



**Promoting social justice by engaging Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders through culturally relevant advocacy, research, and development.**

EPIC is a national organization based in Los Angeles that was established in 2009, by a group of young Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) leaders who recognized the urgency to address the growing needs of NHPI families. With experiences ranging from grassroots organizing to higher education administration, these young leaders sought to build a strong and unified advocacy voice for NHPs; to collect data that spoke to the issues impacting NHPs; and to develop a **pipeline of strong leaders who can be advocates and influencers in, and on behalf of, the community**. Since its inception, EPIC has centered culture and social justice establishing partnerships within and outside of the NHPI community; creating tools and resources to support organizational and community capacity; and fostering the personal, professional, and political growth of youth. EPIC is a fiscally sponsored project of Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Los Angeles.

**Mission:** To advance social justice by engaging NHPs in culture-centered advocacy, leadership development, and research.

**Programs:**

Advocacy

EPIC practices advocacy by educating policymakers, elected officials, and funders outside of the NHPI community about our most urgent issues focusing on education, health, and immigration. This work is carried out primarily through Advocacy Days in Sacramento, CA and Washington, D.C., participation in various multiethnic, statewide, and API coalitions, as well as legislative visits with local officials in Southern California. Integrated voter engagement is another key element of EPIC's advocacy as we believe that civic participation is at the crux of building political power for the NHPI community.

EPIC also acts as the anchor organization for the NHPI National Network that includes over 35 organizations from across the country. It's a cross-sector approach to building a unified voice for NHPs nationally.

Leadership Development

Pacific Islander Leaders of Tomorrow (PILOT) has been EPIC's most robust effort at leadership development. It consists of four components: Summer Institute, Semester Sessions, Forward Movement Projects, and Internships. Please refer to the PILOT 1-pager for more details.

Research

EPIC's hallmark research project has been our national and CA-specific demographic profiles on the state of NHPs released in 2014 in partnership with Asian Americans Advancing Justice- LA. To date, it remains the only report to disaggregate data on NHPs. As we establish more relationships with NHPI academics who can act as principal investigators, we'll be:

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- creating an EPIC Institutional Review Board that supports and validates the work of NHPI scholars and establishes a standard for non-NHPIs who seek to conduct research on and about the NHPI community;
- updating our demographic reports to reflect 2020 Census data;
- investigating the connection between culturally-relevant programming and persistence rates for NHPI college students.

**History:**

Prior to EPIC'S inception, its founders convened to advise the Pacific Islander Health Careers Pipeline Program which was a program of the Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance. The success of the program led to the formation of EPIC and the EPIC Scholars Leadership Roundtable, which has brought together student leaders from college campuses across California. The students focused on developing strategies for community-based leadership on campuses. The EPIC Scholars Leadership Roundtable has been held for 3 years and served more than 100 NHPI college student leaders. Some of these leaders continued to pursue opportunities extended by EPIC through its DC Internship Program. The EPIC DC Internship Program, in partnership with organizations such as White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, OCA, APIAVote, and the Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies, has sent 6 young NHPI interns to Washington, D.C. In 2010, EPIC joined the national effort to bring awareness to the plight of obesity with the creation of the Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Youth Health and Fitness Day. Today, the Pacific Islands Student Association of UCLA has taken ownership of NHPI Youth Health and Fitness Day as their annual outreach event to NHPI students and families in Southern California. Also in 2010, a California bill (AB 1088) requiring state departments to utilize distinct data collection categories for Tongan and Fijian communities, in addition to ones for Native Hawaiian, Samoan, and Chamorro/Guamanian, was proposed. EPIC organized advocacy efforts around this bill, utilizing the energy of its EPIC Scholars student leadership base and helped pass AB 1088, as well as ACR 67, a state resolution recognizing the contributions of NHPI communities to California while recognizing the importance of preserving NHPI communities and their traditions. PILOT started with funding from W.K.Kellogg Foundation's Racial Equity Initiative, and was created in partnership with National Pacific Islander Educator Network (NPIEN), Pacific Islander Education and Retention (PIER- UCLA), Pacific Islands Center for Educational Development (PICED), TOA Institute, Tongan American Youth Foundation (TAYF), and Tongan Community Service Center (TCSC-SSG).

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