February
The 2016 Justice in Action Awards were presented at AALDEF’s annual Lunar New Year Gala to Eric H. Holder, Jr., former U.S. Attorney General and now partner at Covington & Burling LLP, Heidi Chen, Executive VP, General Counsel, and Corporate Secretary of Zoetis, Inc.; and Phil Yu, editor and founder of Angry Asian Man. NBA star Jeremy Lin gave a video greeting, and actor/activist George Takei capped off the evening with a special message, noting that when AALDEF does its important work, “we all live long and prosper.” Sree Sreenivasan and CBS2 News reporter Cindy Yu were emcees for the event at Pier Sixty, Chelsea Piers, attended by more than 750 leaders in law, civil rights, business, and the arts.

March
AALDEF won a $900,000 default judgment from a NY federal court for an Asian woman who was trafficked into the U.S. and forced to perform strenuous household labor for over a decade, without pay or freedom of movement.

April
AALDEF conducted a bilingual exit poll in the 2016 presidential primary elections in New York City and also monitored the special election in Lower Manhattan’s 65th Assembly District.

May
AALDEF and other immigrant rights groups successfully advocated for the NY’s Board of Regents to permit qualified non-citizens to pursue higher education and obtain professional licenses. The decision affects hundreds of thousands of non-citizen students, including DACA students, who are educated in public schools and receive New York high school diplomas.

June
In Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin, the Supreme Court upheld the consideration of race as a factor in university admissions. Justice Kennedy cited AALDEF’s amicus brief in his majority opinion, noting that Fisher’s claim that UT-Austin discriminated against Asian Americans was “entirely unsupported by evidence in the record or empirical data.”

AALDEF criticized the Supreme Court’s 4-4 decision that left in place a nationwide injunction against President Obama’s executive actions on immigration. As a result, the expanded Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which would have provided relief from deportation for certain undocumented immigrants, was not allowed to take effect.

August
AALDEF represented Mallika Das, an Indian American voter, and OCA-Houston in a successful challenge to a Texas state statute that violated the Voting Rights Act. A federal judge struck down the state election law that required all intrastate voters to be registered voters in the county where they are providing language assistance. Sadly, Mr. Das died of cancer on June 2, Saundh Das, her son, said she would have been proud to win this case, knowing it could help many voters in the future.

September
RAGEE, the undocumented youth group affiliated with AALDEF, collaborated with DRUM to launch a new zone, AMPLIFY(HER), written by and for undocumented Asian women.

October
AALDEF used social media to criticize negative stereotypes of Asian-Americans on TV, including a Fox News segment that mocked limited English proficient people in New York’s Chinatown and a planned NBC sitcom that idealized human trafficking. AALDEF’s tweets were published in Entertainment Weekly, Politico, and the Washington Post.

An article in New Yorker magazine described AALDEF’s voter registration of newly-naturalized Asian-American citizens at the Manhattan federal courthouse.

November
More than 650 AALDEF volunteers monitored polling places in 14 states on Election Day and conducted a multilingual exit poll of 13,666 Asian American voters, the largest survey of its kind in the nation. We observed voters denied language assistance and Asian Muslim women voters who faced discrimination at the polls. A full report will be released in 2017.