

Imagine a community where everyone has the chance to thrive –with high quality schools, good paying jobs, and affordable housing in safe neighborhoods. Imagine a community where differences in race, income, gender, ability, and perspectives are celebrated. Imagine a community where we could all experience this, regardless of where we live, the circumstances we were born into, or who we are.

If this vision were achieved, everyone would have a fair and just opportunity to live their healthiest lives.

We know this is not yet the reality for everyone. Differences in opportunity are the result of unfair and discriminatory policies and practices at many levels throughout society that have created deep-rooted barriers to health. Far too many people in our communities start behind and stay behind because of where we live, how much money we make, or discrimination we face because of who we are.

Introduction to Equity, County Health Rankings

## Transformative Narrative for Health Equity



### 1) All people are worthy of dignity and love.

The bedrock of social justice is the dignity of every individual. We honor the fundamental value of every person, wherever they live, whatever they look like, whomever they love or worship. We work together to restore our sense of self-worth when it has been damaged and help everyone see their inner light.

### 2) Healing is interconnected.

We take care of each other, because we all do better when we all do better. We make sure everyone has what they need to be at ease, not just physically but also mentally and spiritually — because love, joy, belonging, and creativity are basic needs. Our wellbeing is also connected to the health of the planet and the other living beings who share it with us.



### 3) We can organize a world where everyone thrives.

We subscribe to a radical belief: it is possible for all of us to have what we need, not merely to survive, but also to thrive. By practicing sustainability, we avoid excess, waste, hoarding, and the misuse of resources. Together, we shift resources to people and communities who need them most. We use our collective people-power to remedy the scarcity caused by capitalism, reimagine how to produce and distribute resources, and share the abundance of this earth.

### 4) Diversity is our greatest strength.

Our differences make us powerful. Ancestral knowledge, family stories, oral histories, queer histories, and other truths that are missing from the history books can help us solve the big problems we face. We center the lived experience and wisdom of communities who have resisted the status quo and embodied alternative ways of being over generations. We practice empathy amidst difference. In the words of Maya Angelou, “in diversity there is beauty and there is strength.”





**5) We can dismantle systems of oppression and heal our wounds.**

Creating a just future begins with understanding how our world has been constructed by powerful elites at the expense of the rest of us. We are all impacted by systems of violence and oppression, including racism, anti-Blackness, xenophobia, white supremacy, capitalism, slavery, genocide, war, imperialism, colonialism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, ageism, patriarchy, and classism.

Moving forward requires a long-term process of liberation: dismantling systems of oppression, repairing wrongs, and healing from trauma. We continually learn from our history even as we write a new story, this one grounded in racial justice.

**6) We are guided by those most harmed by oppression.**

People who are most impacted by oppression have the wisdom, knowledge, and experience to chart the path to liberation. We celebrate the leadership of Black and Indigenous people in particular, as well as immigrants and refugees, people of color, people with disabilities, queer people, and all those who have long been working to build a transformed future.



**7) Participatory democracy is essential to create a shared future.**

In a democracy, everyone has a voice in deciding how our society is structured. An inclusive democracy creates opportunities for every person to participate actively in shaping the conditions that affect our lives. As we build a world where everyone belongs, we ensure everyone has an equal voice in deciding how systems and institutions function.

**8) Our public sphere prioritizes collective wellbeing.**

We're all in this together. Government is the terrain that institutionalizes our collective power. We call for a government serving the common good and an economy promoting the regeneration of people and the Earth. We imagine a public health system that advances the social determinants of health and prioritizes community wellness, healing, and mutual accountability. We value life over corporate profit and the wellbeing of the many over the gains of the few. Our systems cultivate space and time for creativity, innovation, and joy.



**9) We have the power to transform the future.**

Change is natural and necessary. Through organized collective action, acting out of love not fear, we have the power to build a transformed future in which everyone can thrive.

*Illustrations by Yolanda Liman & Drawing Change*

