

Pacific Islander Profile Series: Native Hawaiian Community



Culture

Efforts to protect Mauna Kea, Hawaii's tallest mountain, from the construction of a thirty-meter telescope (TMT) has united tens of thousands of Native Hawaiian's of all ages, all islands, and has invigorated involvement in the struggle for Hawaiian sovereignty. Despite support from the Hawaiian government, construction of the TMT has been stalled for 6 years. The blockade of Mauna Kea by mountain protectors (*kū kia'i mauna*) began in July 2019. The ongoing protests have normalized traditional practices like hula which was more exclusive, and the proliferation of *kapu aloha*: a philosophical code of conduct that is politically expressed through non-violent direct action and practiced by sharing of aloha--love, peace, and compassion for people and land. Mauna Kea also led to the creation of Pu'uuhuluhulu University, an education initiative where various workshops are held on Hawaiian history, language, art, and traditional law.

Health

Native Hawaiians have experienced US occupation of their homeland, political and social disenfranchisement, and compulsory assimilation policies that have adversely affected their health. In a study conducted with Native Hawaiian adults, those who highly identified with Hawaiian culture over US culture show increased symptoms of depression. Native Hawaiian youth reported more suicide attempts compared to youth of other ethnic groups in Hawaii. Barriers to utilization of health services include discrimination, accessibility, and mental health services not aligning with cultural values and traditions. According to Native Hawaiian traditional beliefs, the source of mental and emotional problems can be attributed to: natural ailments (*ma'i kino*), curses or sorcery (*ma'i mai waho*), and interpersonal disagreements (*ma'i ma loko*)



Center for Asian Health Equity (CAHE)

Spotlights

Community Partner Waikiki Health

HEALTH EQUITY

a member of WAIKIKI HEALTH

Waikiki Health is a federally qualified health center (FQHC) based in the Waikiki neighborhood in Honolulu, Hawai'i. Along with primary care, they provide dental, pharmacy, family health and social services and behavioral health counseling. Their mission is *"to provide quality medical and social services that are accessible and affordable for everyone, regardless of their ability to pay."* Waikiki Health is currently a partner in the Asian Engagement & Recruitment Core (ARC) under our All of Us Research Program.

CAHE Staff

MaryGrace joined CAHE in February of 2022 as she was completing her Master of Public Health with an epidemiology concentration at Northwestern University. She is a program manager on the Chronic and Infectious Diseases team and works to increase vaccine confidence among Asian and African immigrant, migrant, and refugee communities. She also analyses disaggregated Asian data to highlight the health needs often overlooked when all Asian's are categorized as one. In her free time, MaryGrace likes to be outside, listen to music or podcasts, and try new foods!

