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Practitioner Essay

Uniting to Move Forward: Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders in 2040

Richard Calvin Chang

Abstract

This essay examines the importance of disaggregating Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander data, issues currently faced by NHPI communities, and where NHPI communities could be in 2040. Projected demographic trends may exacerbate challenges faced by NHPIs in areas such as health, education, income, incarceration, housing, and immigration. The impact of climate change, technological innovations, and the United States' shift towards a majority-minority status on NHPI communities are also analyzed. Three recommendations for improving the position of NHPIs in 2040 are provided: (1) Address the needs of an increasingly diverse NHPI community; (2) develop community capacity for civic engagement; and (3) invest in leadership development and NHPI youth.

Introduction: A Look into America's Future

A look into America's future by the year 2040 requires looking at how Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders (NHPIs) self-identify, how NHPIs are identified and classified, and where NHPIs take up residence. This includes how the federal government defines NHPI, the importance of data disaggregation in shaping the discourse and trajectory of NHPI identity, and the importance of community and power, as a sovereign nation or a swing vote.

There are many ways that NHPIs identify themselves. For Native Hawaiians, it is traditionally tied to genealogical practices. Being multiracial is not an obstacle to Native Hawaiian identity, which has historically been inclusive. NHPI identity has certainly been impacted by history, colonialization, and Western attempts to impose a restrictive application of blood quantum to define eligibility under property and immigration laws.

It was not until the 1970s that the federal government acknowledged that there was a need to collect racial and ethnic data in order to monitor and enforce civil rights laws passed in the 1960s (Spoehr, 2007). In 1976, the Office of Management and Budget created racial and ethnic categories for federal data collection and reporting, one of which was Asian and Pacific Islander (API). It was not until 1997 that the Office of Management and Budget revised Statistical Policy Directive No. 15, Race and Ethnic Standards for Federal Statistics and Administrative Reporting (OMB Directive 15), separating the API category into two groups: “Asian” and “Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.” Proponents of the revision argued convincingly that the API category masked significant health and socioeconomic disparities (Office of Management and Budget, 1997; Spoehr, 2007). Despite this change for federally mandated standards over the last quarter of a century, however, many federal agencies, and other institutions and nonprofits, continue to fail to report NHPI data by continuing to utilize the overly broad API category (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2015; Panapasa, Crabbe, and Kaholokula, 2012; The College Board, 2014).¹ This practice has adverse consequences and will need to change if our nation wants to understand, address, and embrace two of the fastest-growing groups—NHPI and multiracial—in America. Per the 2010 Census, more than half of all NHPIs report being NHPI in combination with one or more other races and that is because NHPIs value intergroup marriage, as exemplified by the Hawaiian kingdom’s codification of the practice in 1840, 127 years before the 1967 U.S. Supreme Court decision against antimiscegenation laws in *Loving v. Virginia*.

While there is ongoing dialogue with the U.S. Census Bureau regarding how to remedy the situation on how to count NHPIs, as of 2015, the U.S. Census Bureau reports at least twenty-four NHPI groups, each with its own distinct cultural traditions, language, and relationship with the United States.² There are also economic factors and trending political and social constructs that may affect how NHPIs self-report their identity. For example, some NHPIs rely on funding that is associated with their indigenous status as native peoples, and when asked to choose between classifying themselves as “Asian Pacific Islander” they may opt to choose or write in “Native American, Native Hawaiian, or Alaskan Native.”

Currently, the large number of relatively small NHPI groups creates challenges for agencies and organizations tasked with providing linguistic and culturally competent services. Larger NHPI communities may be given higher priority for resources, creating a lag in program development for smaller NHPI communities, regardless of need.

Race and place are important. NHPIs reside in all fifty states with nearly half residing in Hawai'i and California. Approximately twice as many NHPIs reside in the continent compared to Hawai'i. While NHPIs are concentrated mostly in Hawai'i and within western states, the states with the fastest-growing NHPI populations as of 2010 were Arkansas, Nevada, Alaska, Arizona, and Alabama. Different NHPI communities have also settled in distinct states. California is home to more Samoans than any other state. The majority of Tongans reside in Utah and California. The largest community of Marshallese outside of Hawai'i resides in Arkansas. Moving forward, communities will be impacted differently based on various state legislative policies, varying costs of living, and vulnerability to displacement. Areas with clusters of NHPIs from islands that are particularly vulnerable to climate change may also see accelerated growth due to population migration.

NHPIs in 2015

The Census Bureau estimates that there are approximately 1.5 million NHPIs in the United States as of 2015 (Ong, Ong, and Ong, 2015).

The following issue areas represent ongoing areas of concern that could shape the future of NHPIs. The complex impact of each NHPI community's unique historical relationship with the United States within these issue areas is deserving of far more detailed analysis than this essay can provide.

While these differences must be acknowledged, there are issues, such as health, education, poverty, and housing, where NHPIs experience disproportionately poor outcomes. These efforts have often highlighted disparities that become invisible under the oft-used and overly broad "Asian Pacific Islander" data category, such as the importance of addressing alarmingly high cancer rates and chronic illnesses related to obesity, low higher educational attainment rates, poverty levels among the lowest of any group in the United States, and similarly low homeownership rates. Policy discussions by mainstream organizations regarding the remaining issue areas discussed in the following text, including incarceration and immigration, unfortunately often leave NHPIs out of the conversation, either due to lack of disaggregated data or interest. The following represents a snapshot of where NHPIs are today to provide context for the anticipated trajectory of NHPI.

Regarding health, NHPIs are more likely to be diagnosed with heart disease, cancer, and diabetes than any other racial group. Mental health has also been a rising concern for NHPIs. The Centers for Dis-

ease Control and Prevention has revealed that suicide deaths among NHPIs increased 170 percent between 2005 and 2010. About 35 percent of NHPI are obese, compared to 28 percent for the total population. Approximately one in four Tongans and Marshallese are uninsured, a rate comparable to Latinos (31 percent) and Black or African Americans (18 percent). Given the high poverty rate of NHPIs, it is even more critical that affordable health care remains available and accompanied by linguistic and culturally competent outreach and support services.

Education is also frequently cited as a high priority issue by NHPI community leaders. The percentage of NHPI adults with at least a bachelor's degree is 18 percent, significantly below that of the total population of 28 percent (Empowering Pacific Islander Communities and Asian Americans Advancing Justice, 2014). In fact, the rate of bachelor's degree attainment among NHPIs twenty-five years and older is identical to Blacks or African Americans. The higher educational attainment rate for Tongans and Samoans is nearly identical to that of Latinos. For Marshallese, the higher educational attainment rate is 3 percent, lower than any other racial and ethnic group. Despite these statistics, NHPIs have struggled to draw much-needed attention and resources to increase bachelor's degree attainment rates. Continued use of the API label prevents policy makers and institutions with resources from acknowledging the challenges facing NHPIs by placing NHPIs within the model minority myth. This misperception is reinforced by scholarships for underserved and underrepresented communities that exclude NHPIs from applying. The College Board, which operates the SAT and Advanced Placement Program utilizes the API category when reporting results by race and ethnicity. As such, NHPIs are not listed as one of the three traditionally underserved groups of students in the breakdown of "Equity Gaps in Participation and Success among Traditionally Underserved Students" (The College Board, 2014).

Income and poverty remain relatively unaddressed, particularly for NHPIs living in the continental United States, in part due to the lack of disaggregated data. The per capita income of NHPIs is \$19,051, well below the total population's average per capita income of \$27,334 (Empowering Pacific Islander Communities and Asian Americans Advancing Justice, 2014). The number of NHPIs living at or below the poverty line increased 56 percent between 2007 and 2011. Marshallese fare worse than all other racial groups in terms of living at or below the poverty line (49 percent), at low income (73 percent), and in terms of per capita income (\$7,097).

Incarceration is a growing concern for NHPI communities. The number of incarcerated NHPIs grew 22 percent between 2002 and 2010, compared to 8 percent for the total population (Empowering Pacific Islander Communities and Asian Americans Advancing Justice, 2014). In particular, the incarceration rate in several states with large numbers of NHPIs reveal even greater disparities and, in some cases, triple-digit growth rates. While California's total incarcerated population increased only 2 percent, the number of incarcerated NHPIs in California increased 144 percent. While Utah's total incarcerated population increased 27 percent, the number of NHPI incarcerated grew 134 percent. In Hawai'i, the incarcerated population decreased 10 percent while the number of incarcerated NHPIs increased by 8 percent. Hawai'i lacks the capacity to house all of its inmates, so many inmates, including NHPI inmates are transferred out of state (Office of Hawaiian Affairs, 2010). This practice breaks cultural familial bonds that provide a foundation for preventing recidivism and encouraging rehabilitation.

Another pressing issue for NHPI communities is homeownership. Homeownership has historically provided an important means of accumulating wealth and allowing for upward mobility. However, the homeownership rate for NHPIs is 47 percent, compared to 65 percent for the total population (Empowering Pacific Islander Communities and Asian Americans Advancing Justice, 2014). This is the same percentage for Latinos. Homeownership rates also vary widely between NHPI groups as well. For Native Hawaiians the homeownership rate is 51 percent compared to 43 percent for Guamanian or Chamorro and 34 percent for Samoans. Micronesian groups have lower homeownership rates than any other racial group.

Regarding immigration and migration, the different immigration statuses of Pacific Islanders belie the uniformity implied by the NHPI label. Depending on immigration status, Pacific Islanders will face different experiences attempting to access services or benefits. Native Hawaiians are indigenous to the United States and are not considered immigrants. The various benefits and limitations accorded to each respective status, as seen in Table 1, complicates the development of uniform policies and analysis of trajectories for NHPI.

NHPIs in 2040

Demographic projections indicate that the NHPI population will grow 52 percent to 2.3 million by 2040, maintaining one of the fastest growth rates in the country (Ong, Ong, and Ong, 2015). With this rate of

Table 1. Immigration Statuses of Pacific Islanders

Pacific Island of Birth	Immigration Status	Characteristics of Immigration Status
Guam, Hawai'i, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands	U.S. Citizens	May live and work in the United States legally Qualify for public benefits May vote in elections Eligible to serve in U.S. military
American Samoa	U.S. Nationals	May live and work in the United States legally Must obtain citizenship to obtain full benefits May not vote in elections while living in the United States Qualify for most federal benefits and some state or local benefits Eligible to serve in U.S. military
Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Republic of Palau	Compact of Free Association (COFA) Migrants/"non-immigrants"	May live and work in the United States legally Not eligible for most federal benefits, some U.S. states may provide limited benefits Eligible to serve in U.S. military May not vote
Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Samoa, Tokelau, Kiribati, and Others	Immigrants	Must apply for legal permanent resident status to work and live in the United States legally, similar to other immigrants Must wait five years to apply for public benefits Cannot vote or serve in the U.S. military

Source: Empowering Pacific Islander Communities and Asian Americans Advancing Justice, 2014

growth, issues that NHPs experience today may be exacerbated by 2040. Foreign-born NHPs will continue to comprise a significant if slightly shrinking segment of NHPs in 2040. NHPs will also continue to have a higher proportion of youth aged seventeen and younger than any other racial and ethnic group. The growth of multiracial NHPs is expected to outpace that of single race NHPs, with 66 percent of NHPs projected

to be multiracial by 2040. However, it should be noted that this projection may be heavily weighted by Native Hawaiians, who were 69 percent multiracial as of 2010. Other Pacific Islander groups have historically had relatively lower rates of outmarriage. Only 10 percent of Marshallese, 20 percent of Tongans, and 35 of Samoans were multiracial as of 2010.

Assuming that no significant interventions occur, this essay offers what the state of NHPIs could look like in 2040. This is followed by an examination of anticipated intervening developments in the physical and demographic environment as well as technological developments, each of which may provide additional challenges or opportunities for NHPI. The analysis concludes with recommendations for achieving an idealized trajectory for NHPI.

The Trajectory of NHPIs within the United States

There is unfortunately little reason to be optimistic about the state of NHPIs in 2040 without sustained efforts to address current issues. The low bachelor's degree attainment rate among NHPIs means that college-aged students in 2040 will likely have parents who lack the experience to successfully navigate institutions of higher education. The continued underrepresentation of NHPI professionals could similarly mean reduced exposure of NHPI college-aged students to role models. It will also likely limit the potential network of mentors who can help inform NHPI students' career choices. The lack of a support network from parents or the community can be expected to remain a barrier to higher educational attainment in 2040.

The financial health of NHPIs will likely become increasingly strained. STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) majors will likely continue to dominate the top of the pay scale, but there is little indication that increasing numbers of NHPIs are poised to earn those degrees by 2040. Increasing barriers to higher education could also divert increasing numbers of NHPIs to military service. Should NHPI homeownership rates remain low, many NHPIs will likely continue to lack a vital tool for building equity and having the resources to fund continued education for themselves and their children, especially as college tuition continues to rise (The College Board, 2015). Low homeownership rates and high rental rates could also mean that NHPIs may be disproportionately impacted by the current trend of spending a rising percentage of income on rent, thus increasing the difficulty of saving a sufficient amount for a down payment on a house (Spearshott, 2015).

The overall health of the community will likely be adversely impacted by the combination of a projected increase of elderly NHPIs aged sixty-five and older from 7 percent in 2015 to 13 percent in 2040 (Ong, Ong, and Ong, 2015). There will likely be increased costs associated with the long-term treatment of chronic diseases that will place additional financial burdens on supporting family members, particularly for youth who must choose between pursuing higher education or caring for their elders. For individuals and families unable to pay for health care or ineligible to participate in health insurance exchanges, states and hospitals could carry additional financial burdens through increased use of emergency room treatment, and possibly reduce health care to low-income, foreign-born NHPI. Noncitizen COFA migrants will be particularly vulnerable should additional states follow Hawai'i's lead in reducing the level of health care coverage for COFA migrants between now and 2040 (Blair, 2014).

Economic Impact on Pacific Islands

A lower educational attainment rate and higher financial burdens from increased rent and health care costs will likely reduce the ability of NHPIs in the United States to send remittances to the Pacific Islands. The cost of caring for an increasingly aging population and support for family members from the islands joining relatives in the United States may negatively impact the remittance economy. Youth raised in the United States, who are culturally distant from their Pacific Islands and familial relations on the islands, could participate less actively in the remittance economy. A combination of these factors could prove devastating to remittance-dependent Pacific Island economies such as Samoa and Tonga. Reduced remittance income could also accelerate migration from the Pacific Islands among families who want to search for more sustainable economic opportunities.

Impact on NHPI Political Power

Native Hawaiians who represent 43 percent of the NHPI community in 2010 have the largest proportion of multiracial members of any Pacific Islander group (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2012). As of 2010, 69 percent of Native Hawaiians were multiracial and the only group to exceed 50 percent. The next largest proportion of multiracial NHPI belonged to "Guamanian or Chamorro," at 38 percent.

The increase of multiracial NHPIs from 57 percent in 2015 to 66 percent by 2040 could potentially alter how NHPI identity is defined

and would introduce new wrinkles in its use as a label for political organizing. For example, the identity of NHPI groups has incorporated many facets to varying degrees, such as a close relationship to the land, language, histories, ancestry, cultural knowledge, and blood quantum. These facets can form a connective tissue but they have also been used to establish claims to cultural capital and legal rights with divisive manifestations.³

At the other extreme, NHPIs may choose to identify with a non-NHPI race, rather than with their own NHPI race, leading to a dilution of NHPI numbers. NHPI identity and its political utility may be impacted by the U.S. Department of the Interior developing procedures for reestablishing a government-to-government relationship with Native Hawaiians and the Native Hawaiian Nation Constitution recently ratified by Na'i Aupuni delegates. In 1997, numerous Native Hawaiian advocates pushed for Native Hawaiians to be recategorized under the "American Indian/Alaskan Native" (AI/AN) category as part of revising OMB Directive 15. Their reasoning was that the AI/AN category would better align with Native Hawaiian claims to federal recognition and their indigenous status within the United States. It would also better reflect the federal government's distinct treatment of Native Hawaiians as a distinct Pacific Islander community with its own legislative funding sources. Recent movement toward federal recognition by Na'i Aupuni and the U.S. Department of Interior may lend more support to a renewed effort to separate Native Hawaiians from the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander category created in OMB Directive 15. If successful, Native Hawaiians would have a clearer path to greater disaggregated data at the federal level for their community. Although NHPI community organizations are generally in agreement that each NHPI community should have access to their own data, the separation of Native Hawaiians from other Pacific Islanders could potentially create the perception that Native Hawaiians are disinterested from the challenges facing other Pacific Islander communities, ultimately damaging the ability to organize under the NHPI label in the long run.

The projected increase in the percentage of multiracial NHPI by 2040 need only challenge NHPI identity as far as blood quantum and physical appearance is permitted to determine NHPI identity. Many NHPI communities historically valued intermarriage even before European settlers arrived. The use of blood quantum and percentages may provide genetic certainty but ignores many of the previously mentioned facets and the inclusiveness valued by Pacific Islanders. How-

ever, the way in which NHPI identity is now utilized may distort NHPI identity in the future. If NHPI identity becomes disconnected from the preceding traditional facets in favor of a label that simply determines resource allocation or program eligibility, multiracial NHPIs may feel compelled to follow whichever race or identity will provide the most benefit. NHPI groups that have historically had low outmarriage rates may deem increasing multiracial rates as a threat to Pacific Islander identity and spur divisions between NHPI groups. There is anecdotal evidence that multiracial NHPIs who do not match stereotypical appearances are ostracized by other NHPIs and feel pressured to prove their “Pacific Islander-ness.”

Multiracial NHPIs nonetheless have the potential to make positive contributions to the overall NHPI identity as a resource for political organizing. NHPIs already have sufficient numbers to act as a swing vote in municipal elections with low voter turnout. There were 2,077 voting age NHPIs in Carson as of 2010 (City of Carson, 2015). The 2015 city council election and special city council election in Carson, CA, were decided by 1,686 and 18 votes, respectively (City of Carson, 2015). The increasing percentage of multiracial NHPIs might allow for an NHPI voting bloc to play a deciding role in close elections on a larger scale and help NHPI communities gain more serious consideration from political campaigns and the media.

At the same time, a greater percentage of multiracial NHPIs may also attract the same wedge tactics employed against Asian Americans. Campaigns that advocate for limiting or eliminating programs that give preference to NHPIs and other marginalized communities may seek to convince multiracial NHPIs that such programs would harm their own prospects at receiving such benefits now or in the future.

Anticipating Intervening Developments

The following anticipated developments represent only a small slice of the potential events that could have a significant impact on NHPIs in the United States. Among those that are beyond the scope of this essay, but deserve much more thorough analysis, include the Hawaiian nation-building process and sovereignty movement, federal clarification of the Hawaiian Homes law, Samoan birthright citizenship, the renewal and renegotiation of the Compacts of Free Association in 2023, immigration reform efforts, advocacy efforts to restore Medicaid benefits to COFA migrants, and the outcome of continued legal challenges to programs meant to benefit Hawaiians or other underserved minorities.

The Potential Impact of Climate Change

Researchers from the U.S. Geological Survey, Deltares U.S.A., and the University of Hawai'i have concluded that many low-lying atolls in the Pacific Ocean will be rendered uninhabitable within a matter of decades, due to warming sea temperatures and sea-level rise exacerbating the impact and size of annual storm waves that will salinize freshwater resources (Storlazzi, Elias, and Berkowitz, 2015). As a result, Pacific Island nations such as the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu, and Kiribati, already impacted by climate change, will possibly see the start of a mass exodus by 2040 (Raymundo, 2015). While Australia, New Zealand, and Fiji could host climate change refugees in the future, those capable of migrating to the United States will face integration issues common to many foreign-born Pacific Islanders in the United States, except on a larger scale.

Climate change also has the potential to accelerate migration due to changing seasonal weather patterns. For example, El Nino seasons on the U.S. West Coast are typically followed by droughts in the Marshall Islands (Radio New Zealand International, 2015). As such, the rate at which foreign-born NHPs migrate to the United States will likely accelerate as the impact of climate change worsens.

Climate change can potentially impact NHPs residing in the United States as well. Many NHPs residing in western states and the Pacific Islands may be forced to move under threat of rising tides and stronger storms (Stockton, 2015). Should a devastating meteorological event occur, recovery efforts may discriminate against lower-income communities as was the case in Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina (White, 2015). Given the financial profile of NHPs, NHPs are more likely to live and work in lower-income neighborhoods that may struggle to receive recovery funding. For NHPs in the United States, climate change may offer opportunities to recognize shared intersections with other communities of color and form the basis for new advocacy alliances. In addition, the growing numbers of NHP U.S. citizens will likely have more leverage with U.S. policy makers and regulatory agencies that can help curb carbon emissions and lower climate targets.

The Potential Impact of Innovation/Technology

The technological landscape is likely to continue evolving at a rapid pace. Current developments that appear likely to impact NHPs through 2040 include gene editing, big data, and online education.

Pharmaceutical companies are investing heavily to perfect tools for precisely editing and transporting genes between biological entities as well as to identify relevant genes, and these advances could affect the future health of NHPIs (Nordrum, 2015).

The Harvard Stem Cell Institute, for example, is currently testing a genome editing approach for permanently reducing cholesterol levels. The development of customized and much more effective treatments for chronic diseases that disproportionately impact NHPIs could mitigate the financial burden of treating disease.

The National Demographic Shift to Majority Minority

As the country's demographics continue to shift toward a majority minority by 2040, the calculus of electoral politics will likely require candidates to shift their platforms to a more nuanced and culturally tailored approach. This may create opportunities for previously marginalized communities such as NHPIs, and call attention to NHPIs' unique challenges and needs. At the local level, NHPIs may continue to grow in low voter participation districts where their numbers may constitute the margin of victory. At the national level, the relatively small size of the NHPI voting age population and growing clout of other communities of color may necessitate building strategic political alliances to consistently remain politically relevant in national policy discussions.

The majority minority shift creates a political environment that will benefit communities that can build large alliances among diverse networks. The potential exists for strong alliances with South East Asian, Black or African American, and Latino communities given the many shared health and socioeconomic challenges with other communities of color detailed in the preceding text.

Recommendations

Defining an "Ideal Trajectory"

Defining what constitutes an "ideal trajectory" for NHPIs requires a thoughtful, ongoing discussion among community elders and leaders with youth organizers that will be carrying the torch in 2040. For purposes of this essay, an "ideal trajectory" is defined as a path that respects the diversity of NHPI communities, politically unites from within and with allies from without to improve the quality of life, maintains a leadership pipeline for NHPI youth, and refuses to leave behind those most vulnerable.

Recommendations Moving Forward

1. Address the needs of an increasingly diverse NHPI community

The diversity of the NHPI community needs to be accurately reflected in data collected and reported by government agencies and organizations that influence policy makers. Accomplishing this will require rejecting the “Asian Pacific Islander” label for data collection and reporting purposes while also investing in the resources necessary to ensure that NHPI data is disaggregated and reliable.

Access to essential services must also be expanded. These measures should include passing legislation that grants COFA migrants access to federal means-tested programs such as Medicaid. Comprehensive immigration reform that keeps families together and allows access to safety-net programs and affordable higher education regardless of immigration status must be prioritized. Investments should be made to develop the capacity of community-based organizations to assist with anticipated migration stemming from Pacific islands impacted by climate change.

Organizations that serve NHPI communities must provide linguistic and culturally competent services. These services should apply a rigorous standard above and beyond simply having someone of Asian Pacific Islander descent on staff expected to serve all Asian Americans and NHPI. The threshold for requiring availability of in-language services should accommodate NHPI communities with high rates of limited English proficiency. Data disaggregation and an expansion of culturally and linguistically competent services would provide growing NHPI communities, especially those that will be taking in climate change refugees, a better chance of reaching their potential and contributing to the broader community.

2. Develop community capacity for civic engagement

The establishment of a unified political network that respects NHPI diversity while coordinating policy advocacy efforts would maximize the potential for NHPI communities to carry a meaningful, if not decisive, voice. Such a network will need to strengthen the capacity and sustainability of grassroots efforts in addition to organization members.

Fostering alliances with other communities of color that share the same challenges and values will be an essential component of civic engagement capacity building. This work needs to be prioritized, in anticipation of the shift to a majority minority country, to ensure that NHPI concerns are relevant and addressed.

Investment in a culturally relevant civic education program, particularly one that focuses on the importance of municipal positions and elections, could lay the foundation for local grassroots civic engagement efforts while helping to mobilize support for local candidates who might later participate in the political leadership pipeline.

The development of civic engagement capacity could enable NHPI communities to have a more effective voice across all policy areas, including climate change and the use of big data.

3. Investing in leadership development and NHPI youth

Resources must be devoted to creating a leadership pipeline for NHPI youth. The most immediate and readily available opportunity for developing NHPI leaders is ensuring that the relatively few NHPI students who are able to attend higher education institutions receive the support necessary to earn their degree. They should also be provided with a culturally relevant curriculum that teaches the importance of giving back to the community, along with other skills that contribute toward becoming professionally successful. At the same time, efforts must be made to build culturally relevant academic support programs for youth of all ages that incorporate parents and community structures already in place. Creating a leadership pipeline would ensure that the NHPI community has strong community advocates with the necessary skills to build coalitions with other communities before and after the demographic shift to majority minority in 2043.

Conclusion

It is difficult to believe that the first ancestral explorers who traversed the Pacific Ocean thousands of years ago were not in some way inspired by the hope of a brighter future for their communities. Despite everything that NHPI communities have endured as a result of contact with Western powers, it is the NHPI dream that continues to fuel NHPI communities in the United States. As we approach 2040, cultivating and fostering a brighter future that respects the diversity of NHPs, eliminates disparities, and provides meaningful opportunities for all communities to thrive will require a willingness to adopt a broader political identity than NHPI communities have used in the past. To advance the NHPI dream, political solidarity among NHPs and other communities that share similar challenges and values will be key. Together, we can build a better future by challenging systems that are notoriously resistant to change.

Investing in youth leadership programs for NHPI students in higher education can also be a catalyst for breaking the cycle of poverty in NHPI communities. Increasing the number of NHPI professionals can increase NHPI representation within higher-paying jobs and provide invaluable assistance with building the community's capacity to implement the recommended civic engagement activities. It can also create a new generation of NHPIs who will have the ability to successfully navigate higher educational institutions and possess the drive to pass that knowledge along to succeeding cohorts. Incorporating culturally relevant components that keep NHPI students rooted in their culture will also help strengthen community bonds and expand the NHPI network to include other NHPI professional mentees and mentors. In the medium to long term, these efforts could create a "new normal" where NHPI communities view earning degrees from institutions of higher education as both feasible and necessary to continue professional advancement and remain competitive. The professional networks of these young NHPI leaders would likely include non-NHPIs who could serve as a base for developing allies and resources to advocate for systems changes.

In addition to cultivating the network, we need to require institutions to collect and report NHPI data to allow NHPI communities to present a more accurate portrait and advocate for a more equitable share of resources. These resources could complement youth leadership and civic engagement programs. It will also elucidate important issue areas and assist in educating and spreading awareness of the importance of recognizing the diverse nature of NHPI communities. More accurate data would also help inform spending priorities and increase the efficacy of critical safety-net programs for NHPI communities.

The challenges facing NHPI communities in 2016 must be addressed while keeping an eye on the drastically changing environmental, technological, and demographic landscape in the decades to come. The insights provided by demographic projections should inform ongoing conversations about the nature of NHPI identity and where NHPI communities see themselves heading.

Self-determination and empowerment are fundamental parts of this journey to NHPI equality. NHPI communities must leave a legacy—one that maintains roots in NHPI heritage and values, prepares NHPIs for a more diverse future, and paves the way for successive generations to act with a collective and unified voice.

Notes

1. The Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNTY Data Book has been praised by President Clinton and Attorney General Eric Holder. The most recent version of the report continues to use the "Asian/Pacific Islander" category.
2. The diversity inherent within the NHPI label requires acknowledging how various NHPI communities have distinctly different trajectories not captured by a generalized NHPI trajectory. This is due to the different colonial experiences and historical and political treatment of various NHPI communities. NHPI communities will have varying access to the political process or government benefits in the United States based on their immigration status. The number of diverse NHPI communities also has implications for the utility and maintenance of an NHPI identity. Many NHPI communities share cultural affinities and similarities like prioritizing the family unit over individuals. However, the different historical circumstances that led to each NHPI community settling in the United States have led to divergent characteristics and priorities. E.g., only 2 percent of Native Hawaiians have limited English proficiency (LEP) while the LEP rate for Marshallese is 41 percent. As such, Native Hawaiians do not have as a great a need for linguistically competent services. From this example we can see that the use of the NHPI label to demonstrate political solidarity cannot be taken for granted.
3. Applicants for Hawaiian Home Lands must demonstrate a minimum 50 percent blood quantum to qualify. Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920.

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