



# Hawai'i Scholars for Education and Social Justice

Research Brief #4

May 1, 2022

## Racism and Discrimination against Micronesians in Hawai'i: Issues of Educational Inequity

*This fourth research brief of the Hawai'i Scholars for Education and Social Justice (HSESJ) is concerned with the educational attainment, experiences, and problems encountered by students from Micronesia in the public school system of Hawai'i, especially at the K-12 level.* It begins with a historical background of the three independent nations that have Compacts of Free Association (COFA) agreements with the United States—the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), and the Republic of Palau (ROP). Thus, in this paper, the term “Micronesian” refers to citizens of the COFA nations and their descendants in Hawai'i but does not include Chamorros from Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Other sections of the research brief include a discussion of systemic racism against Micronesians

in Hawai'i, a review of the educational status and experiences of students from Micronesia in the K-12 public schools, and a summary of Micronesian community support organizations. The brief concludes with policy recommendations directed to public institutions, such as the State legislature and the Department of Education, to provide educational equality and to address the problems encountered by Micronesians in the public schools and in Hawai'i in general. The HSESJ offers our expertise and experience to assist in the development of these recommendations.

### Micronesian History and Context

The islands of Micronesia consist of groups of small islands, both volcanic “high” islands and “low” coral atolls in the northwest Pacific Ocean. Island groups include Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the Republic of Palau (ROP), and the Republic of

the Marshall Islands (RMI). They also include Nauru and Kiribati islands, which are in the geographic region, but are not politically affiliated with the United States. For the purposes of this brief, we will focus on the three groups that are affiliated with the US by Compacts of Free Association (COFA)—ROP, FSM and RMI.

### History

All of the Micronesian islands were most likely settled by sojourners from Southeast Asia starting 3,500 years ago (Ridgell, 1997). The travelers expanded east and north over time, settling more and more island groups, and they mixed with other sojourners from different areas of Australasia. Because this movement occurred over a long period of time and included a mix of sojourners from different places, the languages and cultures of the islands diverged. Currently there are at least eighteen distinct languages and many dialects among the three nations that are associated with the US (Heine, 2002). In addition, clothing, cultural and political structures, and religions differ among the island groups.

### Colonialism

More recently, people in Micronesia have experienced more than a century of colonial rule under the Spanish, Germans, Japanese and Americans (Hezel, 1995). The Spanish brought Catholicism, and the Germans brought Protestantism, both of which continue to have strong footholds in different island groups. Missionaries from the US built on these foundations and introduced missionary schools and education. The church is still a central physical and social structure in most villages.

The Japanese took control over the islands of Palau, the Northern Marianas, the Carolines (now mostly incorporated into the FSM), and the Marshall Islands through World War II, and many battles were fought in this area. After the war, the

US agreed to manage the islands through the United Nations Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. The US subsequently tested 67 nuclear bombs on two atolls of the Marshall Islands between 1946 and 1958, making those islands uninhabitable and exposing hundreds of islanders to radiation through wind-blown fallout on Rongelap and Utric atolls (Dibblin, 1988). The repercussions of this destruction and its resulting illnesses continue through high rates of cancer, separation from ancestral lands, and difficulty getting adequate reparations (Carucci, 1997; Genz et al., 2016; Ratliffe, 2018).

Although the colonizing nations were mostly interested in capitalizing on the fish and mineral resources of the islands, as well as their strategic placement for political gain, the islanders' ways of life were impacted, especially by the Japanese and Americans. Language, diet, culture and religion were all affected by colonizers' engagement in war and their control of island resources, as well as the importation of both Catholic and Protestant missionaries who proliferated across the islands (Hezel, 2010). In 1963, the US realized that it had not fulfilled its obligations to support the development of infrastructure for health, business, education, and government in the region, and increased financial contributions and technical assistance in these areas. Epidemics of non-communicable diseases, such as obesity, cancer, heart disease and diabetes, resulted from changes in diet, stress related to changes in culture, and other effects of colonialism over time (Pobutsky et al., 2005). White rice, introduced by the Japanese, replaced many traditional, more nutritious foods because of its convenience. Most people in the region eat rice at every meal. These health concerns have increased medical migration to Hawai‘i and other places where people can get intervention for these diseases (Pobutsky et al., 2009).

## Governance

The US supported self-governance, and in the 1970s and 1980s the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) joined into one country consisting of four states of disparate island groups (Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei and Kosrae), and Palau also consolidated into one political entity. These two areas became independent nations along with the RMI. In 1986, the RMI and the FSM agreed to Compacts of Free Association (COFA) with the US, and Palau signed a COFA in 1994.

## Migration to the US

Citizens of the ROP, FSM and RMI began to have access to some US government grants in the 1970s under the Trust Territory, starting with Pell grants for education. The purpose was to educate future leaders in the region. Young people traveled to attend small colleges, often religious-based, in the continental US (Hezel, 2006). Many returned to the islands and took leadership positions, and others stayed and built lives in the US. Family members and neighbors joined them, forming small communities in unlikely places, such as Missouri, Texas and Oregon (Hezel, 2013). After the COFA were signed, all citizens of the three COFA countries could travel, attend school and work in the US without visas. People relocated for three primary reasons—health care, jobs and education (Graham, 2008). This was a direct result of the lack of these opportunities on their own islands. Although they came from all of the COFA nations, the majority were from the RMI and from Chuuk State, the most populated and poorest state of the FSM (Hezel, 2013). Many were recruited by certain industries that had difficulty finding workers in the US, such as amusement parks and nursing homes. Most of the migrants from the region planned to return to the islands once their objectives had been reached.

## Pandemic Experiences

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the experience of Micronesians has been described as a “syndemic,” a set of linked health problems that together contribute to the excess burden of a disease on a population (Yamada, 2020). Non-Hawaiian Pacific Islanders, who account for only 4 percent of Hawaii’s population, comprised 30 percent of the cumulative COVID cases and a disproportionate 16 percent of COVID deaths. This increased risk has been linked to housing insecurity, limited employment opportunities, and underlying comorbid conditions caused by limited access to healthcare (Hosaka, 2021). Meanwhile, because of their status as residents rather than as US citizens, Micronesians were prohibited from accessing Medicaid and experienced longer wait times when applying for unemployment benefits. At the same time, they were unable to return to their island homes because of stringent measures on travel from high-risk countries like the US.

## Systemic Racism

### Against COFA Citizens in Hawai'i

Race scholar Joe Feagin’s systemic racism theory (2006) provides an incisive means to analyze the institutionalized racism and discrimination that COFA citizens are subject to in Hawai'i. Feagin argued that systemic racism explains the “foundational, large-scale and inescapable hierarchical system of US racial oppression... directed at people of color” (Feagin & Elias, 2013, p. 936). The three major dimensions of systemic racism applied to the experiences and status of COFA citizens include institutional discrimination, racist stereotypes and narratives, and maintenance of socioeconomic inequalities. Applying this theory demonstrates clearly the systemic racism, and hence oppression and inequality, that the COFA community regularly encounters in the Aloha State. As reviewed below, this racism is especially evident in the provision of health care services, in police

enforcement, in the representations and stereotypes of COFA citizens, and in their very low socioeconomic status in Hawai'i. This section of the research brief hence discusses the racialized social, political and cultural context that the COFA community must contend with, including students in the K-12 public school system, whose experiences are considered in the next section.

### Discriminatory Practices and Policies

One of the principal dimensions of systemic racism is discriminatory practices (Feagin & Elias, 2013, p. 937), to which can be added discriminatory policies. From a systemic racism perspective, discrimination—understood as unfair or unequal treatment—extends far beyond individual or interpersonal acts of discrimination, insofar as systemic racism theory contends that such treatment or action occurs through established practices and policies, which collectively impact their victims. The most recent blatant example of discriminatory policies against COFA citizens was the determined effort by the State of Hawai'i to deny them equal access to state-provided health care services (Okamura 2019, p. 48). Besides enhanced employment opportunities, adequate health care is one of the main reasons that COFA citizens settle in Hawai'i because of its absence in their home nations.

**Health Care.** In July 2010, the State of Hawai'i dropped about 7,500 COFA citizens, which was more than one-half of their population, from its health care program for low-income residents, Med-QUEST, and placed them in another program, Basic Health Hawai'i, which provided significantly less services and benefits (Shek & Yamada, 2011). The following month, a legal advocacy organization, Lawyers for Equal Justice (now the Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice) and several pro bono attorneys filed a class action lawsuit on behalf of the COFA community. The suit argued that the State of Hawai'i had

deprived them of health care coverage based on their national origin and immigration status and thus had violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. In December 2010, a U.S. district court judge in Honolulu issued a ruling in their favor that restored full Med-QUEST benefits to COFA citizens. However, in 2012 the State appealed the judge's decision to the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, and two years later the court declared that the State of Hawai'i does not have to provide health care services to COFA citizens through its state-operated Medicaid programs (McElfish et al. 2019, p. 3). The detrimental impact on COFA citizens following the termination of Med-QUEST coverage is evident from the substantial decreases in their utilization of Med-QUEST-funded inpatient (42 percent) and emergency room (69 percent) services (Halliday et al. 2019).

The repeated efforts by the State of Hawai'i to deny the COFA community equitable health care benefits abundantly demonstrate the discriminatory policies that confront them, and their adverse consequences. Fortunately, in December 2020, Congress restored Medicaid coverage to COFA citizens in the U.S., which was initially provided to them when their home nations signed their respective Compacts of Free Association with the U.S. in 1986 (Federated States of Micronesia and Republic of Marshall Islands) and 1994 (Republic of Palau). The following year, Med-QUEST health care coverage resumed for COFA citizens in Hawai'i.

Rather than discriminatory policies, studies of discrimination against COFA citizens in Hawai'i tend to focus on how they are treated interpersonally. A survey study of COFA citizens in Honolulu and Hawai'i counties (n=517), "Bias Against Micronesians in Hawai'i," found that 7.2 percent of them responded affirmatively that "because [they] are Micronesian," they have "been treated poorly or harassed in health care settings in

Hawai‘i” (Stotzer, 2019, p. 2). The survey questions and hence respondents’ answers emphasize interpersonal, rather than institutional, discrimination, and this methodological approach is commonly used in other studies of discrimination encountered by COFA citizens. A survey of “Chuukese Community Experiences of Racial Discrimination and Other Barriers to Healthcare” (Inada et al., 2019) indicated that almost all of their interviewees reported “receiving poor care or hearing insensitive remarks” from health care providers, primarily at hospitals. However, the authors stated that few Chuukese community participants used the term “discrimination” when interviewed and instead said health care providers were “not nice,” “rude,” or “spoke in a mean way.”

While Chuukese and other COFA community members may not fully understand how racial discrimination occurs through established policies and practices, the researchers conducting such studies need to be more cognizant of the significant ways by which COFA citizens are denied equal access to health care services by such policies and practices. If racial discrimination is understood as primarily occurring in interpersonal relationships, then the solutions proposed to alleviate it may focus simply on changing the nature of those interactions, such as by having nurses and doctors act and speak nicely, rather than by establishing and implementing policies that provide equal access to health care. As a principal component of systemic racism, discriminatory policies and practices have a collective adverse impact far beyond interactions in a health care setting, even if COFA citizens are not treated poorly or verbally demeaned at a doctor’s office.

**Policing.** Another major area of discriminatory practices and policies that oppress COFA citizens, have been found to be considerably overrepresented among those subject to use of force by officers of the Honolulu Police Department

(HPD) (Jedra & Hofschneider, 2021). While they constitute about one-fourth of Oahu’s population, NHPIs were more than one-third of those involved in police use of force incidents in 2019, the highest proportion for all racial groups. During a briefing on HPD’s 2019 annual report on use of force to the Honolulu Police Commission, Assistant Police Chief Rade Vanic maintained that the high percentage of use of force incidents involving NHPIs (34.5 percent) can be attributed to their having the highest percentage of arrests (38.1 percent), an outcome which also requires explanation. According to these HPD annual reports, NHPIs, as well as African Americans, were overrepresented among those subject to police force between 2010 and 2018 (Hofschneider, 2020), which indicates that use of force is an ongoing practice by the police with those racial groups.

More than six months before the Honolulu Police Commission briefing, Mateo Caballero, legal director of the Hawai‘i chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), sent a letter to Commission Chair Shannon Alivado, Police Chief Susan Ballard, and HPD’s senior legal advisor, which requested the police department to implement several reforms in policing. In his letter, Caballero (2020, p. 1) asserted the ACLU’s “serious constitutional and civil rights concerns about recent reports of racial bias and disparities in arrests and use of force by the Honolulu Police Department.” He cited a recent investigation by Hawai‘i Public Radio (HPR), which found that 26 percent of HPD arrests for stay-at-home violations were “Micronesians,” who are only one percent of the state population. People arrested for violating the stay-at-home order faced a misdemeanor charge with a maximum fine of \$5,000 and a year in prison (Mizuo, 2020).

Among the reforms that Caballero (2020, p. 3) recommended that HPD initiate was to end “racial profiling.” He emphasized that racial profiling “is not only the act of selecting or targeting minorities for law enforcement contact, but also includes policies or practices (such as broken window policing or sweeps) that have a disparate impact on disadvantaged communities.” Caballero continued that “too often, police stop and search people of color without substantial evidence of wrongdoing, based on explicit and implicit biases... Consequently, HPD should adopt... policies that define racial profiling, prohibit law enforcement from engaging in it, and make clear that it is unconstitutional under the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments.” These data indicate that HPD engages in a discriminatory and therefore illegal practice of racially profiling COFA citizens and other racial minorities in its policing practices, which may be based on a prevalent stereotype of COFA citizens as prone to crime.

### Stereotypes and Narratives

Another primary dimension of systemic racism consists of racial stereotypes, representations, interpretations and narratives “designed to rationalize and implement persisting racial oppression” (Feagin & Elias, 2013, p. 937). These concepts are especially relevant for understanding the extreme racism against the COFA community and the means by which it is expressed and maintained in Hawai'i. One of the most dominant representations and narratives about COFA citizens is that they are “leeches” and “cockroaches,” who undeservedly and excessively use government resources and services, such as public housing, health care, and welfare benefits, even though they are ineligible for the latter (Okamura, 2019, p. 48; Hawai'i Appleseed Center, 2011, pp. 15-16). The especially vile racism against COFA citizens is clearly evident in their being regularly referred to as leeches and cockroaches, insofar as they are portrayed as not even human beings and hence

denied a common humanity with others. These racist representations and perceptions rationalize and justify the discrimination and inequality that the COFA community experiences, such as racial profiling, and contribute to their high rates of unemployment and poverty (see below). A principal source of the racist stereotypes and narratives of COFA citizens is joke telling about them or so-called “Micronesian jokes.” They are the frequent target of jokes that admittedly are made about almost every ethnic group in Hawai'i, a practice which is called “ethnic humor.” However, jokes about COFA citizens are especially dehumanizing

Students from Micronesia encounter barriers to learning opportunities in the form of bullying and racist stereotyping.

and focus particularly on their physical appearance and personal hygiene and homelessness among them (Okamura, 2019, p. 50). Typical examples include: “Why aren't there many beautiful Micronesians? Why are there only two pallbearers at a Micronesian funeral?” Given the very small size of the COFA community in Hawai'i, the widespread proliferation and popularity of denigrating jokes about them are startling, as is the racist hostility expressed in the jokes.

Social media is a popular means for the dissemination of jokes about COFA citizens and also racist slurs about them, which are hardly intended to be funny. The hatred expressed in these demeaning narratives led Sha Ongelungel, a Palauan activist born and raised in Oregon who lives in Hawai'i, to start a Twitter thread, #BeingMicronesian, in 2018 beginning with screenshots of online racism she regularly sees (Hofschneider, 2018a). A Facebook post about a “Micronesian” man harassing a driver resulted in numerous comments that compared them to

cockroaches and animals, including “hunting” Micronesians and spraying them with insecticide. As Ongelungel explains, “It’s not just cockroach jokes, it’s threats of ethnic cleansing. I would like people to understand the full spectrum of what we have to deal with in terms of the really stupid things that people say... People want to kill us for some reason” (cited in Hofschneider, 2018a). Even the Republic of the Marshall Islands Consulate in Honolulu has regularly received written hate messages, such as “[Expletive] Micronesia. Kill all Micronesians” (Hawai‘i Appleseed Center, 2011, p. 18).

Another primary source of the narratives and representations of the COFA community as overusing public services is government officials in their official capacities. In public testimony to the Hawai‘i Advisory Committee to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, the director of the state Department of Health and Human Services, Rachel Wong, asserted that in fiscal year 2014, “16,822 FAS [Freely Associated States or COFA nations] citizens received medical insurance coverage” provided by the state of Hawai‘i and that the “total amount” of FAS citizens who used all state services, not just insurance, numbered 21,733 (cited in Hawai‘i Advisory Committee, 2019, p. 20). The latter figure greatly exceeds the estimated population of 14,700 COFA citizens in Hawai‘i at that time by the U.S. Department of the Interior and very likely refers to the number of services provided and not the number of persons who received them. This overstating of the number of COFA citizens served by the state of Hawai‘i is very much part of a dominant narrative of their excessive use of government services and thus the heavy burden they pose for Hawai‘i and its people.

Thus, the State of Hawai‘i contends that it provides tens of millions of dollars in services annually to the COFA community. In her testimony, Director Wong noted that in fiscal year 2014 the total cost of such services to the state was \$167

million, while Hawai‘i received only \$11.2 million in federal impact aid (Hawaii Advisory Committee, 2019, p. 21). However, the State does not give a breakdown of the costs of these different services for COFA citizens, such as K-12 public education that very likely accounts for most of the expenditures. The Hawai‘i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice (2011, p. 18) has pointed out that the State does not tabulate the cost of its social services for other immigrant groups, which are much larger than the COFA community, and that the latter has been singled out for such scrutiny.

It needs to be emphasized that COFA citizens have been ineligible, since passage in 1996 of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (“welfare reform”), to receive federal need-based assistance, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (food stamps), and Supplemental Security Income, despite the prevalent mistaken belief that they do. One of the major findings of the Hawai‘i Advisory Committee to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission (2019, p. 31) is, “There is widespread negative perception of COFA migrants in Hawaii. They continue to be scapegoated as a drain on resources, particularly health care.” This finding is supported by a qualitative content analysis of letters to the editor published in the *Honolulu Star-Advertiser* between June 2010 and April 2015. The study found that many of the letters blamed COFA citizens for “worsening various social problems in Hawai‘i,” particularly overburdening the health care system, depleting social services, and increasing homelessness (Rita, 2020, p. 195). However, the late COFA community advocate, Joakim “Jojo” Peter, emphasized that they pay state and federal taxes like other Hawai‘i residents, but “We are paying for other people’s eligibility [for Medicaid and other federal benefits] because we don’t have eligibility” (cited in Lyons, Tengan & Peter 2015, p. 668), despite their especially low socioeconomic status.

## Socioeconomic Inequalities

The “maintenance of major material and other resource inequalities” in the racial hierarchy is another primary component of systemic racism (Feagin & Elias, 2013, p. 937). Less research and hence information is available on the socioeconomic status of COFA citizens in Hawai'i. Based on American Community Survey (ACS) data for 2011-2015 from the U.S. Census Bureau, the state Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (2018) reported that Marshallese had the lowest median household income (\$32,700), the highest rate of civilian unemployment (17 percent), and the highest poverty rate for individuals (51 percent) of ethnic groups in Hawai'i. Marshallese also had the lowest percentage of persons 25 years and older with a college degree or higher (2.6 percent), which was much less than the median for Hawai'i (30.9 percent).

Of the various COFA groups, data were provided only for Marshallese, who are a majority of COFA citizens in Hawai'i, because the ACS findings are based on sampling, and the small sample size of other COFA groups does not allow for reliable reporting of their data. Nonetheless, it might be assumed that the other COFA groups, with the possible exception of Palauans who have a more robust economic system in their islands, do not differ significantly in their socioeconomic status in Hawai'i from Marshallese in terms of occupational, income and educational status. If that is the case, COFA citizens arguably have the lowest socioeconomic status of all ethnic groups in Hawai'i, which directly reflects the discriminatory policies and practices and racist stereotypes and narratives to which they are subject.

In Hawai'i, the educational attainment of Marshallese is significantly lower than the Hawai'i median, with 2 percent holding a bachelor's degree compared to the 30 percent State median.

With regard to higher education, at UH Mānoa in fall 2020, only 27 “Micronesian” undergraduates were enrolled (not including Chamorro students (34)), and this number has been decreasing in the past 10 years (Mānoa Institutional Research Office, 2020). COFA students are a minimal proportion (0.25 percent) of Mānoa undergraduates (10,688). Although COFA students very likely have a greater presence at the UH community colleges, they are still underrepresented compared to their percentage of K-12 public school students (5 percent).

“Micronesian” students in the UH system could include international students from the COFA nations in distinction to those who are state of Hawai'i residents and were educated locally. At the UHM College of Education, 19 of 1,938 or one percent of students enrolled for fall 2021 identified as Micronesian (J. Miranda, personal communication, September, 16, 2021). Of the 19 students, only one was enrolled in a teacher licensure track. This data is problematic because research indicates that when teachers are the same race or ethnicity as their students, the students do better in school, especially in math and reading (Dee, 2004; Egalite et al., 2015; Redding, 2019). The minimal number of COFA undergraduates at UH Mānoa may be an indication of the educational and social difficulties they encounter in the public schools, which lessen their transition to postsecondary education.

In terms of employment, the “Bias Against Micronesians in Hawai'i” study noted above reported on “occupational discrimination” against COFA citizens (Stotzer, 2019). A considerable one-fourth of the interviewees responded affirmatively that “Because [they] are Micronesian,” they have “been treated poorly, e.g., made fun of, gossiped about, etc., by coworkers or a boss in Hawai'i”



(24.1 percent). Significant numbers also indicated, because they are Micronesian, they have “been mistreated at a job in Hawai‘i, such as not being given a promotion” (9.4 percent) and have “been denied a job in Hawai‘i” (8.9 percent). These percentages attest to the racial discrimination that COFA citizens perceive themselves as experiencing in the workplace and in seeking work, which contributes to their low occupational and income status in Hawai‘i.

The above cited study concluded that its “findings suggest that bias and discrimination... is [*sic*] prevalent” against COFA citizens and “speak to the need for additional resources and education for all communities, including [service providers] and Micronesian community members, to

understand their civil rights in regard to healthcare access, employment, and housing” (Stotzer, 2019). More significantly, the study findings indicate the tremendous need to eliminate discriminatory policies and practices, and not just bias, that subjugate COFA citizens in order to alleviate the systemic racism against them.

By applying systemic racism theory, this section of the research brief has demonstrated how its various dimensions work together inter-dependently to maintain the COFA community as the most racially oppressed and denigrated group in Hawai‘i. Systemic racism is also evident in the experiences and status of COFA students in the K-12 public school system.

### **Status and Experiences of Students from Micronesia In K-12 Hawai‘i Public Schools**

In this section of the research brief, we present evidence that students from Micronesia are experiencing restricted access to educational opportunities. Racism and systemic inequities are significant factors that can help to explain differences in educational outcomes as compared to statewide averages. We conclude with examples of students' strength and resiliency. The final section of the brief outlines policy recommendations.

#### **Enrollment**

The Hawai‘i Department of Education (HiDOE) provides enrollment figures for “Other Micronesian” students (8,963) that differentiate them from “Guamanian or Chamorro” students (551) for the 2019-2020 school year (DBEDT, 2021). The former ethnic category can be assumed to refer to students from Micronesia who are close to five percent of the 179,300 public school students and outnumber longer resident groups, such as Chinese Americans (3.0 percent) and Samoans (3.3

percent). About six percent of Micronesian students (510) reported being homeless (Ratliffe, 2019). Most students from Micronesia are placed in the State’s English Learner Program with over 55 percent considered active English Learners (EL). An additional 39 percent were either former EL or monitored EL students, leaving only 13 percent who were not EL. Chuukese and Marshallese are the second and third most common languages spoken by ELs in the State (Hawai‘i Data Exchange, 2021).

#### **Graduation Rate**

An indicator of significant problems related to providing students from Micronesia access to

quality education is graduation rates. Between 2013 and 2018, only 50 percent of students from Micronesia who entered ninth grade four years earlier graduated from high school, and 43 percent dropped out before graduating (Ratliffe, 2019). The overall graduation rate for the State was 86 percent (Hawai‘i Department of Education, 2021b). Structural inequities leading to this discrepancy include a lack of support, such as inadequate numbers of qualified EL teachers and bilingual school home assistants. Overt racism and stereotyping in schools may have contributed to students giving up and dropping out. Furthermore, some EL courses provided to high school students from Micronesia do not count toward graduation, causing significant barriers to graduating within the allotted time frame (Matsuda, 2016). Some families from Micronesia have reported feeling that students were effectively “pushed out” of schools.

Educational attainment is linked to positive social factors such as earning potential and lower unemployment (State of Hawai‘i, 2018), as well as better health and wellbeing (Raghupathi & Raghupathi, 2020). However, data indicate that there are barriers to educational opportunities for students from Micronesia. At the high school level, only 11 percent of Micronesian students in Hawai‘i public schools enrolled in college-level math or English courses in 2017, as compared to over 27 percent of all students (Ratliffe, 2019).

### A Lack of Qualified Personnel

There is a need for more educators and support staff in Hawai‘i with backgrounds and qualifications to teach students from Micronesia and other English learners (Armstrong, 2019; Office of English Language Acquisition, 2021; Hawaii Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2015). In school year 2017-2018, only eight percent of teachers in the State were considered “qualified” for Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

(TESOL). However, the HiDOE has subsequently enacted requirements for all teachers of ELs to complete relevant coursework and for EL teachers to be credentialed (Hawai‘i Department of Education 2021a). Such educator preparation is essential for teachers to have the skills and knowledge to effectively work with students from Micronesia and to address the issue of racial stereotyping of students by educators. This initiative is critical and needs to be expanded. Shari de La Cuadra-Larsen, Acting Director for the HiDOE Department of Education Special Projects Office, testified that most complex areas in the State do not have enough Bilingual School Home Assistants who are qualified interpreters, biliterate, and culturally competent in the languages and cultures of Micronesian students. Further funding for qualified personnel to support students from Micronesia is clearly needed and is something that the State is legally obligated to do.

### Bullying and Racial Stereotyping in Schools

Not only is access to quality education the State’s legal obligation, it is also critical to help address inequities and systemic racism. Yet, in addition to not having qualified personnel, students from Micronesia encounter barriers to learning opportunities in the form of bullying and racial stereotyping (Iding et al. 2007; Lyons et al., 2015; Okamoto et al. 2008; Talmy, 2009).

According to testimony provided to the Hawai‘i Advisory Committee to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission (2019) that focused on “COFA Migrant Access to Education,” Rebecca Gardner, a legal analyst for the State of Hawai‘i Office of Language Access, testified that, “The reality is that [Micronesian migrants] are subject to outright discrimination and hate speech, and just a lack of understanding” (p. 37). Shari de la Cuadra-Larsen, Acting Director for the HiDOE Special Projects Office, testified that Micronesian students “feel uncomfortable in school settings because of

perceived discrimination and language barriers and because formal schooling with compulsory education requirements is often a new concept to these students” (p. 34).

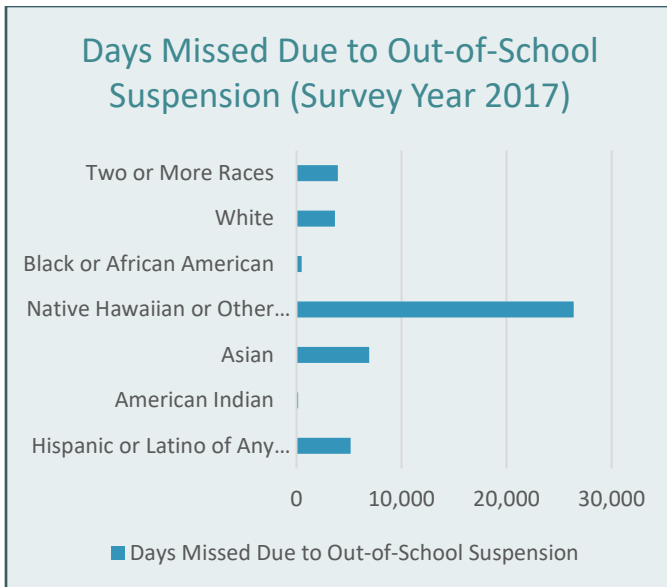
Reports indicate that racial stereotyping not only comes from other students, but also from school officials and teachers (Hofschneider, 2018b; Lyons et al., 2015; Sakai & Yamauchi, 2016). Joakim Peter, a Chuukese advocate said, “A lot of our students have been telling us stories where school officials have said some very racist things to them or have failed to promote a more inclusive atmosphere for learning where students can understand each other’s culture and respect that” (quoted in Lyons et al., 2015). Sakai and Yamauchi (2016) interviewed 11 teachers from ethnically diverse Title I schools who were identified by principals or peers as exemplary in implementing family and school engagement strategies. While the teachers were putting forth concerted efforts to better engage families, some made statements that reflected negative stereotypes, such as Micronesian families not valuing education. Hofschneider (2018b) interviewed a resident of Hawai‘i who stereotyped Micronesian students as being lazy and communicated that teachers at her children’s school agreed with the sentiment.

Iding, Cholymay, and Kaneshiro (2007) interviewed Chuukese teenagers who reported that teachers assumed that Chuukese students were disinterested or not listening, but in actuality, the students were not understanding what the teachers were saying. In his ethnography on ESL classrooms, Talmy (2009) observed incidences of both overt and covert racial stereotyping and degradation from teachers targeting students from Micronesia. Talmy found that teachers used “deficit-oriented” discourses about the abilities and schooling orientations of students and that they made negative comments about students’ appearance, intelligence, and hygiene.

Similarly, middle school students indicated that they felt the low expectations of teachers were rooted in racial stereotypes (Okamoto et al., 2008). When asked why some teachers treated them so poorly, one student stated “maybe it’s because they don’t know how to deal with us. They don’t know what we do and stuff like that” (p. 139). A middle school student from Micronesia who was interviewed by other teens at the Boys and Girls Club of Hawai‘i (2013) responded to the question, “Who are Micronesians?” by saying, “I know we are not dirty, we are not cockroaches, and we like to have fun.” One can infer that he had been called those things in the past. Talmy (2009) also found that newcomer students in ESL classrooms experienced bullying, not just from students from other ethnic groups, but from students with similar backgrounds who had been in Hawai‘i longer and sought to disassociate themselves from the new arrivals—a process Talmy referred to as “becoming local.”

### Attendance and Disciplinary Actions

The aforementioned studies indicate that schools may not be welcoming or safe spaces for students from Micronesia, helping to explain differences in attendance and disciplinary actions for students from Micronesia, compared to the State averages. According to 2017-2018 Federal Civil Rights data about Hawai‘i, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students, the federally identified group that includes students from Micronesia, were “chronically absent” at a rate of 8.3 percent, twice as often as the other categories listed (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders comprised 28.6 percent of the student body but accounted for 47 percent of in-school suspensions, 51.3 percent of out-of-school suspensions, and 56.2 percent of referrals to law enforcement.



Source: U.S. Department of Education, 2020

Such disciplinary actions can have major repercussions for academic performance and can increase the likelihood of dropping out (Terrell, 2015).

### Strength and Resilience

Studies indicate sources of strength and resilience related to students from Micronesia in the face of racial stereotyping and bullying (Heine, 2004; Iding et al., 2007; Kaneshiro & Black, 2012; Okamoto et al., 2008). In her dissertation, Heine (2004) found that newcomer families from Micronesia shared many of the buffers and resilience of other newcomer youth (Suárez-Orozco, et al., 2009). She found that students who were successful in school shared characteristics in common, including high family expectations and close supervision, clear goals, and a sense of responsibility to give back to their families and their communities.

Furthermore, meaningful relationships with educators have been shown to build social capital, resilience, and a sense of belonging for Micronesian students (Heine, 2004; Kaneshiro & Black, 2012; Okamoto et al., 2008). Opportunities found in co-ethnic clubs and activities are important sources of resilience for youth (Iding et al., 2007). Such activities can help students sustain their cultures and

languages (Boys & Girls Club of Hawai‘i, 2013). When teens from the Boys and Girls Club interviewed Jocelyn Howard, who is from Chuuk and co-founder of the organization We Are Oceania, said, “I want people to know that our culture is very beautiful and the fact that we still have our culture is important, because for me, it helped me survive in Hawai‘i.” Later in the video, Joakim Peter, a co-founder of We are Oceania and an elder from the Chuukese community, shared, “We are all in the same boat, or in the same canoe so to speak. We have given so much to the US as a group, as a people, as countries. We have given so much to the US. We have so much to contribute in culture.” These examples of strength and resilience in the Micronesian community point to initiatives that can be cultivated and institutionalized to help address the opportunity gaps, racism and stereotyping experienced by students from Micronesia in Hawai‘i schools.

**IN SUMMARY**, there are almost 9,000 students who are Micronesian in K-12 HiDOE schools, and many receive EL services. More than 40 percent of students from Micronesia drop out of high school, and they are under-represented in college-level courses in high school and later in undergraduate and graduate education. This under-representation contributes to lower wages than other groups in the State. As we will outline, **bullying and racial stereotyping** in schools provide a major barrier that Micronesian students face.

## Community Supports

A number of grassroots organizations have formed to support families and children in Hawai‘i from the three Micronesian nations with Compacts of Free Association with the US. These organizations were created mostly by the communities of people from Micronesia in response to the difficulties that families have experienced finding and navigating health, education and other social services, as well as succeeding in our educational system.

**Compact of Free Association Community Advocacy Network (COFACAN).** Volunteers from the larger community meet monthly to “mobilize and engage individuals and allies in positive actions to promote change for our community” (COFACAN, 2021). Their aim is to support the community of people from the COFA nations—Republic of the Marshall Islands, Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia. They originally formed to advocate to restore Medicaid benefits for the COFA population in Hawai‘i and at the federal level, but have evolved to also “encourage civic participation and proactively share and highlight the positive contributions of the Micronesian community, combating negative stereotypes that seek to disempower.”

**Micronesian Community Network (MCN).** This grant-funded community group, affiliated with the nations of Micronesia, has a “vision of empowering the Micronesian Community to be successful, healthy, and as a unified group in Hawaii” (MCH, 2022). MCN has four goals: (a) to promote communication, harmony, and unity among Micronesians with the local culture; (b) to facilitate access to services including health systems and housing; (c) to develop and improve education, leadership, and entrepreneurial skills; and (d) to enhance and foster a model Micronesian [community].

**We Are Oceania (WAO).** WAO is a grant-funded, nonprofit group with the mission of “Empowering

our Micronesian community to navigate success while honoring the integrity of our diverse heritage” (WAO, 2022). It provides a support system for all communities, families and individuals from the islands of Micronesia. Staff assist people to find appropriate resources, including for housing, public assistance, education, and youth empowerment.

**Waipahu Safe Haven Immigrant/Migrant Resource Center.** This organization serves the Waipahu, Oahu Community, especially Micronesian families by providing holistic services addressing needs identified by the community. Service needs are guided by two steering committees; Marshallese and Chuukese, who meet regularly to discuss challenges and concerns in their community. Services provided by the Safe Haven include after school tutoring, adult education, access to health insurance enrollment, rental and utilities assistance, cultural crafting and sewing, and support for the Micronesian club of Waipahu High School. All activities have language access. Topics experts are brought in to educate the committees and community about whatever challenges concern them.

**Chuuk Me Nessor (Chuukese Language and Cultural School).** Three Chuukese language schools on O‘ahu teach children Chuukese language and culture on Saturdays. They were started based on ideas and support from the Chuukese Steering Committee of Safe Haven (Chuuk Me Nessor, 2022).

**Marshallese Education Day.** This annual event recognizes and promotes youth achievement in school. All middle and high school Marshallese youth with a 3.0 grade point average or higher are honored in a community celebration. In addition, this donation-supported nonprofit organization celebrates Marshallese culture and traditional knowledge and provides information about scholarships and educational opportunities for youth.

#### **Marshallese Community Organization of Hawaii.**

The Marshallese Community Organization of Hawaii (MCOH), a non-profit organization was created in September, 2019, to address the needs of the Marshallese community. During the pandemic, their role was increased to address the multiple needs of the Marshallese community. Their mission is to preserve cultural heritage and to offer charitable educational and health care support. During the pandemic, they provided key support for Marshallese families affected by COVID and other

Pacific Island communities such as food drives, vaccine pods, educational outreach, language access, and any support families needed.

**Micronesian Health Advisory Coalition.** The Micronesian Health Advisory Coalition, (MHAC) advocated against the Basic Health Hawaii insurance that the state mandated for the COFA community in 2010. Its members provided advocacy at the State’s Health Equity Conference as well as through legislative testimony, and raised funds through MHAC’s basketball tournaments to pay for litigation by the Lawyers for Equal Justice, now known as Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice. MHACs mission was, “through its collaborative leadership and guided by our unique cultural values, advocate for the health and well-being of Micronesians to improve their quality of life in seeking justice and equality for the Pacific Community. They continue to work with their youth doing basketball and volleyball tournaments.

### **Policy Recommendations**

The public policy recommendations below follow directly from the discussion above concerning the major problems with systemic racism that COFA citizens regularly encounter in Hawai‘i. They are intended to address these problems in general and in the K-12 public school system in particular. The HSESJ expresses our willingness to assist in the development of our recommendations.

**The Honolulu Police Department (HPD)** must end its practice of racial profiling COFA citizens, which is evident in their huge overrepresentation among those arrested for stay-at-home order violations related to the COVID-19 pandemic. These disparities also possibly exist among Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders subjected to use of force by the police.

**In addition, the HPD** must require their units to receive cultural education to improve their awareness and understanding of the different cultures of Micronesia. They should develop

partner-ships with Micronesian organizations to provide the cultural knowledge that they need.

**The state legislature** must support improving language access for the State of Hawaii, by providing training for interpreters and translators through the community colleges. A State certification process needs to be created to produce qualified interpreters for the State.

**The State legislature and the HiDOE** need to allocate additional funds for hiring more bilingual school-home assistants to improve communication between

COFA parents and their children's teachers. This lack of sufficient language access very likely contributes to the educational difficulties, including suspensions and dropping out, experienced by COFA students. In addition, hiring an adequate number of certified and prepared EL teachers can better support student success. Finally, celebrating the academic and other achievements of students from the COFA states in the public schools can promote more positive attitudes and perspectives toward this group.

**The HiDOE** needs to address the disparities among students who are subject to disciplinary actions, such as expulsions, suspensions, and referral to law enforcement agencies. These actions are disproportionately affecting children from the COFA nations.

**High school teachers and counselors** should recruit and encourage more COFA students to enroll in Early College courses offered at their schools because they are greatly underrepresented in them, and taking such courses can significantly increase their entry into college. They should also work to considerably increase the high school graduation and college going rates of COFA students.

**The HiDOE** needs to further develop and enforce a campus policy prohibiting the race-based verbal and physical mistreatment of students. includes stereotyping and bullying, by other students, teachers and administrators.

**The HiDOE** needs to substantially reduce the dropout rate of COFA students from its high schools.

**The HiDOE** needs to expand the curriculum to include education about the history of Micronesia. The nuclear legacy and the history of colonialism are especially important and relevant topics that

students need to know. Safe spaces for students in schools, such as Micronesian clubs, need to be encouraged to build support for students and develop their self-esteem.

**The University of Hawai'i**, through its student affairs office at each campus, should develop college recruitment activities that target students from the COFA nations in public intermediate and high schools. These activities can include tours of UH campuses and presentations by UH COFA students at public schools. In addition, the University should reconsider tuition differentials for students from the COFA states so that they can more easily afford tuition. While federal aid is provided to COFA students for bachelor's and master's degrees, they are ineligible for federal aid for doctorate degrees. The State, in particular, the University of Hawai'i, could provide additional assistance for doctoral students from COFA States.

Lastly, while not a policy recommendation, the HSESJ strongly encourages the people of Hawai'i to affirm their commitment to living in a multicultural society by extending the values of

**ALOHA,  
EQUALITY,  
INCLUSION,  
AND  
SOCIAL JUSTICE**

to the COFA community. This individual and collective initiative can begin by not disseminating "Micronesian" jokes and racist slurs and by promoting a sense of aloha for COFA citizens in Hawai'i.

#### AUTHORS:

E. Brook Chapman de Sousa, Jonathan Y. Okamura, Katherine T. Ratliffe and Margary Martin.

*Over 100 scholars in Hawai'i have endorsed this statement. See a full list of signatories at the end of this document.*

### References

- Armstrong, H. (2019, March 8). Letter to Hawai‘i Teacher Standards Board Standards Committee. <http://Hawai‘iteacherstandardsboard.org/content/wp-content/uploads/EL-Teacher-Program-HTSB-Request.pdf>.
- Caballero, M. (2020, July 5). “Re: Racial and wealth disparities in policing to Honolulu Police Department.” Letter. [https://www.acluhi.org/sites/default/files/field\\_documents/06.05.20\\_-\\_aclu\\_letter\\_to\\_hpd\\_re\\_discriminatory\\_policing.pdf](https://www.acluhi.org/sites/default/files/field_documents/06.05.20_-_aclu_letter_to_hpd_re_discriminatory_policing.pdf).
- Carucci, L. M. (1997). *Nuclear nativity: Rituals of renewal and empowerment in the Marshall Islands*. Northern Illinois University Press.
- Chuuk Me Nessor (Chuuk Language and Cultural School). (2023, Feb. 23). Chuuk Me Nessor. <https://www.chuukmenessor.com/>
- Compact of Free Association, Community Advocacy Network (COFA CAN). (2021, Feb. 23). About. [www.facebook.com/cofacan](http://www.facebook.com/cofacan).
- Dee, T. S. (2004). Teachers, race, and student achievement in a randomized experiment. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 86(1), 195-210.
- Dibblin, J. (1988). *Day of two suns: US nuclear testing and the Pacific islanders*. Virago Press.
- Egalite, A. J., Kisida, B., & Winters, M. A. (2015). Representation in the classroom: The effect of own-race teachers on student achievement. *Economics of Education Review*, 45, 44-52.
- Feagin, J. R. (2006). *Systemic Racism: A Theory of Oppression*. New York: Routledge.
- Feagin, J. R. & Elias, S. (2013). Rethinking racial formation theory: A systemic racism critique. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36(6), 931-960.
- Genz, J. H., Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua, N., LaBriola, M. C., Mawyer, A., Morei, E. N., & Rosa, J. P. (2016). *Militarism and Nuclear Testing in the Pacific* (Vol. 1). Center for Pacific Island Studies, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. <https://doi.org/http://hdl.handle.net/10125/42430>.
- Graham, B. (2008). Determinants and dynamics of Micronesian emigration: A short discussion paper. [http://www.yokwe.net/index.php?name=Downloads&req=viewdownload&details &lid=370](http://www.yokwe.net/index.php?name=Downloads&req=viewdownload&details&lid=370).
- Hawai‘i Advisory Committee to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. (2019). *Micronesians in Hawaii: Migrant Group Faces Barriers to Equal Opportunity*. <https://www.usccr.gov/pubs/2019/08-13-Hawaii-Micronesian-Report.pdf>.
- Hawai‘i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice. (2011). *Broken Promises, Shattered Lives: The Case for Justice for Micronesians in Hawai‘i*. Policy brief. [https://evols.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/bitstream/10524/23158/CaseForJustice\\_MicronesiansInHawaii.pdf](https://evols.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/bitstream/10524/23158/CaseForJustice_MicronesiansInHawaii.pdf).
- Hawai‘i Boys & Girl’s Club (2013). *Micronesian Culture* (video). Available at <https://vimeo.com/71384783>.



- Hawai‘i Data Exchange. (2021, October). Hawai‘i English learner data story. <https://www.hawaiidxp.org/data-products/hawaii-english-language-learners-data-story/>.
- Hawai‘i Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism. (2018). Demographic, Social, Economic, and Housing Characteristics for Selected Race Groups in Hawaii. Research and Economic Analysis Division. [https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/economic/reports/SelectedRacesCharacteristics\\_HawaiiReport.pdf](https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/economic/reports/SelectedRacesCharacteristics_HawaiiReport.pdf).
- Hawai‘i Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism. (2021). Ethnicity of Public School Students: 2019-2020, table 3.19. The State of Hawai‘i Data Book. Honolulu: Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism. <https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/economic/databook/db2020/section03.pdf>.
- Hawai‘i Department of Education. (2021a). Educator quality: Teacher and paraprofessional guidelines. [https://hidoeotm.org/eq/DOCS2122/EducatorQualityGuidance\\_SY2021-22.pdf](https://hidoeotm.org/eq/DOCS2122/EducatorQualityGuidance_SY2021-22.pdf).
- Hawai‘i Department of Education. (2021b). State of Hawai‘i college and career readiness measures. Longitudinal Education Information (LEI) System. <https://hidoedata.org/state/999/ccr>.
- Heine, H. C. (2002). Culturally responsive schools for Micronesian immigrant students (Briefing Paper #PB0204).
- Heine, H. C. (2004). “Tuwaak B We Elimaajnono” Perspectives and voices: A multiple case study of successful Marshallese immigrant high school students. Doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.
- Hezel, F. X. (1995). Strangers in their own land: A century of colonial rule in the Caroline and Marshall Islands. University of Hawai‘i Press.
- Hezel, F. X. (2010). Christianity in Micronesia. In C. Farhadian (ed.), *Introducing World Christianity*. Blackwell Press.
- Hezel, F. X. (2013). Micronesians on the move: Eastward and upward bound. *Pacific Islands Policy*, Issue 9.
- Hezel, F. X. & Samuel, E. (2006). Micronesians abroad. *Micronesian Counselor* 64, 1-12. <http://www.micsem.org/pubs/counselor/pdf/mc64.pdf>.
- Hofschneider, A. (2018a, Sept. 19). “#BeingMicronesian in Hawaii Means Lots of Online Hate.” Honolulu Civil Beat. <https://www.civilbeat.org/2018/09/beingmicronesian-in-hawaii-means-lots-of-online-hate/>.
- Hofschneider, A. (2018b, Sept. 21). Why talking about anti-Micronesian hate is important. Honolulu Civil Beat. <https://www.civilbeat.org/2018/09/why-talking-about-anti-micronesian-hate-is-important/>.
- Hofschneider, A. (2020, June 29). HPD chief says there’s less racial bias in Hawaii. She’s wrong. Honolulu Civil Beat. <https://www.civilbeat.org/2020/06/what-implicit-bias-looks-like-in-hawaii/>.
- Hosaka, K. R., Castanera, M. P., & Yamada, S. (2021). Structural racism and Micronesians in Hawai‘i: The COVID-19 syndemic. *Asia Pacific Journal of Public Health*, 33(6-7), 775-776. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10105395211012188>

- Iding, M., Cholymay, N., Kaneshiro, S. (2007). Building bridges not barriers: Inviting Chuukese family involvement in Hawai‘i schools. *Journal of Pacific Rim Psychology*, 1(1), 10-13.
- Inada, M. K., Braun, K. L., Mwarike, P., Cassel, K., Compton, R., Yamada, S., & Sentell, T. (2019). Chuukese community experiences of racial discrimination and other barriers to healthcare: Perspectives from community members and providers. *Social Medicine*, 12(1), 3-13.
- Jedra, C. & Hofschneider A. (2021, Feb. 3). “‘Significant’ Disparity in Use of Force Questioned by Honolulu Police Commission.” Honolulu Civil Beat. <https://www.civilbeat.org/2021/02/significant-disparity-in-use-of-force-against-some-groups-questioned-by-honolulu-police-commission/>.
- Kaneshiro, S., & Black R. (2012). Strengths and resources of Micronesian students in a Hawai‘i middle school. *Pacific Educational Research Journal*, 14(1), 43-66.
- Lee, S. (2018, April 27). Feds: Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander kids suspended far more often. Honolulu Civil Beat. <https://www.civilbeat.org/2018/04/feds-native-Hawaiian-pacific-islander-kids-suspended-far-more-often/>.
- Lyons, P., & Tengan, T. (2015). COFA complex: A conversation with Joakim “Jojo” Peter. *American Quarterly*, 67(3), 663-679.
- Mānoa Institutional Research Office. (2020). Enrollment. University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. [https://manoa.hawaii.edu/miro/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Micronesian\\_enroll-undergrad20.pdf](https://manoa.hawaii.edu/miro/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Micronesian_enroll-undergrad20.pdf).
- Matsuda, S. M. (2016, May 12). Drop-out or push-out? Micronesian students in Honolulu. PASS. <https://www.pass-usa.net/micronesian-students-honolulu>.
- McElfish, P. A., Purvis, R. S., Riklon, S., & Yamada, S. (2019). Compact of Free Association migrants and health insurance policies: Barriers and solutions to improve health equity. *Inquiry: Journal of Health Care Organization, Provision and Financing*, 56(1-5). <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0046958019894784>.
- Micronesian Community Network (MCN). (2022, Feb. 23). Micronesian Community Network. <https://nationsofmicronesia.wordpress.com/micronesian-community-network->
- Mizuo, A. (2020, June 29). Racial Disparities Emerge in HPD Enforcement of Stay-at-Home Violations. Hawai‘i Public Radio. <https://www.hawaiipublicradio.org/local-news/2020-06-29/racial-disparities-emerge-in-hpd-enforcement-of-stay-at-home-violations>.
- Office of English Language Acquisition. (2021). Teacher Projections for English Learners [Fact sheet]. [https://ncela.ed.gov/files/fast\\_facts/Del4-4ELTeacher%20Projections\\_6.11.2021\\_508.pdf](https://ncela.ed.gov/files/fast_facts/Del4-4ELTeacher%20Projections_6.11.2021_508.pdf).
- Okamoto, S., Mayeda, D., Ushiroda, M., Rehuher, D., Lauilefue, T., & Ongalibang, O. (2008). Risk and protective factors of Micronesian youth in Hawai‘i: An exploratory study. *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, 35(2), 127-147.
- Okamura, J. Y. (2019). What about racial groups and boundaries (and race and racism)? *Anthropological Notebooks*, 25(1), 37-56.

- Pobutsky, A. M., Buenconsejo-Lum, L., Chow, C., Palafox, N., & Maskarinec, G. G. (2005). Micronesian migrants in Hawaii: Health issues and culturally-appropriate, community-based solutions. *California Journal of Health Promotion*, 3(4), 59-72.
- Pobutsky, A. M., Krupitsky, D., and Yamada, S. (2009). Micronesian migrant health issues in Hawaii, Part 2: An assessment of health, language and key social determinants of health. *California Journal of Health Promotion*, 7(2), 32-55.
- Raghupathi, V. & Raghupathi, W. (2020). The influence of education on health: An empirical assessment of OECD countries for the period 1995–2015. *Arch Public Health* 78, 20. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13690-020-00402-5>.
- Ratliffe, K. T. (2018). Nuclear nomads: Finding a new island. *Diaspora, Indigenous and Minority Education*, 12(3), 139-154. DOI: 10.1080/15595692.2018.1462157.
- Ratliffe, K. T. (2019, May 24). Hawai'i Educational Research Network: Highlights on Micronesian School Success. Presentation at Hawai'i Data Exchange Conference, Kapolei, Hawai'i.
- Redding, C. (2019). A teacher like me: A review of the effect of student-teacher racial/ethnic matching on teacher perceptions of students and student academic and behavioral outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, 89(4), 499-535.
- Ridgell, R. (1997). *Pacific Nations and Territories: The islands of Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia* (3rd, revised ed.). Honolulu: Bess Press.
- Rita, N. (2020). Local identity and migrant politics: A qualitative content analysis of Letters to the Editor in Hawai'i. *Social Process in Hawai'i*, 46, 181-199.
- Sakai, K. & Yamauchi, L. A. (2016, April). Family engagement from ethnically diverse teachers' perspectives in Title I elementary schools. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Washington, DC.
- Shek, D. & Yamada, S. (2011). Health care for Micronesians and constitutional rights. *Hawaii Medical Journal*, 70(11), 4-8.
- State of Hawai'i (2018, March). *Demographic, Social, Economic, and Housing Characteristics for Certain Race Groups in Hawai'i*. [https://files.Hawai'i.gov/dbedt/economic/reports/SelectedRacesCharacteristics\\_Hawai'iReport.pdf](https://files.Hawai'i.gov/dbedt/economic/reports/SelectedRacesCharacteristics_Hawai'iReport.pdf).
- Stotzer, R. (2019, Feb.). Research Brief: Bias Against Micronesians in Hawai'i. School of Social Work, University of Hawai'i.
- Suárez-Orozco, C., Pimentel, A., & Martin, M. (2009). The significance of relationships: Academic engagement and achievement among newcomer immigrant youth. *Teachers College Record*, 111(3), 712-749.
- Talmy, S. (2009). Becoming "Local" in ESL: Racism as resource in a Hawai'i public high school. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 9(1), 36-57, DOI: 10.1080/15348450903476840.
- Terrell, J. (2015). Tongan, Micronesian, Hawaiian students most likely to be suspended. Honolulu Civil Beat. <https://www.civilbeat.org/2015/07/tongan-micronesian-Hawaiian-students-most-likely-to-be-suspended/>.

- U.S. Department of Education. (2015). 2014-2015 Hawai‘i Consolidated State Performance Report. Washington, DC: Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. <https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/consolidated/sy14-15part1/hi.pdf>.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2020). 2017-2018 Civil Rights Data Collection. Washington, DC: Office of Civil Rights. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-2017-18.html>.
- University of Hawai‘i Economic Research Office (UHERO). (2020). <https://uhero.hawaii.edu/the-impact-of-the-medicaid-expiration-on-cofa-migrants-and-covid19/>.
- University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, Office of Student Equity, Excellence and Diversity. (2016). Mānoa’s Racial and Ethnic Diversity Profile. [https://www.Hawai‘i.edu/diversity/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Manoa-Diversity-Profile\\_Mar30-2016.pdf](https://www.Hawai‘i.edu/diversity/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Manoa-Diversity-Profile_Mar30-2016.pdf).
- We Are Oceania (WAO). (2022, Feb. 23). We Are Oceania. <https://www.weareoceania.org>.
- Yamada (2020, Oct. 25). Let’s call COVID-19 a syndemic. Honolulu Civil Beat. <https://civilbeat.org/2020/10/lets-call-covid-19-a-syndemic/>.

## Signatories

The following scholars and researchers endorse this statement. Institutions are listed for identification purposes only.

Department of Native Hawaiian Health  
University of Hawai'i

Hawaii Disability Rights Center

Hawai'i TESOL

Native Hawaiian Student Services  
University of Hawai'i

PacificWeb, LLC

Amy Agbayani  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Anna Ah Sam  
University of Hawai'i

Ibrahim G. Aoudé  
University of Hawai'i

Shanty Asher  
City & County of Honolulu, Office of Economic  
Revitalization

Mary Babcock  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Robert C. Bachini  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Celia Bardwell-Jones  
University of Hawai'i, Hilo

Jeanne Batallones  
Hawai'i Community College

Rhonda Black  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Chai Blair-Stahn  
Leeward Community College

Jeffrey Bock  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Eunice L. Brekke  
Leeward Community College

Jeremiah Brown  
Waipahu High School

Charlene Bumanglag  
University of Hawai'i

Ruben Campos  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

MeganAnn Cappuccino  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Kimo Alexander Cashman  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

E. Brook Chapman de Sousa  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Jacquelyn Chappel  
University of Hawai'i

Michael Cawdery  
Leeward Community College

Laura Chandler  
University of Hawai'i

Paul M. Chandler  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Pauline W. U. Chinn  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Michael Cooney  
University of Hawai'i

Megan Dabrowski  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Kurt D. Dela Cruz  
University of Hawai'i, Hilo

Keola Diaz  
East West Center

Joe Enlet  
University of Rhode Island

Phillippe Fernandez-Brennan  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Charlotte Frambaugh-Kritzer  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Shawn Ford  
Kapi'olani Community College

Kathleen French  
Windward Community College

Jan L Fried  
Kapi'olani Community College

Candace Fujikane  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Joe Genz  
University of Hawai'i, Hilo

Kathleen Gauci  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Betsy Gilliland  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Monica Gonzalez Smith  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Kawehionalani Goto  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Patricia Espiritu Halagao  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Meagan Harden  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Ulla Hasager  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Mary Therese Perez Hattori  
Pacific Islands Development Program

Junie Hayashi  
Leeward Community College

Vilsoni Hereniko  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Lizabeth Horii  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Josie Howard  
We Are Oceania (WAO)

Craig Howes  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Carole Hsiao  
Community Educator, Honolulu

Marie Iding  
University of Hawai'i

Cathy Kanoelani Ikeda  
University of Hawai'i, West O'ahu

Tobias Irish  
University of Hawai'i, Hilo

Jan Minoru Javinar  
University of Hawai'i, West O'ahu

Uniokalani Jensen  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Elizabeth Jiménez Salinas  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Jeff Judd  
Leeward Community College

Elianna Kantar  
Farrington High School

Julie Kaomea  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Kelly Kennedy  
Leeward Community College

Janet Kim  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Clayton Kimoto  
Attorney at Law

Roger Kiyomura  
Hawai'i Pacific University

Monica C. LaBriola  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Charles R. Lawrence III  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Priscila Leal  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Winona Kaalouahi Lee  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Mellanie Lee  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Aaron Levine  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Sara Lynch  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Agnès Malate  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Margary Martin  
University of Hawai'i, Hilo

Patricia Massoth  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Ron Matayoshi  
University of Hawai'i

Alexander Mawyer  
Center for Pacific Islands Studies

Phillip H. McArthur  
Brigham Young University Hawai'i

Elizbeth Mcfarlane  
University of Hawai'i

James McKown  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Alexander Means  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Ellen T. Meiser  
University of Hawai'i

Barbara Melamed  
Behavior Medicine Associates LLC

Erin Mendelson  
Hawai'i Department of Education

Raymond Michael Miner  
Republic of the Marshall Islands Early Hearing  
Detection and Intervention Program, University of  
Hawai'i

Roxanne Moore  
ReHumanizEd, LLC

Natalie Nimmer  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Veronica F. Ogata  
Kapi'olani Community College

'Alohilani Okamura  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Jonathan Y. Okamura  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Leslie Okoji  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Eve Okura Koller  
Brigham Young University Hawai'i

Cecily Ornelles  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Wayde Oshiro  
Leeward Community College

Jen Pagala Barnett  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Leticia C. Pagkalinawan  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Annemarie Paikai  
Leeward Community College

Ryen Palmeira-Madarang  
University of Hawai'i

Christian Palmer  
Windward Community College

Saofai Pao Lowe  
Wa'ianae High School, University of Hawai'i,  
Mānoa

Kristin Pauker  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Wendy Pearson  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Griza Perez  
University of Hawai'i, Hilo

Lorenzo Perillo  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Joanna Philippoff  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Kara Plamann Wagoner  
Kapi'olani Community College

Andrew Polloi  
University of Hawai'i, Hilo

Christine Quemuel  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Vidalino Raatior  
Dr. Joakim Peter Memorial Scholarship

Katherine T. Ratliffe  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Davis Rehuher  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Nicole Alia Salis Reyes  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Scott Robinson  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Colleen Rost-Banik  
University of Hawai'i

Joanne Sablan  
University of Hawai'i

Ku'uleialohaonālani Salzer-Vitale  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Nicole Schlaack  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Bethany F. Schwartz  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Alethea Kuulei Serna  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Caroline Soga  
Honolulu Community College

Jeffrey D. Stern  
Chaminade University of Honolulu

Monica Stitt-Bergh  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Krisnawati Suryanata  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Derek Taira  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa



Steven Talmy  
University of British Columbia

Ger Thao  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Katherine A. Tibbetts  
Lili'uokalani Trust

Victoria Timmerman  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Tracy Trevorrow  
Chaminade University of Honolulu

James B. Tueller  
Brigham Young University Hawai'i

Rouel Velasco  
University of Hawai'i, West O'ahu

Linda Venenciano  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Julianne Walsh  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Syreeta Washington  
Leeward Community College

Bruce Watson  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Helen Wong Smith  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Eric K. Yamamoto  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Lois A. Yamauchi  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Jon Yoshioka  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Waynele Yu  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Joseph Zilliox  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Klavdija Zorec  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Deborah Zuercher  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa