Council this year to knock on doors and talk about my values, just as NALAF advises. Canvassing helped educate voters who typically only pay attention during a presidential election. As a result, we increased voter turnout and introduced people to local politics and issues – good groundwork for future elections. NALAF’s endorsement and the support I received through check-ins, resource emails, and referrals, made a difference.

Ajmeri Hoque, 2021 NALAF Endorsee for Dublin, Ohio City Council, Ward 1

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## Strategic Partnerships

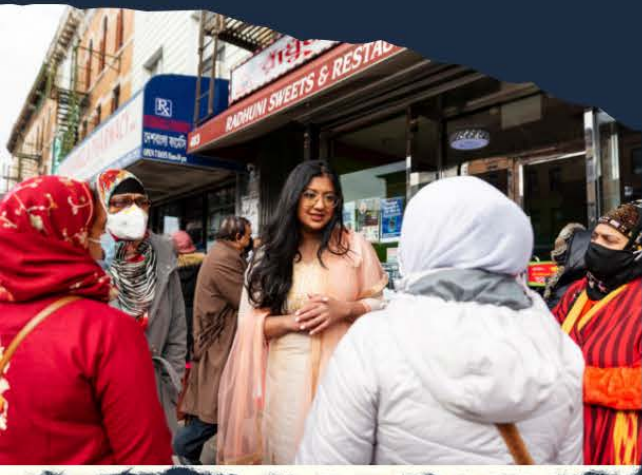
NALAF worked alongside other national organizations to align strategies and advance a common agenda for a progressive and diverse bench of candidates. NALAF fills a critical space in the movement. Many national organizations consult NALAF to amplify emerging immigrant leadership, bringing needed resources to candidates at the local level across the country. We partnered with Run for Something, the Pipeline Initiative, America Votes chapters, and others to recruit candidates, collaborate on data, and refer endorsees.

Regular communications with our partners helped NALAF address the campaigns' needs, combat misinformation, collaborate on GOTV, and host events to highlight best practices. In addition, we participated in coalitions like Home is Here to advocate for much-needed policies such as citizenship for all and federal voting rights.

# Making History in New York City

**For the first time, the majority of the New York City Council Members are BIPOC and women. Ten NALAF endorsees, nine of them women, won seats – comprising 20% of the City Council!**

This historic win was no accident. NALAF, and its 501c3 affiliate New American Leaders, have developed deep roots in New York. Our work, combined with the implementation of rank choice voting, opened the door for many women and non-traditional candidates. NALAF is proud to have endorsed trailblazers such as Julie Won, one of the first Korean American Council Member, and Crystal Hudson, the first out gay Black woman Council Member.



One newly elected Council Member, Shahana Hanif, is the daughter of working-class Bangladeshi immigrants and a long-time community organizer. Her struggles living with lupus motivated her to run for office, and politics is often hostile to people with disabilities, degenerative diseases, and mental health issues. Still, she knew health care was one of her community's top issues.

Shahana honed her campaign skills at a New American Leaders training and received a NALAF endorsement. Steeped in NALAF's values of growing the electorate, centering the immigrant experience, and running grassroots campaigns, Shahana and her team worked hard to register the large Bangladeshi community to vote. They mobilized super volunteers and created campaign literature, handwritten notes, and digital ads in Bangla. She had the highest voter turnout in general in the whole city, and the turnout among Bangladeshi voters tripled.

Voters were hungry for a candidate that reminded them of themselves: a working-class woman of color who faces challenges head on. As a result of this thoughtful campaign, Hanif became the first Muslim woman elected to the New York City Council. She is one of the first South Asian representatives and the first woman of color to represent her Brooklyn district.

# Seizing the Moment in 2022

Since 2018, New Americans have turned out to run and vote in record numbers, ushering in a new generation of progressive leaders and policies. But in 2022, our hard-won progress is on the line. NALAF is not backing down from its vision of inclusive democracy and will redouble efforts to find the most promising, community-grounded New American candidates in priority states including Arizona, California, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, and New York. At the same time, we are launching a new volunteer network to support progressive causes and candidates by activating voters in districts where New Americans can make a difference.

Join NALAF and help us create lasting political power for immigrant communities. For more information, contact [jessica@newamericanleaders.org](mailto:jessica@newamericanleaders.org).

