# NARRATIVE CHANGE
Policy and Practice Brief

OCTOBER 2021
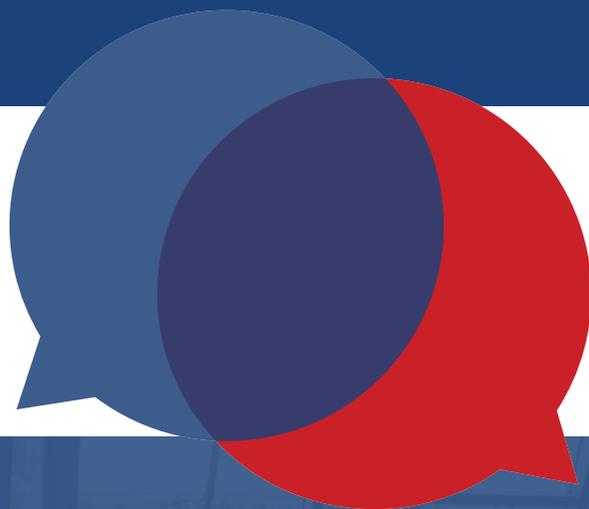
This brief is one of five developed as part of the *Healing Through Policy* initiative. For more information about Healing Through policy, visit debeaumont.org/healing-through-policy.

APHA
AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION
For science. For action. For health.

de Beaumont
BOLD SOLUTIONS FOR HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES™

National Collaborative
for Health Equity
WORKING WITH PEOPLE, PARTNERS, AND PURPOSE
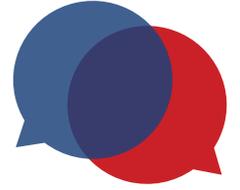
NARRATIVE CHANGE

According to the Truth, Racial Healing, & Transformation (TRHT) implementation guide, the concept of narrative change refers to the fact that the human brain is hardwired to capture stories and associated images to construct conscious and implicit meaning and beliefs. Stories make up our individual and collective narratives about reality. Achieving racial equity and healing from the trauma of centuries of legal, institutional, and structured racial hierarchy requires transforming our experiences, stories, and understandings about the equal and inherent value of all humanity.[1]

At a practical level, narrative change refers to transforming how we communicate about our past, present, and future. It's the "process of disrupting dominant narratives that normalize inequity and uphold oppression and advancing new narratives from our communities and individuals in historically marginalized groups… [to] imagine a different future."[2] The task of creating new narratives about human value means supporting efforts to create and distribute new, complex, and complete narratives in all the ways we communicate, including through entertainment, journalism, digital and social media, school curricula, museums, and monuments and parks.

Narrative change also involves direct conversations in multiracial, multiethnic tables in communities. Doing so can influence people's perspectives, perceptions, and behaviors about and toward one another so that we can work more effectively and productively toward community-based change. The national — and international — change generated by 2020's racial justice movement vividly demonstrates the enormous impact that narrative change can have.

Stories or narratives are how we create meaning. They shape what we perceive to be true, possible, and good. They are central to the development of our worldview and the values we hold sacred.[3] These narratives create the scaffolding under which we co-create the systems and structures that govern our lives and influence our access to resources and our collective health and well-being.

Narrative change is a key part of building a shared reality of interconnectedness and equality. False beliefs in a hierarchy of human value are the bedrock on which this country was founded, as evidenced by the colonization of and

continued theft from Indigenous peoples, the enslavement and institutionally sanctioned terrorizing of and systematic theft from African American communities, the internment of Japanese Americans and continued othering of Asian American communities, and the historic and continued disenfranchisement and marginalization of people of color. These narratives are fundamentally about excluding and dehumanizing certain groups. As a result of these beliefs, individuals, organizations, and systems often unconsciously and unintentionally reflect and perpetuate the structural and institutional racism that is so deeply embedded in our society.

We live in an increasingly polarized environment that drives false and exaggerated beliefs about our differences and contributes to the dehumanization of people who live, look, speak, and act differently than we do. Research from Beyond Conflict's Polarization Index Project asserts that "when polarization in the United States becomes more about identity than disagreement on issues, it becomes toxic. Increasingly, Americans who identify themselves as either Democrats or Republicans view one another less as fellow citizens and more as enemies who represent a profound threat to their identities, creating a form of American sectarianism. …Once we adopt the lens of 'us vs. them,' a range of unconscious psychological processes take root that accelerate toxic polarization and distort the ways we see one another and understand the world around us… The more we feel disliked and dehumanized by members of the other party, the more likely we are to express greater dislike and dehumanization toward them. In this way, the divide between actual and perceived dislike and dehumanization

can create a downward spiral of hostility that fuels further toxic polarization."[4] Disrupting polarization requires that we collectively overcome the enduring legacies of racism, colonization, marginalization, and the false belief in a racial hierarchy. Drawing from Louison Lavoy, "to counter and inoculate against false messages, society must find a way to rebuild a shared reality that will encourage positive forms of communication."[5] Below is a suite of policies and practices that localities can implement to build narratives of interconnectedness that are sustainable and grounded in data and equity.

States and localities play an important role in changing the narrative related to shared values and interconnectedness. Entities at these levels can undertake and implement a variety of policies and practices, including executive orders, resolutions, ordinances, and declarations to advance racial equity; mapping, data collection, and analysis to understand and address inequities and measure progress; racial impact assessments and other systems to achieve accountability; reimagining public spaces to equitably honor our shared history; and advocacy for and creation of curricula that are respectful, inclusive, and honor the diverse communities in which children attend school. These are not the only places that narrative change plays an important role in states and localities. We recognize the interconnectedness of narrative change and other areas of the TRHT framework. These issues are intersectional and oftentimes non-linear. There are critical areas such as democracy and voter suppression as well as exclusionary immigration policies that are supported by harmful and exclusionary narratives. These

areas of policy have been reflected in the Separation and Law briefs.

We've chosen these policy and practice categories because they:

- Recognize the emergent and evolving nature of efforts to dismantle racism and its foundational false belief in a hierarchy of human value.

- Promote and support innovation and creativity to address the unique challenges and priorities in a given jurisdiction.

- Stimulate and accelerate the pace of innovation to address systemic racism and other structures of inequity.

KEY POLICY AND PRACTICE EXAMPLES

Executive orders, resolutions, ordinances, and declarations to advance racial equity

Increasingly publicized instances of police brutality, along with the stark inequalities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, have spurred action in states and localities across the country. Several states, cities, and localities have turned to executive ordinances, resolutions, and declarations as tools to advance racial and health equity. More than 200 states, cities, and localities have declared racism a public health crisis. These statements are a first and important step to narrative change in that they illuminate the structural nature of inequality, creating space for dialogue and collaboration, and spurring changes across all sectors of government to shrink racial health gaps. There is evidence that these ordinances lead to further action. In 2017, after Wisconsin was the first state to proclaim racism a public health crisis, more than 4,000 county employees, including judges and police, received racial equity training, according to Nicole Brookshire, director of the county's Office on African American Affairs.[6]

One year after declaring racism a public health crisis, Milwaukee County passed an ordinance that commits the county government to identify and address policies, practices, and power structures that, whether intentionally or unintentionally, work in favor of white people and create barriers for Black, brown, and Indigenous people. The ordinance commits to building a more diverse and inclusive workforce; ensuring Milwaukee County employees at all levels are involved in designing equitable programs and services that meet the needs of the community; creating opportunities for community members to co-design services; tracking and analyzing data to better understand the impact of county services; generating new sources of revenue; implementing additional efficiencies to address the structural deficit; and making needed investments to advance racial equity. Similar ordinances and resolutions to address structural racism and advance racial equity have been implemented across the country in many places, including Carlisle, Pennsylvania; Dane County, Wisconsin; Minneapolis; Spokane, Washington; Southfield, Michigan; Wheat Ridge, Colorado; and the state of California.

There are also regional efforts to do this work. The Washington, D.C. area's Metropolitan Washington Council of Government (MWCOG) passed a [resolution](#) to embed anti-racism and equity into MWCOG's operations and decision-making. The National Association of Attorneys General — a nonpartisan organization of 56 state and territory attorneys general — launched Attorney General Karl A. Racine's presidential initiative, "[The People v. Hate: Standing Up](#) [for Humanity](#)." The initiative aims to work with attorneys general to raise awareness of hate and bias, prevent hate from taking root in communities, support residents who have experienced hate, and develop and share best practices on improving hate crime data. The National Civic League has created [model orders](#) and ordinances for states and localities to adapt, including executive ordinances on diversity training for board and commission members, police accountability, and racial justice.

Mapping, data collection, and analysis efforts to understand and address inequities and measure progress

Data collection and analysis, particularly disaggregated data collection and analysis, are crucial steps in mapping progress toward equity. Creating timely systems for data collection and analysis are important steps toward documenting progress and motivating action to achieve greater equity. Mapping can be a powerful tool in changing the narrative of how racially marginalized and economically divested communities came into existence and the policy choices and governmental decisions that have perpetuated disparities. Many of the localities that have declared racism a public health crisis have used racial equity analyses and other forms of data analysis to frame the disparate impact of public health problems and identify solutions. Researchers, universities, hospitals, health systems, and even communities have roles in ensuring that these data are accurate, timely, and actionable. They also have a role in ensuring that data are shared with communities and are used to tell a story of what's possible, what's working, and where gaps still exist that prevent equitable opportunities for health and well-being. Data that are embedded in stories help to simplify complex phenomena and provide context, insight, and interpretation that make data meaningful and analytics more relevant and interesting. Narratives that are grounded in data appeal to the head and the heart in ways that move and motivate policy- and other decision-makers to effect change. Examples of uses of mapping, data collection, and analysis for narrative change are provided below.

There are numerous efforts to track disparities at the local and state level. The [Health Opportunity and Equity (HOPE) Initiative](#) is an interactive data tool designed to help states and the country move beyond simply measuring disparities to spur action toward health equity. The HOPE Initiative tracks social determinants of health and health outcomes by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. It uses an opportunity framework to set aspirational but achievable goals to improve life outcomes — especially for populations of color most affected by systemic racism and conscious and unconscious bias. The HOPE Initiative shifts the focus from deficits/disparities to building opportunities for all. Its measures have an equity focus at the state and national levels that complement other rich data sources such as County Health

Rankings and Roadmaps, America's Health Rankings, and the Racial Equity Index.

[County Health Rankings & Roadmaps](#) provides data, evidence, guidance, and examples from nearly every county in all states to build awareness of the factors that influence health and support community leaders' ability to improve health and increase health equity. These data have been used in various localities to advance change. In Nevada, data on the disparate impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on communities of color were used to bolster efforts to create a [proclamation](#) declaring racism a public health crisis in August of 2020.[7] [America's Health Rankings](#) provides a wide variety of health and health-related information in the areas of social and economic factors, the physical environment, health outcomes, behaviors, and clinical care to help policymakers, advocates, and individuals understand a population's health in a holistic, inclusive manner. The National Equity Atlas' [Racial Equity Index](#) helps cities, regions, and states identify priority areas for advancing racial equity, track progress over time, and set specific goals for closing racial gaps. These data have been used in the San Francisco Bay Area to track which communities are hardest hit by COVID-19.[8] Diversity Data Kids is a research project that examines who our children are, whether they have what they need to grow up healthy and achieve their full potential, whether social policies are well designed to improve children's lives, and how to improve such policies for greater equity. Their [Child Opportunity Index](#) measures and maps the quality of resources and conditions that matter for children to develop in a healthy way in the neighborhoods where they live. The Pinellas County, Florida Juvenile Welfare Board and the

University of South Florida worked with researchers at Diversity Data Kids to use Child Opportunity Index data to explore the relative contributions of place, school, and individual/family variables on student absenteeism.[9] In Chicago, the Child Opportunity Index found that nearly 300,000 children were growing up in areas of low opportunity and nearly 1 in 2 Black and Latino children lived in areas of low opportunity, compared to 1 in 50 white children.[10] The census tract-level data were used by the public health department's ReCAST (Resiliency in Communities After Stress and Trauma) program to identify neighborhood blocks where programming was most needed.

There are also a number of innovative tools for applying a racial equity lens through maps and spatial analysis to reveal and understand inequities in experiences and outcomes, identify barriers to equality, and support informed and equitable decision-making within localities. According to Samir Gambhir of the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, "racial and social inequity often manifest as spatial inequity and local issues tend have a regional scope and variation (e.g., school performance, housing vacancy)."[11] Mapping allows us to view, understand, question, interpret, and visualize data in multiple ways that reveal relationships, patterns, and trends. The technology company Esri has developed [GIS for Racial Justice](#), which uses geographic information systems (GIS) for racial equity mapping projects on issues such as [Los Angeles' Equity Index](#), redlining and exposure to urban heat islands, race, and environmental justice in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, [COVID-19 response in the Navajo Nation](#), [the preservation of African American heritage](#), and [more](#). The [Connecticut Health Equity Index](#) measures social

determinants of health at the community level, including housing, education, safety, employment, environmental quality, economic stability, and civic engagement. The index generates community-specific scores and GIS maps that show neighborhood-by-neighborhood variations within each municipality for a given social determinant or health outcome. The index also provides direction for collecting the narrative of those experiencing or witnessing health inequities. This narrative may be collected from interviews or recorded through media including photos, video, and audio. Local public health departments, in partnership with community leaders, organizations, and residents, can use this evidence-based information for strategic planning, community assessment, grant writing, and community engagement activities. Asheville, North Carolina received the North Carolina G. Herbert Stout Award for Visionary Use of GIS in support of the city's Mapping Racial Equity project. The GIS team worked with the Asheville Office of Equity and Inclusion to use spatial analysis to map and record the city's racial history. This included mapping out areas where redlining and urban renewal occurred and crowdsourcing African American history, displacement, and neighborhood change. Several cities, regions, and states have similar equity mapping projects, including Atlanta; Austin, Texas; King County, Washington; Lansing, Michigan; Los Angeles; New Orleans; New York City; Portland, Oregon; Richmond, Virginia; and the state of Massachusetts.

Racial impact assessments, frameworks, and other systems to achieve accountability

Efforts are taking place across the country to embed racial equity impact assessments and other tools into the way local organizations do their work, including the use of racial equity impact assessments and measurement frameworks to track and eliminate disparities; passage of legislation that requires the use of racial equity impact assessments and creates equity offices and officers; and the development of cross-sector collaborative bodies that advance equity. The persistence of deep racial disparities and divisions across society are evidence of institutional racism — the routine, often invisible and unintentional, production of inequitable social opportunities and outcomes — and beliefs in a hierarchy of human value. When racial inequity is not consciously addressed, it is often unconsciously replicated. Racial impact assessments, frameworks, and systems of accountability are key tools for ensuring equity is embedded in the fabric of institutions and systems. They support the work we do to reimagine new narratives about the ways we can relate to, care for, and provide for one another and create a more equitable and expansive shared future.

Racial equity impact assessments (REIAs) are systematic examinations of how different racial and ethnic groups will likely be affected by a proposed action or decision. They're used to minimize unanticipated adverse consequences in a variety of contexts, including the analysis of proposed policies, institutional practices, programs, plans, and budgetary decisions.[12] As Nathan Chomilo states, "requiring a racial equity assessment at the start of the

development of research proposals aimed at answering policy questions can help ensure investigators have, at the very least, stopped to ask how their work may or may not contribute to structural racism or advance racial justice. It can help ensure more attention is paid to making the health system more antiracist instead of solely helping patients and enrollees more efficiently navigate a system that produces racist outcomes."[13] Cities and states across the country are utilizing REIAs to track their progress and create accountability structures for their racial equity efforts. Examples of the utilization of impact assessments in organizational work, and of legislation and practice at the state and local levels, are provided below.

In 2015, the mayor of St. Paul, Minnesota directed all city departments to create annual racial equity plans and developed a racial equity assessment and training for use in city operations and services. Minneapolis has been on a more than 10-year journey to establish institutional accountability and operationalize the city's equity efforts. Baltimore City Councilman Brandon Scott shepherded a bill to create an Equity Assessment Program that was passed by the city council and signed into law in August 2018. The bill authorizes and charges Baltimore with conducting a racial equity assessment, providing necessary training, designating responsible city staff, and instituting metrics to assess and review the outcomes and effectiveness of any policies and investments made. In 2019, the Arlington, Texas county board approved a resolution that commits the county to establishing racial equity targets in policymaking and measures and developing an equity scorecard. Madison, Wisconsin also uses racial equity tools as a part of the development of city

policies, plans, programs, and budgets. In Washington state, King County's Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan is using an Equity Impact Review tool to intentionally consider the promotion of equity in the development and implementation of key policies, programs, and funding decisions. Chicago United for Equity's fellows work with local community leaders to tackle citywide issues of injustice using REIAs. Funding is a critical consideration when recommending the use of REIAs. These assessments can be costly to implement and require funded, rather than merely voluntary efforts. Training and capacity-building on the use of these assessments are also important components of implementation, especially in local, micro, and rural communities.

Rather than implement REIAs in isolation, many localities have developed jurisdiction-wide and departmental racial equity action plans aimed at achieving racially equitable outcomes across several systems and performance measures. Based on PolicyLink's National Equity Atlas, Fairfax County, Virginia's Equitable Growth Profile synthesizes data across several community indicators to make the case for narrowing racial disparities. The Equitable Growth Profile uncovers disparities by income and other measures of well-being across a dozen community measures to illustrate the racial and social disparities that undermine Fairfax's economic growth.

Race Forward's Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) uses its Racial Equity Toolkit and Racial Equity Core Teams guide to provide organizations and localities with data-driven tools and strategies to establish and scale cross-departmental equity frameworks and implementation plans. GARE has developed research, frameworks, and

programs such as [Racial Equity Here](#) to provide city governments with tools, resources, and trainings to analyze how their operations impact people of color and lead to the implementation of outcome-driven action plans. Additional GARE programs include [Advancing Racial Equity,](#) which uses a learning cohort model to provide racial equity training in cities and counties; a racial equity tool that can be used in policy, practice, program, and budget decisions; a capacity-building plan and organizational structure to institutionalize equity; sample policies and practices to advance racial equity; and a racial equity action plan template that can be used to create jurisdiction-specific plans. GARE has incubated other projects that now stand alone, including the [Capitol Collaborative on Race & Equity](#), which helps California state government entities learn about, plan for, and implement activities that embed racial equity approaches into institutional culture, policies, and practices, and [Inclusive Dubuque](#) in Iowa, a peer-learning network of partners committed to creating an informed, equitable, and inclusive community where all people are respected, valued, and engaged. GARE has also helped [Dane County, Wisconsin](#) develop its jurisdiction-wide strategic plan for advancing equity and launched a pilot of their racial equity scorecard with eight jurisdictions to develop a model of tracking equity metrics that facilitates learning across jurisdictions.

Over the past 15 years, there have been a number of legislative efforts to embed equity into the way that state and local government departments operate. Cities like [Tacoma, Washington](#) and [Boston](#) have implemented [Health and Equity in All Policies](#). The [REACH Act](#), passed in November 2020, established Washington,

D.C.'s Council Office of Racial Equity, led by the District's new Chief Equity Officer; created a new REIA for D.C. Council legislation; calls for the training of all D.C. government employees on racial equity; creates a Racial Equity Tool to ensure the District government is accountable; and establishes a Commission on Racial Equity, Social Justice, and Economic Inclusion to continue to oversee the District's efforts.

[California has added an equity requirement](#) to its COVID-19 response, requiring large counties to bring down case rates in specific neighborhoods designated by the California Healthy Places Index before reopening restrictions would be lessened countywide. In 2018, New Jersey passed [S-677/A-3677](#), which requires the state's Office of Legislative Services to prepare racial impact statements for policy changes that affect pretrial detention, sentencing, and parole. [SB 463](#) was passed in Oregon in 2013 and provides a process for formally requesting racial impact statements when considering criminal justice and child welfare legislation. In 2008, Iowa passed the nation's first racial impact statement measure, [HF 2393](#), which allows policymakers to assess the racial impact of proposed changes to sentencing and parole policies. That same year, Connecticut became the second state to authorize racial impact statements through [Public Act No. 18-78](#) for proposed criminal justice policies. Bills and amendments concerning pretrial or sentenced populations are now subject to racial impact analysis.

Not only is it important to measure equity, but there must also be staff, systems, and processes in place to ensure sustainability, ongoing accountability, measurement, training, and implementation of equity efforts. Increasing representational equity

in developing positions, committees, long- and short-term commissions, and offices for accountability to racial equity are important steps to ensure sustainability. According to a report from Montgomery County, Maryland's Office of Legislative Oversight, several jurisdictions across the country have developed new departments or expanded the scope of existing departments to support equity work in their jurisdictions.[14] These departments coordinate jurisdiction-wide equity efforts, train staff, help departments utilize racial equity tools, and develop departmental racial equity plans that align with jurisdiction-wide strategic plans.

In Charleston, South Carolina, an ordinance was passed to create a special commission on equity, inclusion, and racial conciliation. Ashland, Oregon passed an ordinance to create a Social Equity and Racial Justice Commission to adopt anti-racist measures and draft a concrete plan to accomplish equity in Ashland. In the Washington, D.C. metro region, Fairfax County, Virginia;

Montgomery County, Maryland; and Washington, D.C., have used legislation to create racial equity offices whose teams "assess how budget and policy choices will address long-standing disparities in health, education, income and more."[15] The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) convenes a Chief Equity Officers Committee that serves as the hub for regional collaboration and coordination on advancing racial equity initiatives throughout the region, within COG's member local governments, and through COG's work; shares information, data, resources, and best practices to advance racial equity; serves as a forum for cross-jurisdictional discussion; and coordinates COG regional education and training initiatives. Equity offices have been created in a vast number of cities across the country, including Asheville, North Carolina; Austin, Texas; Chicago; Denver; Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota; Oakland and San Francisco, California; Philadelphia; and Portland, Oregon.

Redesigning public spaces to equitably honor our shared history

In "Building Narrative Power for Racial Justice and Health Equity," Open Society Foundations posits that we must pay equal attention "to envisioning narratives that advance racial justice and health equity. Through honoring stories that direct attention to a different, more equitable future, and through elevating the voices of people over institutions, we begin to create the foundational tiles for new mosaics of society."[16] Many of these stories are told in our public spaces. Commemorations, memorials, dedications, public art, and monuments are symbols of our shared

memory of the past and collective futures. They are physical and symbolic markers of what is important, collective, and core to our identities. A central part of narrative change is ensuring that the stories we tell through our commemorations and monuments reflect our shared values by creating public land projects that reiterate those values and revisiting, contextualizing, and addressing inaccuracies or complexities of existing depictions.

There are many examples of projects that tell marginalized stories, including

the work of many [THRHT sites](#). The [Battle Creek Coalition for TRHT](#) in Michigan digitized [Memories from Hamlin](#), an oral history project that captured personal accounts of the rise and demise of The Bottoms, a mixed-race neighborhood that succumbed to gentrification and housing practices disproportionately impacting African Americans. Another oral history project, [Battle Creek Did Not Burn](#), explores local efforts during the civil rights movement. The Battle Creek TRHT site also started a Racial History Timeline Project to create a collaborative and more expansive account of Battle Creek's history.[17] Community members contribute stories, historical facts, and pivotal events from all racial groups who have shaped local and national history. The timeline begins with the original peoples, the Native Nations, entering colonial America, then focuses on the Battle Creek area from the 1830s through the present. The project launched with the community on the National Day of Racial Healing 2020. [TRHT Los Angeles](#) was a partner on the 50th annual Manzanar Pilgrimage to learn about the active incarceration and unjust treatment of Japanese American citizens during World War II at the first concentration camp in the United States. These experiences and history have a lasting economic impact on Japanese American communities. They also held a Tongva History Walk downtown to look at the current and historical impacts of colonization in Los Angeles on the Indigenous peoples of California. Participants at the event learned about the Chinese massacre of 1871 and its ongoing economic impact on the Chinese American community. Through this deep dive into local history, people who work in city and county governments, and in philanthropy, have begun to identify ways that their sectors have contributed to systemic racism.

Initiatives of Change USA (IoC), the coordinating organization for [TRHT in Richmond, Virginia](#), brought together people interested in uncovering stories about the legacy of enslavement in their community (whom they called "weavers"), with those who served as mentors, guides, and faculty ("architects"). The weavers created narratives of history, action, or healing to unveil and unpack their stories. People from different backgrounds convened to tell stories through visual art, movement and yoga, documentaries, books, and websites. Stories focused on food injustice, wellness, the local history of Black women's labor, personal perspectives on gentrification, and obesity and self-esteem among women of color. In Michigan, the [Kalamazoo Historical and Cultural Landscape Project](#) will develop and install interpretive sculptures, monuments, installations, and markers that tell social justice stories and strategies of insistence and resistance. These are intended to be useful tools to help teachers, artists, parents, tour guides, and visitors interpret specific narratives in cultural and historical contexts.

The National Park Service's (NPS) [Cultural Resources Office of Interpretation and Education](#) aims to tell all Americans' stories and promote cultural resources workforce development through youth program internships. The NPS has a number of [heritage initiatives](#) that touch on the historical experiences of those who have been underrepresented in traditional histories. During the Obama

administration, diversity of stories told and commemorated by the NPS increased.[18] For example, President Obama used his authority under the American Antiquities Act of 1906 to establish the César E. Chávez National Monument in Keene, California to commemorate the important Latino leader, the United Farm Workers, and the civil rights movement. Obama has also protected Colorado's Chimney Rock National Monument, which was home to the ancestors of modern Pueblo Indians and is a sacred site to many tribes. And the president's first use of this same statutory authority was to protect Hampton, Virginia's Fort Monroe as a national monument. This location is important to African American history because it was a safe haven for escaped slaves during the Civil War and played a key role in the development of the legal basis for the Emancipation Proclamation.

The NPS has also tried to improve its telling of diverse stories through its National Historic Landmarks Program to "preserve and protect sites associated with LGBTQ history" because only three of the nearly 2,500 national landmarks do so. The NPS reports that from 2011 to 2012, 70% of new national landmarks "reflect and tell complex stories regarding the diversity of the American experience."[19] The American Latino Heritage Fund was created and housed within the National Park Foundation in 2011 to "ensure that our national parks and historic sites preserve, reflect, and engage the diverse stories and communities of American Latinos throughout American History and for future generations."

A key component of the work of reimagining public spaces is not only

building the new, but also removing the old. In 2020, the Virginia state legislature passed a bill allowing individual localities to relocate, replace, or contextualize Confederate statues and monuments within their communities. This builds on earlier efforts by the Charlottesville City Council in 2017 to rename Lee and Jackson Parks because they created racial tension in the city, reflecting a history of slavery in Virginia. An initiative of the University of Virginia, The Memory Project builds on this work by investigating "public memory, memory conflict, and memory politics in the wake of the right-wing violence that came to Charlottesville in August 2017." According to the initiative, "As the events of 2017, the legacies of slavery in the United States, and the problematic history of Charlottesville and the University in particular raise a host of unique challenges for scholars, policy makers, and public officials, The Memory Project aims to demonstrate that Charlottesville and the University of Virginia are at the forefront of a growing trend toward a more objective examination of the past in the service of creating a more equitable and ethical future." This work continues to expand around Virginia.[20] Multiple cities are using art and public projects to tell the stories of marginalized communities. The Smokey Hollow Commemoration in Tallahassee, Florida is a tribute to the African American neighborhood that "was home to several hundred Black residents, as well as stores, cafes, churches, and a school. The neighborhood was eliminated by urban renewal in the 1960s and almost all remnants eradicated by the 1970s." In this way, commemorations are able to honor the memories of those lost to gentrification and other forms of displacement. In Fuller, Tennessee in

response to laws banning the removal of Confederate monuments, five new historical markers depicting the fuller story of the African American experience were placed on Franklin Square in October 2019. Over the past few years, states such as Florida, Louisiana, Maryland, Montana, Kansas, Kentucky, and others have also addressed the inaccuracies or complexities of Confederate monuments. As of 2017, Arkansas has also stopped celebrating Robert E. Lee's birthday on Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Though these changes are seen as progress by many, they have been met with mixed support from some individuals that wonder about their value in teaching parts of American history.

Creating curricula that are respectful, inclusive, and honor the diverse communities in which children attend school

Across the country, there are varying levels of state government influence on K-12 education. Notably, over the past several decades, "local school districts have gradually yielded policy-making discretion to state legislatures and bureaucracies. States' efforts to achieve [educational] equity and improve student and teacher performance have considerably diminished local controls over funding, standards, and curricular content."[21] Reflecting this trend, state-level efforts have passed in Arkansas, Florida, Illinois, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island to require teaching Black history in K-12 public schools.[22] Some school districts, including in Philadelphia, have made a yearlong African American studies course a requirement for high school graduation. The Texas Board of Education approved a Mexican American studies course and offers a statewide elective African American studies course for 10-12th graders. In 2020, Colorado passed the "Know Justice No Peace" resolution requiring the inclusion of Black, Indigenous, and Latino studies in the curriculum by 2022, providing professional development to teachers and administrators around discussing racially traumatic situations, and ensuring that feedback loops are in place to ensure student competency and cultural responsiveness. There are also smaller-scale pockets of innovation happening in areas like Stockton, California, where a local school created an ethnic studies-based U.S. history after-school program focused on Mexican American, African American, and Filipino American histories and cultures.

PROMISE FOR IMPROVING HEALTH AND RACIAL EQUITY

Because narratives are integral to structuring how we interpret events and facts, stories have been described as the "third dimension" of power.[23] Narrative change seeks to shift power by challenging dominant narratives and replacing them with more inclusive ones. Building collective power by changing the stories we tell about who we are and what is possible is a key first step in any large-scale change effort. As Rashad Robinson of Color of Change says, "our values and beliefs about the world are rooted in stories...narrative infrastructure helps us build power and achieve results at the level of a sector or society's operating system, which then influences everything else that can and cannot happen in that system."[24] The policy and practice opportunities put forth in this paper aim to help localities understand and dismantle harmful narratives, co-imagine and create new, positive narratives, and build the infrastructure and systems needed to create a world where we all thrive. To improve the health and well-being of all communities, we must challenge the deeply held cultural assumptions, values, and practices that reinforce racism and oppression.

Narratives can play a large role in perpetuating racial tensions.[25] A pervasive society-wide narrative depicting one group as subordinate to another can result in the minority group's marginalization. Research by Banner, Kang, and Godsil finds that stereotype threat, or the pressure that people feel when they fear that their performance could confirm a negative stereotype about their group, "manifests itself in anxiety and distraction that interferes with intellectual functioning."[26] A report by Braveman and Gottlieb states that "racial discrimination could harm the health of individuals of all socioeconomic levels by acting as a pervasive stressor in social interactions, even in the absence of anyone's conscious intent to discriminate...living in a society with a strong legacy of racial discrimination could damage health through psychobiologic pathways, even without overtly discriminatory incidents."[27]

Research by Carr, Dweck, and Pauker indicates that teaching "that prejudice is a malleable narrative, able to be altered and attenuated, led white participants to express comparatively less anxiety and react more positively in an interracial interaction. Their finding...demonstrates the flexibility of narrative and the ability of the human mind to absorb new stories benefiting intergroup relations."[28]

FEASIBILITY

According to the Perception Institute, "media, entertainment, and other forms of popular culture play a significant role in shaping our perceptions of others. For many of us, popular culture is the primary way we learn about people who are different from us. The problem, though, is that many representations are based on cultural stereotypes, which tend to marginalize and caricature members of nondominant groups. Through these representations, we see a limited, and

distorted, view of others…the consistency of these representations reinforces stereotypes and makes them more readily available in our minds."[29] Media makers are key partners in changing these harmful narratives, yet free speech protections make changing overarching public discourse and racial narratives an ongoing challenge. However, efforts by local leaders in the aforementioned areas are driving meaningful change and seeding counter-narratives. Positive and inclusive counter-narratives are more important as ever as there are increased incidences of well-funded and orchestrated campaigns against critical race theory, intersectionality, and other forms of racial and gender justice discourse. The African American Policy Forum found that as of April 30, 2021, 12 states have introduced some form of legislation prohibiting the teaching of racial justice and critical race theory in American history. Nine states have introduced some form of ban on teaching concepts related to gender justice and sex equality. Five states have introduced bans specifically from teaching the New York Times' 1619 Project, and 13 states have introduced equity ban bills targeting public schools (many of which also apply to universities and colleges).[30] They note, "This moment of racial reckoning has allowed us to tell a new story about this nation. And across the country, there is a groundswell of energy from educators who recognize that basic changes in curriculum and the way we tell our history are long overdue." Efforts to change school curriculum may also be curtailed by state supremacy in education policy that prevents changes at the local level and inequitable cost ramifications as a result of differing local school budgets. The work ahead is not without its challenges, but the efforts of states and localities are critical to creative new narratives of possibility.

RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

County Health Rankings & Roadmaps

Diversity Data Kids

American Public Health Association: Declarations of Racism as a Public Health Crisis

Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE)

Living Cities: Narrative Change Working Group

Open Society Foundations: "Building Narrative Power for Racial Justice and Health Equity"

Esri: Racial Equity GIS Hub

Health Opportunity and Equity (HOPE) Initiative

Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity

ENDNOTES

1   W.K. Kellogg Foundation. (2016). *Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation Implementation Guide.* https://healourcommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/TRHTImplementationGuide.pdf

2   Lynn, Jewlya & Kathlene, Lyn. (2020). *Narrative Change for Health & Racial Equity: Exploring Capacity & Alignment.* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346811466_NARRATIVE_CHANGE_FOR_HEALTH_RACIAL_EQUITY_EXPLORING_CAPACITY_ALIGNMENT

3   Westen, Drew, Betan, Ephi and Defife, Jared. (2011). *Identity Disturbance in Adolescence: Associations with Borderline Personality Disorder.* https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21262056/

4   Beyond Conflict. (2020). *America's Divided Mind: Understanding the Psychology That Drives Us Apart.* https://beyondconflictint.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Beyond-Conflict-America_s-Div-ided-Mind-JUNE-2020-FOR-WEB.pdf

5   National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2018). *Understanding Narratives for National Security: Proceedings of a Workshop.* https://doi.org/10.17226/25119

6   Vestal, Christine. (2020). *Racism is a Public Health Crisis, Say Cities and Counties.* https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2020/06/15/racism-is-a-public-health-crisis-say-cities-and-counties

7   County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. Racism as a Public Health Crisis: Three Responses. (2021). https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/racism-as-a-public-health-crisis-three-responses

8   Treuhaft, Sarah, McCullough, Eliza and Ramiller, Alex. (2020). *Which Bay Area Communities Are Hardest Hit By The Covid-19 Pandemic?* https://bayareaequityatlas.org/node/61501

9   Diversity Data Kids. (2015). *Pinellas County, Florida Uses Child Opportunity Index.* http://diversitydata.org/research-library/impact-story/pinellas-county-florida-uses-child-opportunity-index

10   O'Connor, Laura. (2020). *Moving Data to Action in Chicago: Education and City-wide Collaboration Build a Healthier Chicago.* http://diversitydata.org/research-library/impact-story/moving-data-action-chicago

11   Gambhir, Samir (2010). *GIS Mapping in the Field of Social Equity and Advocacy.* http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/2010_02_19_atlanta_gis_mapping.pdf

12   Race Forward. (2009). *Racial Equity Impact Assessment Guide.* https://www.raceforward.org/sites/default/files/RacialJusticeImpactAssessment_v5.pdf

13   "Chomilo, Nathan. (2020). *Building Racial Equity Into The Walls of Health Policy.* https://www.healthaffairs.org/do/10.1377/hblog20201119.508776/full/

14   Bonner-Tompkins, Elaine and Hall, Victoria. (2018). *Racial Equity in Government Decision-Making: Lessons From the Field.* https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/2018%20Reports/OLOReport2018_8.pdf

15   Brice-Saddler, Michael. (2021). *D.C. joins Montgomery, Fairfax in launching racial equity office.* https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-politics/racial-equity-dc/2021/02/01/02a2b1ba-6498-11eb-8468-21bc48f07fe5_story.html

16   Wainwright, Corrina, Falola, Bisola and Kinglake, Steffie. (2019). *Building Narrative Power for Racial Justice and Health Equity.* https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/8177cc25-e5be-477c-b369-d454468e24f2/building-narrative-power-for-racial-justice-and-healthy-equity-20190812.pdf

17   Buckley, Nick. (2020). *Project seeks public input in telling Battle Creek's racial history.* https://www.battlecreekenquirer.com/story/news/2020/01/27/project-seeks-public-input-battle-creeks-racial-history/4528330002/

18   Goad, Jessica, Lee-Ashley, Matt, and Ahmad, Farah. (2014). *Better Reflecting Our Country's Growing Diversity.* https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/green/reports/2014/02/19/84191/better-reflecting-our-countrys-growing-diversity/

19   Ibid

20   Olivo, Antonio. (2020). *Fairfax County Begins Process of Finding New Names for Lee Highway, Other Sites That Honor Confederate Leaders.* https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/fairfax-renaming-confederate/2020/12/11/f40005ee-3bd5-11eb-9276-ae0ca72729be_story.html

21   Hadderman, Margaret L. (1988). *State vs. Local Control of Schools. https://www.ericdigests.org/pre-927/state.htm*

22   King, LaGarett (2017). *The Status of Black History in U.S. Schools and Society.* https://www.socialstudies.org/system/files/publications/articles/se_810117014.pdf

23   Gaventa, John. (1980). *Power and Powerlessness. Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley.* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/33807442_Power_and_Powerlessness_Quiescence_and_Rebellion_in_an_Appalachian_Valley

24   Robinson, Rashad. (2018). *Changing Our Narrative About Narrative: The Infrastructure Required for Building Narrative Power.* https://belonging.berkeley.edu/changing-our-narrative-about-narrative

25   Godsil, Rachel and Goodale, Brianna. (2013). Telling Our Own Story: The Role of Narrative in Racial Healing. https://perception.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Telling-Our-Own-Story.pdf

26   Kang, Jerry (2012). *Stereotype Threat Amicus Brief – Fisher v. Texas http://jerrykang.net/2012/08/13/stereotype-threat-amicus-brief-fisher-v-texas/*

27   Braveman, Paula and Gottlieb, Laura. (2014). *The Social Determinants of Health: It's Time to Consider the Causes of the Causes* https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3863696/

28   Carr, Priyanka, Dweck, Carol and Pauker, Kristin. (2012). *Prejudiced Behavior Without Prejudice? Beliefs About the Malleability of Prejudice Affect Interracial Interactions.* https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2012-16224-001

29   Perception Institute. Representation: Culture and Perception. https://perception.org/representation/

30   African American Policy Forum. (2021). Truth Be Told: Resist Trump's Equity Gag Order. https://44bbdc6e-01a4-4a9a-88bc-731c6524888e.filesusr.com/ugd/62e126_903752833b384684a2e699327eaf05ca.pdf.