Webinar
The power of narrative to influence civic health
May 23, 2023

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.
Please welcome

Angela Acker
Narrative infrastructure team leader
County Health Rankings & Roadmaps

Cultivating civic infrastructure and civic participation for healthier communities
What do we mean by narrative — and why does it matter?

"The world changes according to the way people see it, and if you alter even by a millimeter the way people look at reality, then you can change it."

-James Baldwin
Three Faces of Power

1. **Visible**: Organizing people and resources to influence decisions

2. **Hidden**: Building infrastructure to influence what’s on the agenda

3. **Invisible**: Influencing worldview to make what’s currently impossible become commonsense

Source: Lukes, Grassroots Power Project

Worldview, Narrative, Story, Message

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

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

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
Please welcome

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

Gloria Dickerson
Founder and CEO
We2gether Creating Change

Questions we will explore...

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

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

What can we do to begin changing narratives in our spaces?
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

Healthy Minnesota Partnership

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

Health = Health Care, health insurance or absence of physical disease

Health inequities or health disparities are the result of individual choices, not system problems

Dominant Narratives about Health

Public Health are the experts

PH does what it gets funded for or what it can bill for

Limiting beliefs about our work

PH can’t do anything about SDOH – socioeconomic status, education, employment, etc.

PH is population based so target the whole
Creating health for all is the responsibility of all

Health is created by social and economic conditions

Emerging Elements about Health

We are only healthy when we are healthy together

The conditions for health are shaped by policy

Brainstorm Current Policy Issues

Hear reports back on advocacy issues

Prioritize Policy Issues

Practice making the connection with various audiences

Develop framing to connect issue to emerging health narrative
COVID Policy Framework

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

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
DREW, MISSISSIPPI

- 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.
HISTORY, CULTURE, PEOPLE, PLACE, AND SPACE

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.

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
DESEGREGATION AT DREW PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT - 1965

CARTER FAMILY

Intolerable Burden

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
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!

DREW COLLABORATIVE

Sharing resources to improve Drew
HOPE CREDIT UNION PARTNERSHIP

Providing opportunities for home ownership and small businesses

GROCERY ONLINE ORDERING DELIVERY SERVICE

Providing access to fresh food in a food desert
MAE BERTHA CARTER LEARNING CENTER

Providing space to connect and learn

FAMILY & SOCIAL SUPPORT RECREATION/KABOOM/PLAYGROUND
CULTURE PAVILION/DREW DAY JUNETEENTH

BLIGHT REMOVAL & HOUSING DEVELOPMENT
Creating affordable housing
LIBRARY RESTORATION
Creating welcoming public space for learning and gathering

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

Do feel you could adapt the strategies shared during the webinar to use within your community?
Yes
No
Maybe
Questions?

Click on survey link in the chat
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