

County Health  
Rankings & Roadmaps

Building a Culture of Health, County by County

# Webinar

The power of narrative to influence civic  
health

May 23, 2023

[countyhealthrankings.org](http://countyhealthrankings.org)



University of Wisconsin  
Population Health Institute  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Support  
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In a democracy, everyone has a voice. As we build a world where we all belong, we can also ensure everyone has an *equal* voice in deciding how our society is structured and how systems, communities and institutions function.



YOLANDA LIMAN  
Drawing  
Change

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**Please welcome**

**Angela Acker**

Narrative infrastructure team leader  
County Health Rankings & Roadmaps

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**Cultivating civic  
infrastructure and  
civic participation**  
for healthier  
communities

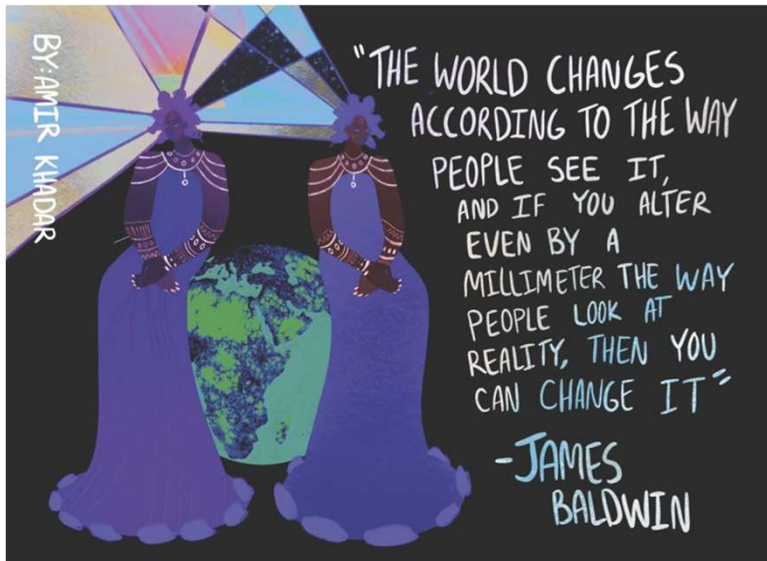


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# What do we mean by narrative — and why does it matter?



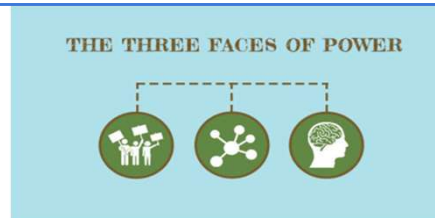
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## Three Faces of Power

1. **Visible:** Organizing people and resources to influence decisions
1. **Hidden:** Building infrastructure to influence what's on the agenda
1. **Invisible:** Influencing worldview to make what's currently impossible become commonsense



Source: Lukes, Grassroots Power Project



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## Worldview, Narrative, Story, Message



Source: Narrative Initiative, "Waves: A model for deep narrative change"

**Take home:**  
Narratives are *NOT* the same as messages



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## Dominant Narratives Are...

- Narratives held by many people at this moment in time
- Omnipresent and insidious - in our heads and actions, often without us being aware of them
- Embedded in our institutions, structures, and norms
- Not naturally occurring - created, advanced, and maintained by people to intentionally shape possibilities and outcomes
- Drawn from a subset of the values and beliefs held by those in power
- More powerful than facts



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## We Can Change Dominant Narratives

- Making dominant narratives visible makes them **lose power**
- With a transformative narrative, we can **lift up a different set of values and beliefs**
- By changing values and beliefs, we can **change what's possible**



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**Jeannette Raymond**  
Public Health Practice  
Asst. Section Manager  
MN Department of  
Health



**Gloria Dickerson**  
Founder and CEO  
We2gether Creating  
Change

**Please welcome**

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## Questions we will explore...

What does narrative work look like at the  
Minnesota Department of Health?

How has shifting narratives in Drew, MS resulted  
new way of living?

What can we do begin changing narratives in our  
spaces?

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# Join Us! Discussion Group

**When:** Immediately following the webinar

**What:** Interactive learning experience, opportunity to share ideas and ask questions

**How:** Zoom

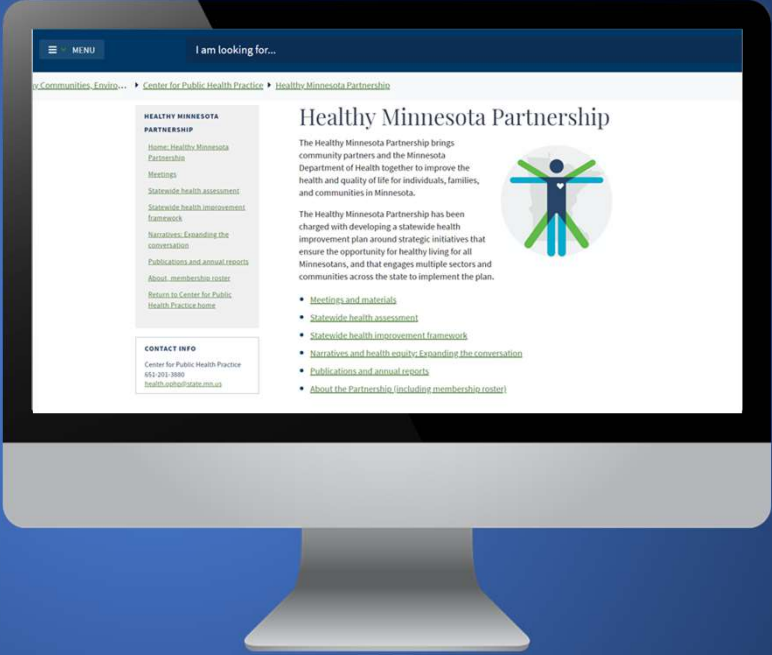
**Why:** Deepen the webinar learning, allow further exploration



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## Healthy Minnesota Partnership

The HMP drives the direction of the SHA and develops the Statewide Health Improvement Framework (SHIF)



5/16/2023

health.state.mn.us

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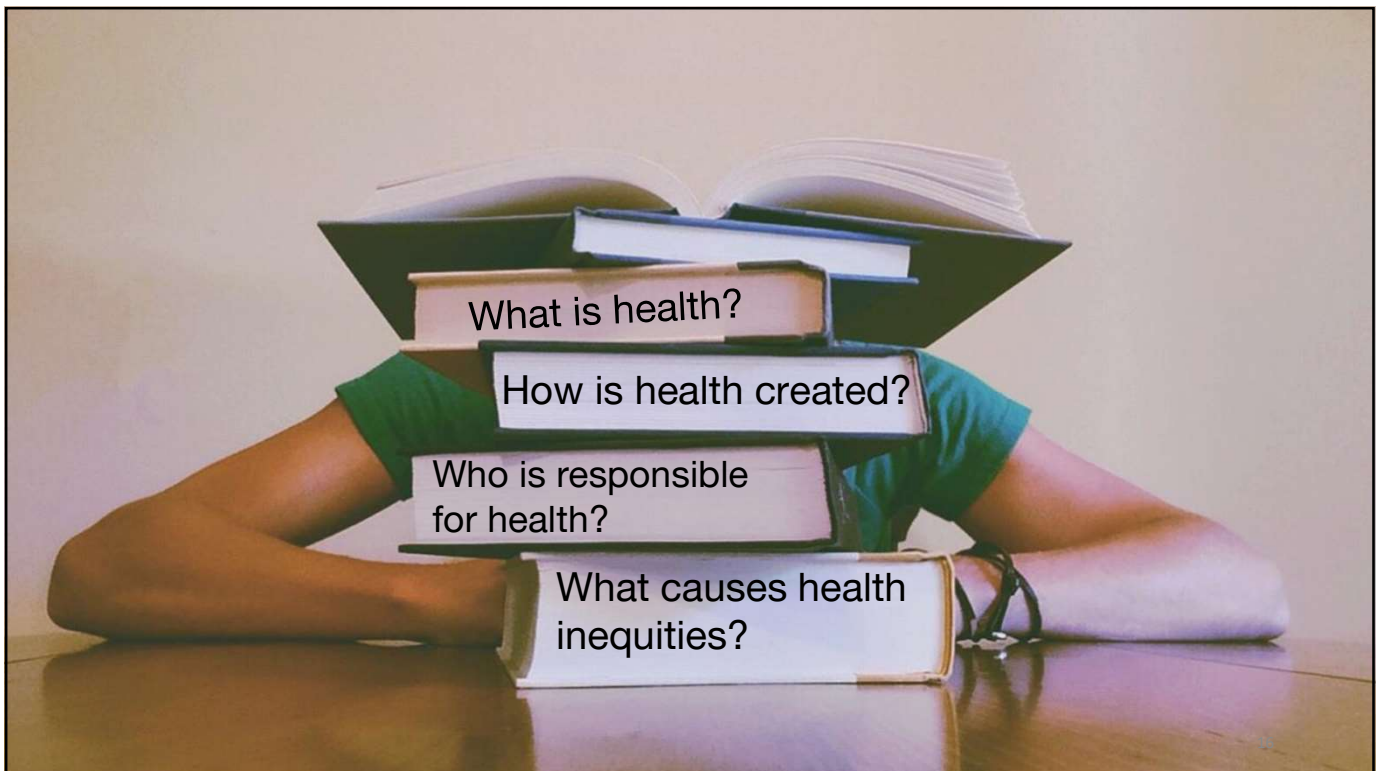
## Healthy Minnesota Partnership

- Strategic approach to expand the conversation about what creates health
- Public narratives that emphasize the opportunity to be healthy
- Conversations with many others to inform the emerging narrative



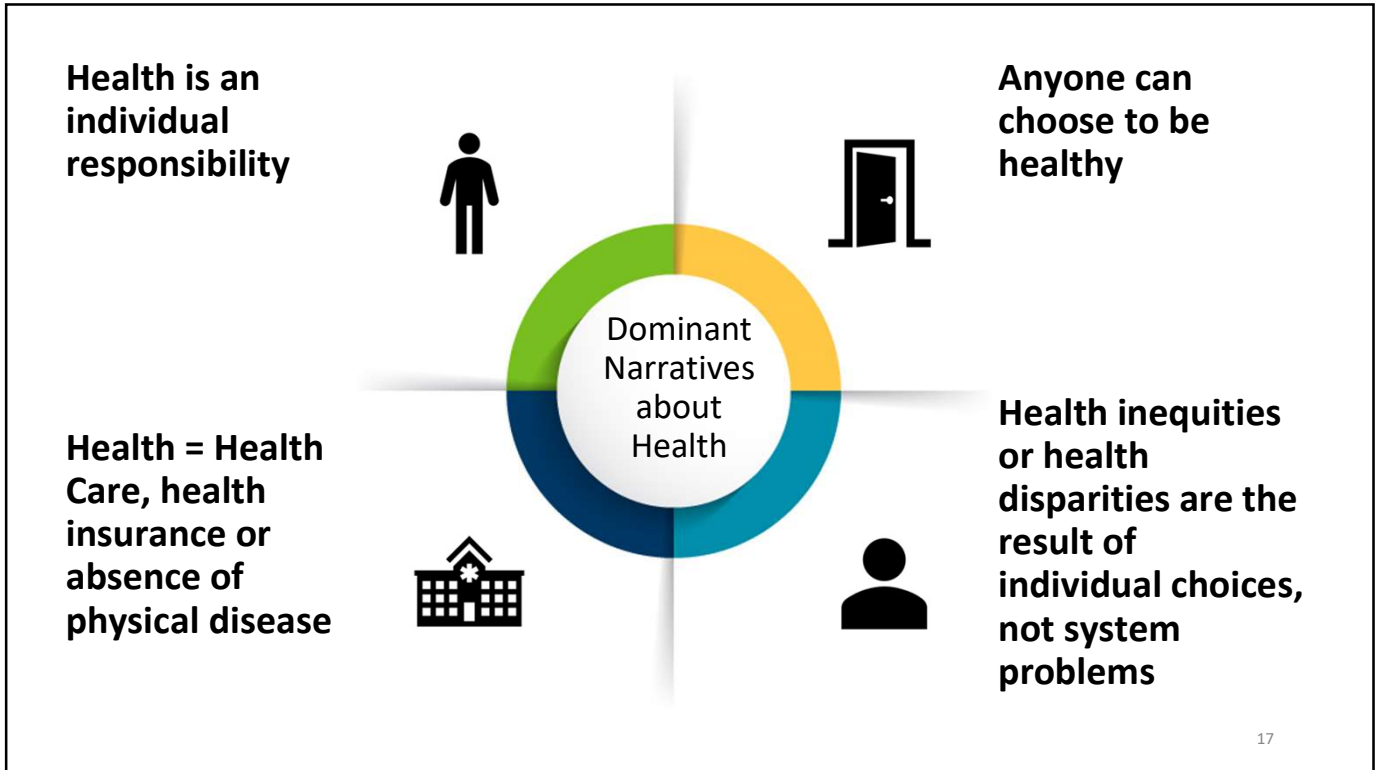
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/practice/healthymnpartnership/index.html>

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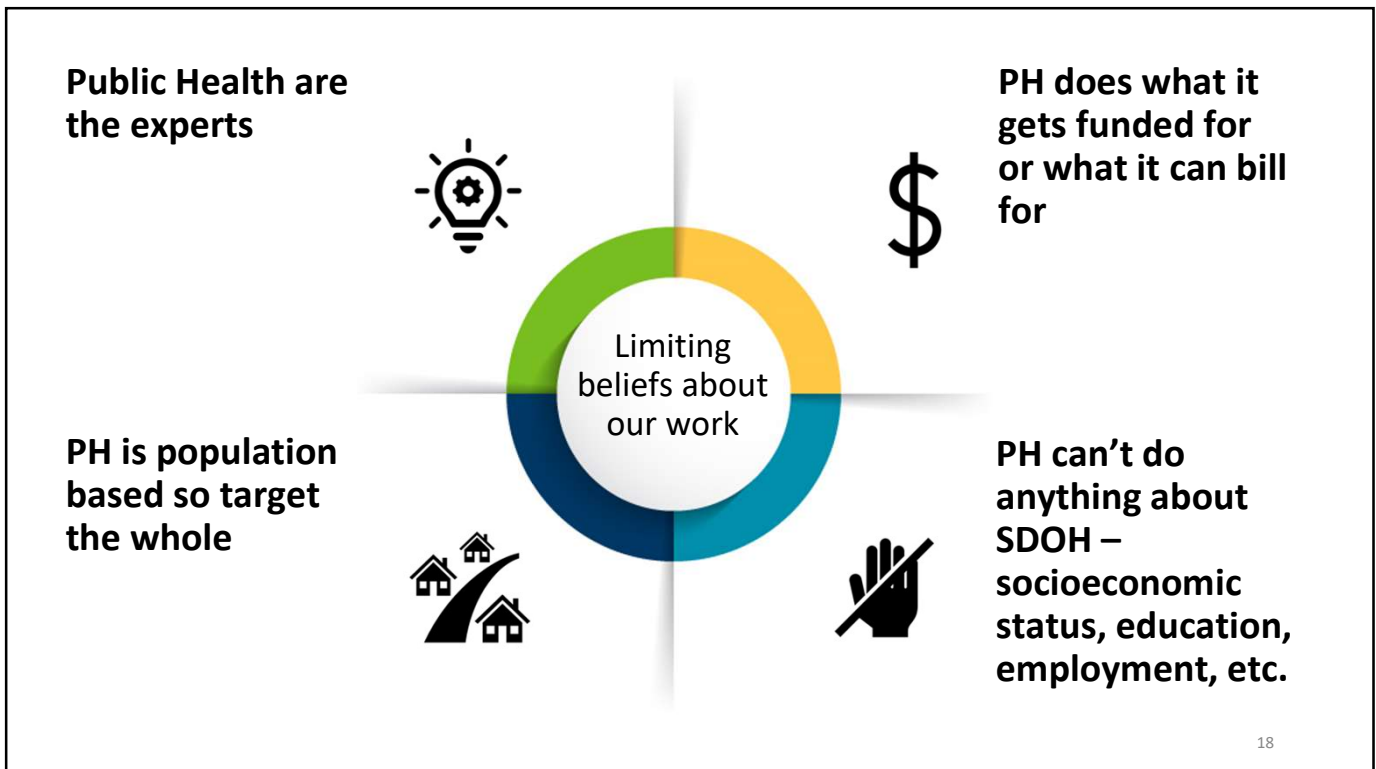


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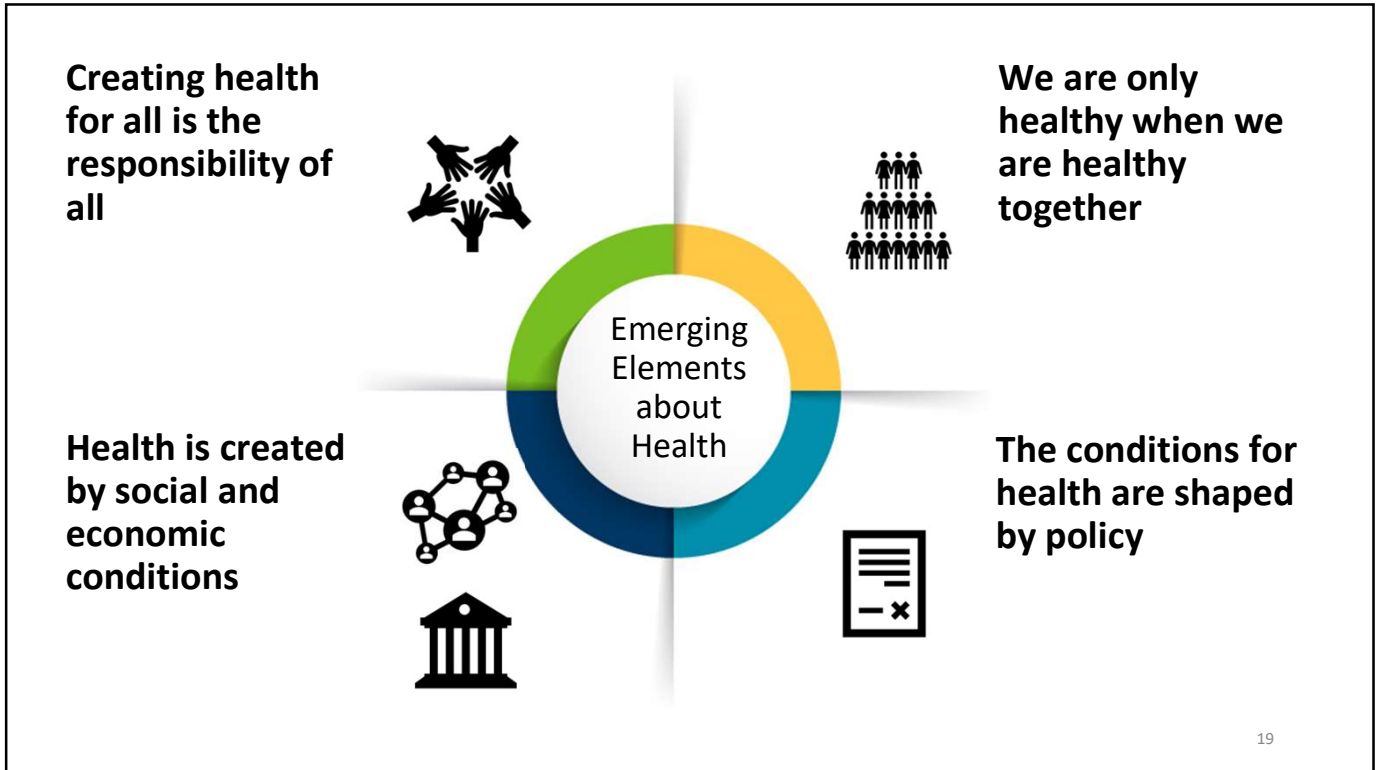




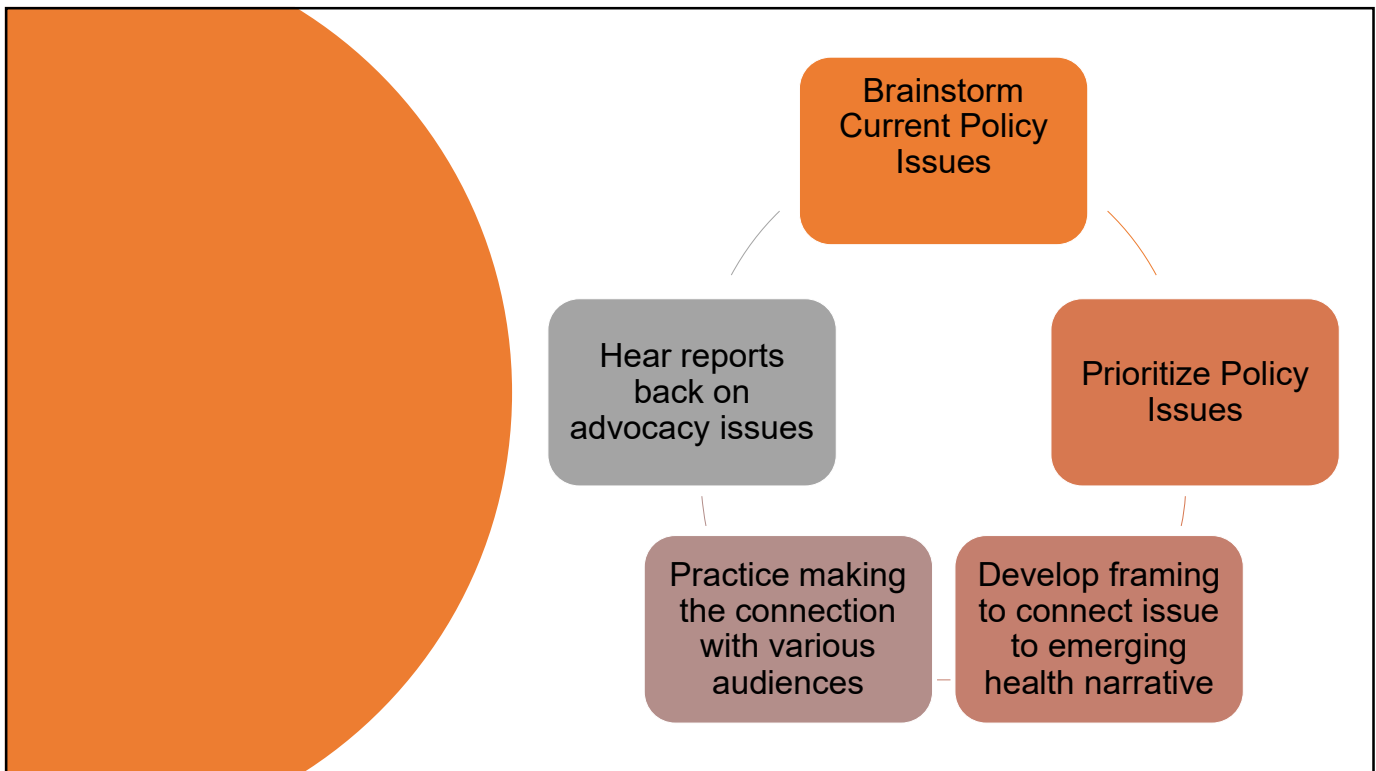
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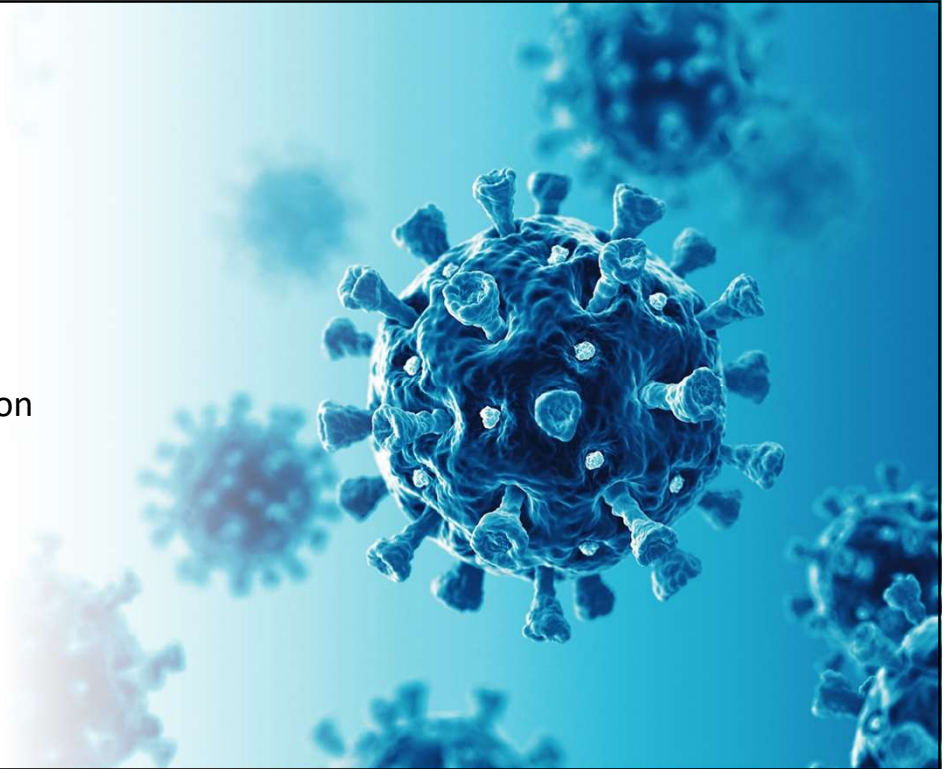
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## COVID Policy Framework

- Paid Sick Time
- Housing Stability
- Access and Utilization of Broadband



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## Advancing advocacy and change efforts

### **Legislative Policy**

- Paid Leave: State, City and County levels
- Minimum Wage Increase

### **Corporate Policy**

- Fair wages for contracted cleaning staff

### **Organizational Policy**

- Department of Corrections on Policy on pregnancy and delivery options for incarcerated people
- Various Approaches to Equity Reviews of organizational policy

### **Program Policy**

- Early Hearing Detection - shift to community supports in addition to service navigation

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## Training and tools

- Web Pages
- Narrative Facilitation and Training
- Equity Policy Review Training
- Practice, advocacy opportunities and sharing success

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## DREW, MISSISSIPPI

### HISTORY, CULTURE, PEOPLE, PLACE, AND SPACE

- **A rural town located in the Mississippi Delta**
- **Farmers and plantation owners experienced agricultural prosperity in the 1960's and 70's at the expense of sharecroppers.**
- **Integration in the early 1970's gave rise to white flight, the opening of a private school, and the public schools being racially segregated again.**

Photo Credit: The Chief Organizer Blog

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## HISTORY, CULTURE, PEOPLE, PLACE, AND SPACE

Train depot in Drew, 1976  
Photo Credit: MS Department of Archives and History

### THE CONSEQUENCES OF ECONOMIC DECLINE

- Agricultural economy declined, state penitentiary moved, and last grocery store closed.
- Loss of well-paying jobs and population decline led to a decline in tax base.
- Quality of public schools declined as a result.
- Drew High School closed and students were bussed.
- Extreme poverty led to blight and hopelessness.

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## HISTORY, CULTURE, PEOPLE, PLACE, AND SPACE

Photo Credit: [The Chief Organizer Blog](#)

### DREW'S CHALLENGES

- One of the highest poverty rates and most significant financial, educational, and health deficits in the country
- Loss of young professionals seeking better economic opportunities
- Struggles to attract private, state and federal investments
- Does not have the resources or capacity to advance economic development, housing, or other community development goals
- Is in need of outside investment support

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## DESEGREGATION AT DREW PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT- 1965

CARTER FAMILY



### Intolerable Burden

Larry Carter et al., Plaintiffs-appellants, v. Drew Municipal Separate School District et al., Defendants-appellees, 451 F.2d 599 (5th Cir. 1971)



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## COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS THEN

LISTENING WAS THE CRITICAL FIRST STEP

## A NARRATIVE OF SCARCITY WE DON'T HAVE...

- Fresh food
- Quality schools
- Play areas
- Safe and affordable housing
- A library free of mold
- A place to socialize
- A clean community
- Drivable streets
- Medical services for the uninsured
- Hope

Drew 2017  
Photo Credit: Andrew Manning, [Urban Decay Blog](#)

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## COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS NOW

SHIFTING THE  
NARRATIVE WAS THE  
NEXT STEP

### A NARRATIVE OF HOPE WE CAN CREATE...

- A grocery store
- A and B-graded schools
- A safe playground
- Affordable homes
- A refurbished library
- A beautiful community free of blight
- Space to meet and learn
- Access to medical care
- Opportunity to build self-esteem, engage civically, and participate in the political process
- **HOPE!**

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### DREW COLLABORATIVE

Sharing resources to  
improve Drew

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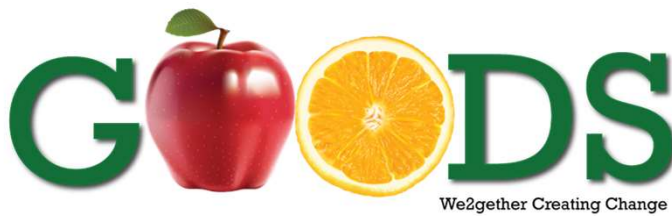


## HOPE CREDIT UNION PARTNERSHIP

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Providing opportunities for home ownership and small businesses

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## GROCERY ONLINE ORDERING DELIVERY SERVICE

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Providing access to fresh food in a food desert

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**MAE BERTHA  
CARTER LEARNING  
CENTER**

Providing space to  
connect and learn

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**FAMILY & SOCIAL SUPPORT  
RECREATION/KABOOM/PLAYGROUND**

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## BLIGHT REMOVAL & HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Creating affordable housing

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## LIBRARY RESTORATION

Creating welcoming public space for learning and gathering

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## EMMETT TILL ACADEMY

Connecting young leaders to the past while empowering them to speak out for change, justice, and equality

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## We Can Change Dominant Narratives

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## POLL

Do feel you could adapt the strategies shared during the webinar to use within your community?

Yes

No

Maybe

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# Questions?



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# Click on survey link in the chat



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June 20, 2023

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Dean of Boston University  
School of Public Health



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