

# Developing a Transformational Criminal Justice Narrative: A Toolkit

**National Criminal Justice and Public Health Alliance**

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# About the Narrative Development Toolkit

We believe that a better world is indeed possible — we *can* create a more just society that promotes health, safety, and equity. An important step in doing so is using the process of developing transformational narratives to envision that world.

The [National Criminal Justice and Public Health Alliance](#) created this toolkit to support community organizers and health equity advocates in developing, using, and adapting transformational narratives to advance equity in the criminal and juvenile justice systems. The National Criminal Justice and Public Health Alliance's Narrative Workgroup went through a process similar to the one described in this resource to develop a transformational narrative. We found the process to be incredibly eye opening — it sharpened our analysis, fundamentally changed how we communicate about our work, strengthened our relationships and deepened our resolve to transform the system.

After completing our process and sharing the transformational narrative with others, we realized that the *process was as important as the product*, and we decided to help others go through a similar process.

## This toolkit includes the following materials:

- An introduction to public narratives and their role in community organizing, systems change, and public policy change
- A six-step guide to developing a transformational narrative
- A set of exercises and tips to support transformational narrative development

Shifting the narrative is often a long-term process. It is hard to do, hard to measure, and, because it often doesn't have immediate payoffs, hard to make time for. But it is critical that we embark on this work.

With this in mind, we strongly encourage you to share your transformational narratives back with us, and to let us know your feedback on using this toolkit to guide your process. If we hear that many people are trying this out, we'll bring people together to share lessons learned and to support one another. You can contact us through Jonathan Heller at [jch@humanimpact.org](mailto:jch@humanimpact.org). Thanks for all you are doing!

## Why Public Health?

We believe that public health professionals have an important role in partnering with people working on justice system transformation.

Public health work and criminal justice reform intersect across multiple areas:

- Involvement in the justice system is a social determinant of health with multi-generational health impacts
- Many people caught up in the justice system face multiple public health issues, including mental illness, substance use, and trauma
- Equity is an important public health value and goal and the justice system is currently one of the most inequitable systems in the US, with people of color and people living with low incomes facing disproportionate outcomes at every stage of interaction with the system
- Societal conditions that lead to inequitable involvement in the justice system are the same conditions that lead to health inequities

- Public health's focus on upstream prevention, reducing harm, restoring people to full physical, mental, and social health, and valuing life support working for transformations to every stage of justice system involvement.

## Acknowledgments

- This toolkit is in large part derived from — and would not be possible without — the work of Richard Healey, Sandra Hinson, and David Mann at the Grassroots Policy Project ([www.grassrootspolicy.org](http://www.grassrootspolicy.org)). Their focus is helping to build a powerful progressive movement that is more than the sum of its parts, that has the power to promote a progressive agenda, and that moves a progressive worldview into state and national political discourses.
- Many people were involved in developing a narrative about the criminal justice system that lifts up public health values, which created the building blocks for this toolkit. We thank all those involved: Gus Alexander, Marisa Arrona, Daryl Atkinson, Jeanne Ayers, Shannon Cosgrove, Mary Crowley, Chelsea Davis, Jasmine Graves, Jonathan Heller, Lorenzo Jones, David Liners, Paul Marincel, Glenn Martin, Marilyn Metzler, Clare Reidy, Peter Schafer, Danielle Sered, Shari Silberstein, Charlene Sinclair, and Mojgan Zare.
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# Introduction

*Fish discovered water last.*

– Ethiopian proverb

## Public Narratives Shape What Policy Change Is Possible

Dominant public narratives are like the air we breathe. They are embedded in our institutions, structures, and norms. Indeed, most of the time, we are hardly even aware of them, much less the way they shape our experience and our understanding of our experiences.<sup>1</sup>

### How do dominant public narratives come about?

Our *worldviews*, or “the beliefs, norms, values, and commonsense that are socially derived and provide shared meanings for people”.<sup>2</sup> This shared meaning shapes how we live. Our worldviews also shape what change we believe is possible and necessary, the policies we support, and the way we take in and interpret data.

Worldviews manifest in public narratives, as in the stories we share that shape our conscious perceptions, understandings, analysis, and sense of responsibility and possibility.<sup>3</sup> Public narratives are meta-stories that provide an understanding or interpretation of people and situations.<sup>4</sup>

Public narratives both inform and are informed by our individual internal narratives.<sup>5</sup> Common themes in our broadly held values and beliefs are woven together — organically and deliberately — to form public narratives that are held collectively by many people. Because they are held by many people, public narratives not only shape our individual experiences and narratives but they also provide the lens through which we interpret our experiences and the experiences of others.

### How do current dominant public narratives undermine our public policy goals?

Within the US, several narratives are continuously woven together and serve to sustain inequities and structural oppression.

Examples of existing dominant narratives include:

- People must pull themselves up by their own bootstraps to achieve the American Dream. We are all individually responsible for our own fate and if we work hard, we’ll succeed materially.
- Government is inefficient and should be small.
- Solutions come through the marketplace.
- We have overcome structural oppression.

Furthermore, many believe that when someone commits a crime, he or she must be punished, and that being “tough on crime” — defined as making punishment increasingly and excessively harsh and expansive — is the only way to deter crime and that incarceration makes people safer.

If the majority of decision makers and potential voters continue to be limited by these narratives, it will be impossible for us to transform the criminal justice system and ensure that the Black community and other communities of color that have been hardest hit by the inequities of the current system have what they need to thrive.

To transform the criminal justice system into a set of institutions that support public safety and health of *all* people (regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, income, faith, or abilities), we must unmask the dominant public narrative regarding crime and justice and develop and share widely a transformational narrative.

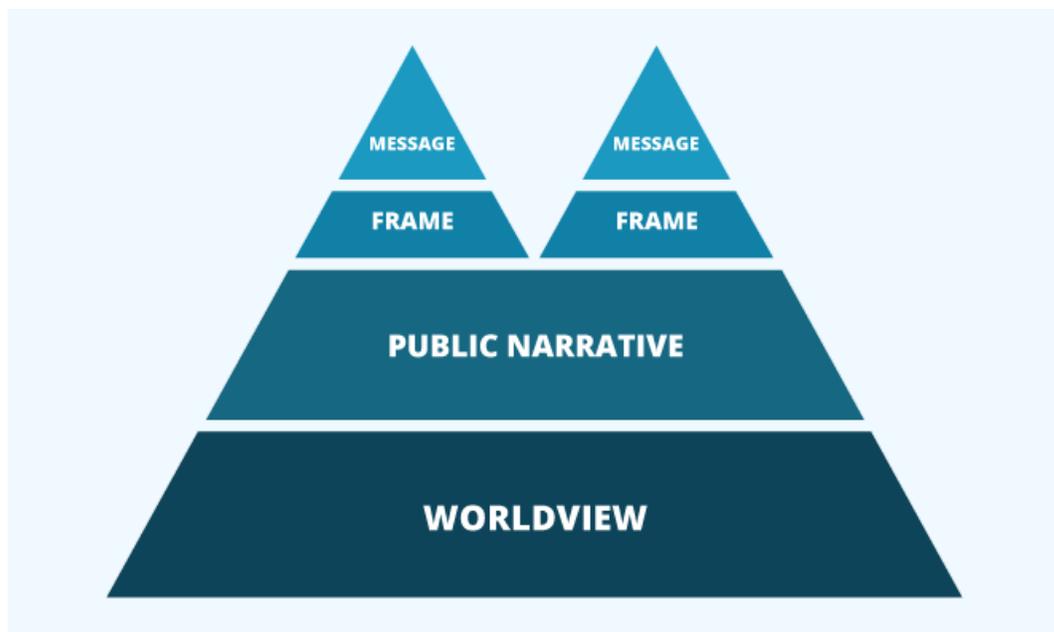
## Shaping the Narrative Is a Form of Power

While we often don't think of worldview and the shaping of narratives as a form of power, changing a structure or system requires many people to have the collective belief that those changes are necessary and possible. Expanding and influencing public consciousness toward change — shaping the narrative — then becomes an important form of power.<sup>6</sup>

The good news is that the dominant narrative was created by people, for a purpose, and it can be reshaped by people over time. The current tough-on-crime narrative has only been in place for the last 50 years. People simultaneously hold many values and beliefs, some of which resonate with the existing dominant worldviews and public narratives and others that likely conflict with them. It is possible to intentionally lift up a different set of values people hold and weave those into a narrative that supports the changes we seek. When given the opportunity to have a broader conversation, people often recognize they hold a wider set of values and beliefs and see the harm they and others are experiencing when these are ignored.

This new narrative and the process of developing it moves beyond the transactional and, indeed, can be transformational for the people involved because of what it enables.

We must make changing the public narrative an important component of our work. We have a responsibility to do this; if we are not working to tell the broader truth, we are complicit in creating and sustaining a system that benefits some at the expense of others.



The public narrative influences the *frames* we choose to use. Frames are metaphors that serve to structure our experience and understanding of the complex world around us and help people make sense of what they hear and see by triggering concepts that already exist in their minds.

Frames then influence the *messages* we use to advance social change.

For any particular social or policy change campaign, developing strong and resonant messages that move people to action is critical; success depends on our communications and actions. For long-term change, however, we must be thinking about not just winning the campaign in front of us, but whether our messages for a particular campaign help or harm progress toward the larger changes we seek.

<p><b>Example 1</b></p>	<p>Winning a sentencing reform campaign by emphasizing that the policy change will only be applied to people who have committed non-violent crimes may make it harder to achieve policy change for people who commit violent crimes. The short-term message will likely deepen people’s belief in an element of the current dominant public narrative — that people who commit violent offenses are undeserving and fundamentally different from those who commit non-violent offenses.</p>
<p><b>Example 2</b></p>	<p>Advocating for treatment alternatives to incarceration based on the financial savings that these alternatives have been shown to have may convince fiscally conservative elected officials to vote in favor of reform. But, in the long run, we are reinforcing a message that important reforms that have higher costs are not worth implementing.</p>

## The Process of Developing a Transformational Narrative Is an Organizing Tool

The process of revealing the current dominant narrative — making it visible — and developing a transformational narrative is an organizing tool. It is an important component of political education and can help people understand that what they have been experiencing as individuals is part of a shared experience that is the result of systems and structures. The process can lead to personal transformation because our worldviews are “often linked to unexamined assumptions about human nature, identity, gender, race, class, sexuality, and family.”<sup>7</sup> Those assumptions, unchecked, become so entrenched that they feel like “common sense,” or self-evident truths. The process of unmasking the narrative can be difficult, or even jarring, but it can also deepen relationships among the people — and organizations — that undertake it together because it is based on sharing values.

To maximize the impact of creating a transformational narrative, the process should be undertaken in the context of power and movement building and transformational and systems change work. When the process is used only in the context of a specific campaign, it becomes more message focused and less transformational.

## Developing and Lifting Up a Transformational Narrative Is an Ongoing Project

The transformational narrative that results from the process described below is important, but it is just a starting point.

To be useful, the new narrative must be worked into our framing, messaging, and actions across the movement to transform the justice system and the public health system. It must become part of popular culture, embedded in our movies, music, and social media. The media must understand the narrative that has controlled their past reporting and the alternative that is not only possible, but critical and urgent. Elected officials must take it up, own it, and make it part of their messaging, including their stump speeches. Campaigns for change must fully incorporate it not just once, but in every campaign.

Furthermore, even the process of developing a transformational narrative is iterative. We in the Narrative Workgroup don’t feel that we’ve developed a finished product or a singular new narrative. We are testing it in campaigns and seeing how it resonates, and then we will refine it. If many groups develop potential transformational narratives, we’d like to compare them, integrate them and elevate them.

We are at the beginning of this journey and we hope you travel with us.

# Steps to Develop a Transformational Narrative

One or two people can work together to facilitate the six steps described below:

- **Step 1:** Find Your People - Identify a group of 10 to 20 people with whom to develop a transformational narrative
- **Step 2:** Build Relationships by Sharing Your Stories - Build the relationships, understanding, and trust you will need across your group throughout this process
- **Step 3:** Develop a Shared Understanding of the Concept of Public Narrative - Define worldview, public narrative, framing, and messaging, and give examples to differentiate them
- **Step 4:** Identify the Elements and Underlying Values of the Existing Dominant Narrative - Unmasking the current dominant narrative helps crystalize understanding of public narrative and shows people what we're up against
- **Step 5:** Develop and Document the Elements of a Transformational Narrative - Develop a narrative grounded in our values, beliefs, and assumptions
- **Step 6:** Develop an Action Plan - Develop a plan for using the transformational narrative you develop and sharing it with others

Including preparation for, time in, and follow up from meetings, the facilitator will likely need to spend about 30 hours carrying out the full process. The facilitator should familiarize themselves with the entire process before beginning, and will need to set meeting agendas, monitor time during meetings, ensure everyone is engaged and has the opportunity to share their perspective, encourage participants to be open to the ideas of others, and, between meetings, document progress and summarize draft narratives.

*The process described below has been adapted from the work of David Mann of the Grassroots Policy Project.*

## Step 1: Find Your People

First, you will need to identify a group of 10 to 20 people with whom to develop a transformational narrative.

Ideally the group will share values but represent a diverse set of perspectives, including:

- People directly impacted by the criminal justice system, i.e., formerly incarcerated people, crime survivors, and their families
- Justice reform advocates
- Racial justice advocates
- Community organizers
- Public health professionals
- Communications professionals

Make sure to gather people who represent a diversity of dimensions across race/ethnicity, gender, income, sexual orientation, education, age, and geography (e.g., urban and rural and/or different regions across the US, depending on your scope).

Note that while it could be very powerful to include reform-minded law enforcement representatives in the process, law enforcement is considered the expert within the dominant narrative and their views are already widely sought and heard. For that reason, we feel it is optional to include their voice in this process.

### Parameters to consider in gathering your group:

- **Folks are coming with a political analysis and some political education:** People in the group, as well as the facilitator, should already have a political analysis, political education, and/or worldview through which they understand their own values and beliefs and why inequity and injustice persist. This should include an understanding of structural racism. If they do not have this analysis, they are likely to develop a narrative that is not substantially different from the existing dominant narratives, and this process will not achieve its intended aims. If the people you want to work with do not have an analysis, an important first step is to work together to develop one.
- **Deep relationships across the group are not required at the outset:** People in the group don't need to already know one another — the process can be used to build and deepen relationships between individuals and organizations. You can undertake this process more than once — first, for example, with your core constituency, people with whom you have relationships, and then with an expanded group that also has a similar analysis.
- **People are able to commit their time:** Everyone in the group should have the time to fully engage. The process can take about 12 hours, which can be spread across a few weeks or months.

#### The National Criminal Justice and Public Health Alliance Narrative Workgroup was composed of people from:

- Two nonprofits focused on justice system reform
- Three community organizing groups focused on justice system reform, including two that organize formerly incarcerated people
- Three public health research and advocacy non-profits
- An academic institution that provides educational services for incarcerated people
- A governmental public health agency

Participants came from across the US and from several racial/ethnic groups.

The group met by phone for an hour a month for about 10 months.

## Step 2: Build Relationships by Sharing Your Stories

Public narratives are most powerful when they tap into values and beliefs shared by many, so your group needs to understand each other's values, beliefs, and worldviews. This step is critical to build the relationships, understanding, and trust you will need across your group throughout this process.

Spend time together answering questions such as:

- What are two to three core values and beliefs that have shaped you?
- What is your story about how these value and beliefs were formed?
- How did your values and beliefs lead you to the work you are doing?
- How are your values currently being violated in your communities generally and specifically as a result of the system of mass incarceration?

There are many methodologies that you can use for people to share their stories, including those that draw on arts and culture such as story circles used by theater groups in the south during the civil rights movement.

While you probably don't want to document people's stories since they are likely to be personal, document the values and beliefs you share across the group so you can refer to them later in the process.

Appendix A has an example of a popular education exercise that can be used to achieve the same goal of this step instead of just having a discussion.

#### Values shared by members of the National Criminal Justice and Public Health Alliance Narrative Workgroup included:

- Human dignity
- Human justice
- Racial equity
- Inclusion
- Relationships
- Redefining what expertise looks like
- Not being directed by fear of the other
- Community
- Opportunity
- Anti-White supremacy, anti-racist work
- Belief in the possibility of true democracy where all people are lifted up

Note that while you may be focused on a public health approach to transforming the criminal justice system, the values held by people in public health may not be specific to public health.

### Step 3: Develop a Shared Understanding of the Concept of Public Narrative

People have different understandings of the phrase *public narrative* and often understand it to mean framing and messaging. Spend time talking about worldview, public narrative, framing, and messaging, defining each, giving examples, and differentiating them. As a group, review existing written documents (such as the introductory text above and the documents that are cited), presentations (<http://grassrootspolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Power-of-Narratives-Slides.pptx>), and/or videos about public narrative (e.g., [http://www.preventconnect.org/2014/04/public\\_narratives/](http://www.preventconnect.org/2014/04/public_narratives/) - see the recording of session 1 and start listening at the 17:27 mark).

You may need to remind people more than once what you mean by the term *public narrative* and that these narratives are created by people and can be changed by people.

Appendix B includes an exercise that can help people understand that what is considered legal or illegal can change over time and be influenced by public narrative.

### Step 4: Identify the Elements and Underlying Values of the Existing Dominant Narrative

The next conversation your group will take on is about the current dominant narrative. This helps crystalize people's understanding of the term *public narrative* and shows people the power of what we're up against. For many people this is an easy exercise, but the resulting narrative can be depressing and infuriating. Be prepared for that and responsive to the feelings it generates among the people in your group. For others, this step can create internal confusion; some people don't want to believe that the dominant narrative can have such influence (i.e., on themselves) so they feel a need to double down on the dominant narrative as "true." For yet

others, this discussion can have a liberating effect as it names the dominant narrative as something created for a purpose.

Start the discussion by asking questions like:

- How do the media and movies portray crime and the justice system? How do elected officials portray them?
- What are the stories people in the general public tell about crime and the justice system?
- What values and beliefs underlie these portrayals of crime and the justice system?

Together, you can read articles or watch video clips to spur people's thinking. Alternatively, use the exercise in Appendix C to start this discussion.

If racism and other forms of oppression, both historic and current, do not come up on their own, ask probing questions (e.g., Are there specific populations that are portrayed as causing more crime? Are there some populations that are thought to be more deserving than others?) to reveal their influence.

In addition to asking these questions, push the group to investigate their answers more deeply, for example by asking "Why do you/we believe these things?"

Document the answers to these questions and summarize the key themes. Revisit these questions at future meetings and add to the answers and themes if people have more ideas to share.

You may also want to take time to discuss the implications of the dominant narrative. What power does this narrative hold? What are the connections between the narrative and policy, investments, etc.? Having this conversation can create the public and political will to intentionally expand the narrative and organize others to do the same.

**Below is the summary of the existing narratives that the National Criminal Justice and Public Health Alliance Narrative Workgroup identified:**

*You should be afraid, very afraid. Crime is rising and innocent people — children, women, White people, White women especially — are the victims. The perpetrators are people of color, especially Black men. They are not like us. They are bad, lazy, undeserving people. Crime and violence are part of their culture.*

*Those people are making individual choices to commit crime. Society as a whole — especially White society — has no role in creating the behavior of these bad people.*

*Punishment, retribution, and revenge deter crime. In fact, not punishing those who commit crime is immoral. Rehabilitation doesn't work.*

*Those who commit violent crime are especially undeserving, and we should show no sympathy toward them. On the other hand, when a White person commits a crime — not that they do very often — it is sometimes justified and it does not represent the White race in any way. White heroin addicts, for example, deserve our sympathy — they've fallen on hard times — and are worth saving.*

*Police and prosecutors are experts we should trust. They deliver justice fairly and know what is best. Police violence is justified.*

## Step 5: Develop and Document the Elements of a Transformational Narrative

While identifying the existing dominant narrative may be relatively easy, developing a transformational narrative can be more challenging. It involves creating something new and envisioning a very different world — one grounded in our values, beliefs, and assumptions — from scratch. The conversation will likely start more slowly and may take longer than the unmasking phase.

Start the discussion by asking questions like:

- Starting with the values and beliefs we discussed earlier, how would we want the justice system to operate?
- What is the value of people who are incarcerated and people who have been charged with or convicted of a crime?
- What should be the purpose of a criminal justice system? What would be the outcomes associated with a successful justice system?
- What does it mean to be safe? What do you think of when you think of safety?
- What public health and racial justice principles should guide a future justice system?
- What is the role of people who are/have been incarcerated in a justice system? What is the role of families and communities around them?
- What are examples of existing programs and policies that embody the justice system we would want? What are the stories that underlie those programs and policies?
- If successful, what would we be investing in rather than jails and prisons?

In addition to asking these questions, encourage the group to investigate their answers more deeply, for example by asking “Why do you/we believe these things?”

Rather than focusing on what you don’t want, in the negative, focus on what you do want, in the positive. Be intentional about focusing on the values, beliefs, and assumptions you want reflected. Avoid policy, analysis, or reactive statements (e.g., statements that start with “need to eliminate”), which are often grounded in the framework of the current dominant narrative. The transformational narrative should be aspirational. Though it is not a vision statement, a vision, strategies, actions, and messages can be derived from it.

Again, document the answers to these questions and summarize the key themes. Revisit these questions at future meetings and add to the answers and themes if people have more ideas to share.

**Below is the draft summary of the transformational narrative that the National Criminal Justice and Public Health Alliance Narrative Workgroup developed. We believe that the narrative below should not be the starting point of your process to develop a transformational narrative, but we provide it as an example of our work. Furthermore, we share it knowing that we want to improve on this narrative and that it is far from perfect.**

*The justice system must perform by our societal ideals: valuing every life, showing compassion and forgiveness, and restoring hope.*

*Society needs to address the underlying causes of behaviors we deem inappropriate and of poor health. We must ensure people have what they need to thrive — good jobs, housing, education, food, and health care — and address underlying issues such as mental health, substance abuse, trauma, and hopelessness. The justice system and the public health system must place on society the collective responsibility to create these conditions.*

*To improve safety and health, the justice system must make people whole again. It must give people the chance to be responsible for what they did wrong and accountable for repairing the harm they caused.*

*We believe all people are fully human and deserving of dignity and fairness. We need to create a justice system and a public health system that is fair to everyone, including people of color, women, LGBTQ people, and other historically marginalized groups; addresses forms of discrimination that influence outcomes, including implicit bias and structural racism; understands that those who commit crimes have often also been victims of crimes; and is accountable to improving health and safety.*

*This justice system is within our reach. Law enforcement, district attorneys, probation officers, elected officials, school administrators, public health officials and others can choose to adopt existing programs and practices that embody this vision. These programs have been evaluated and shown to work — they improve community safety, strengthen families and communities, heal, and end the cycle of violence and trauma.*

*We must recognize that all of us — people of color, women, LGBTQ people, and other historically marginalized groups; people of all incomes; people from both urban and rural areas; individuals, families, and communities; those who administer the justice system and those who are under its influence; White people — would be better off if everyone was supported in reaching their full life and health potential. We can only reach our societal goals — safety, health, or other — when we create this justice system.*

## Step 6: Develop an Action Plan

After you've developed a version of the transformational narrative, develop a plan to use it. The plan can include:

- Reviewing and revising materials and/or campaigns in your own organizations to reflect your transformative narrative. For example, ensure that the policy changes for which your organization is advocating align with and help advance the transformational narrative.
- Communicating the transformational narrative to your base in meetings and through webinars.
- Writing about the transformational narrative in op-eds and blogs.
- Aligning your campaigns with the transformational narrative. Develop frames and messaging for specific audiences based on the narrative and review your messages (including social media) to ensure they don't unintentionally reinforce the dominant narrative. Remember that your messages need to be audience specific — how you talk to your base using the narrative to motivate them to action will be different than how you talk to people who don't (yet) share your analysis and to whom you are trying to offer a different way of seeing the issue. You will need to make the transformational narrative digestible, which we recognize is its own process.
- Bringing the transformational narrative to the attention of:
  - *Justice system and public health officials.*
  - *People in the mass media* – Talk with them about how they are covering criminal justice issues and the impact of their coverage. Explain how they could cover justice issues differently and provide examples of frames and messages that are based on the transformational narrative.
  - *Elected officials* – Ask them to ensure they are not reinforcing the dominant narrative and to include messages (that you can help create) based on elements of the transformational narrative in their speeches and in their platform.

- *Artists, including musicians, filmmakers, and script writers* – Ask them to develop materials based on the transformational narrative and to ensure that their work does not play into or reinforce dominant narratives.

One effective strategy for communicating about the transformational narrative is to offer people a choice between the dominant narrative and the one you developed. Contrast them. Engage people in discussion and inquiry about the transformational narrative. This can help people understand that the dominant narrative exists and show them that they can choose not to reinforce it. Shifting the narrative is not about winning an argument; it is an invitation to see things differently.

Appendix D contains a set of helpful “do’s and don’ts” for using the transformational narrative.

As you implement the action plan, document and share with others how you’ve used the narrative and any changes that have resulted from using it. Also plan to revisit the narrative to improve it based on how it is being received and what you are learning. As the group of people exposed to it expands, it will be informed by new views and tensions. Remember that the narrative is not an end product; it equips us to recognize where our words and actions are not aligned with our values and vision of a just justice system.

Several progressive organizations have been developing framing and messaging to support justice reform. Though they may not be grounded in a transformational narrative similar to the one you develop, their research and suggestions may be helpful as you think about your new messaging.

- [Opportunity Agenda](#)
- [Frameworks Institute](#)
- [ASO Communications](#)

## Appendix A: Tree of Life/Storytelling Exercise

*Created by Charlene Sinclair from the Center for Community Change*

1. **Preparation:** Put up sheets of newsprint — four pieces in a 2 by 2 grid — and draw a tree with a trunk and roots. Have many markers available.
2. **Overview of Exercise (2 min):** In many cultures the history of their community, their family, their people is shared through storytelling. For some the storytelling is informal (Thanksgiving dinner, family reunions); for others it is highly ritualized (Jewish Seder). For all it is a way for the generations that come after them to understand the struggle, success, values, and beliefs of the community. In this exercise we will tell the story of our people.
3. **First Round – Story Development (20 min):** In groups of three to four, we will develop the story of how our people worked to create God’s Commonwealth. Questions for small group discussion:
  - What were the beliefs/principles (bedrock, fertile ground) we held?
  - What values emerge and grow from beliefs/principles we held?
  - What good fruit did we bear from our steadfast struggle for the creation of God’s Commonwealth?
4. **Recording Outcomes (5–7 min):** On the tree of life put the responses developed by each group (underline, make bold, or check mark if you have the same or similar response as another group). **Beliefs should be under the roots, values should be the roots, and fruits should be clear.**

5. **Second Round – Storytelling in Pairs (10 min total, 5 min for each story; facilitator will give 1 min warning and call for shift at 5 min mark):** We now know the story of our people. Find one person whom you’ve had little interaction with in the past and share your story. Use the following scenario:
  - You’ve been blessed to live a long and fruitful life. You are now at your family reunion and all of the children are gathered around you to hear how you and your people worked to create God’s Commonwealth. What will you share with them?The first person will share his/her story. Have the second person also share their story highlighting points that are shared in common and points that were not mentioned in the first story.
6. **Second Look at the Tree – Recording additional outcomes (5 min):** Ask people to return to the tree of life and see if there is anything to add after telling and hearing the stories.
7. **Large Group Conversation (20 min):** Re-gather for large group conversation. Ask what struck people in the small group discussion, storytelling, and when they look at the tree.

## Appendix B: Crime Fact or Fiction

*Created by Charlene Sinclair, CCC, and Sandra Hinson from the Grassroots Policy Project*

**Materials:** Copies of the True or False statements below, without the answers.

**Introducing the Exercise:** This exercise is an informal and fun way to explore how laws, and especially what is (or who is) considered to be legal or illegal, change over time.

**Step 1:** Break the participants into small groups of four or five.

**Step 2:** Hand out the list of statements below. Have one person in the group read each statement aloud. Then, as a group, they must decide whether they think each statement is true or false. Everyone should participate.

*Trainer Note:* Be sure to hand out a version that does *not* contain the answers. After the group makes their decision, reveal the correct answer.

### True or False Statements

1. Pope Leo XIII, Queen Victoria, and US presidents Grover Cleveland and Ulysses S. Grant all shared a love for cocaine. **[True]**
2. In Seattle it is illegal to sit on the sidewalk, but it is not illegal to spit on the sidewalk. **[True]**
3. Laws criminalizing interracial marriages remained in effect in many states until 1945. **[False.** They remained in effect until ruled unconstitutional in 1967.]
4. In 1859 and again in 1879, the state of California prohibited corporations and state, county, or municipal governments from employing persons of “Chinese or Mongolian races.” **[True]**
5. In 1961, nine students from a Black college were arrested for reading in the “Whites-only” section of the Jackson State University library. **[True]**
6. During peaceful sit-ins at a segregated lunch counter in Nashville, TN, protesters were arrested for “disturbing the peace.” **[True]**
7. We no longer send people to jail because of unpaid debts. **[False.** In June 2014, a 55-year-old mother was found dead in her cell while serving a 48-hour jail sentence that was meant to erase her \$2,000 debt.]
8. In 2006, an evaluation of 24 different studies on the cost effectiveness of privately run prisons found that they are more cost effective than state-run prisons. **[False.** The evaluation was inconclusive, but suggested that there is no difference in cost effectiveness.]
9. When longshore workers in New York refused to cross picket lines erected by Philadelphia longshore workers, they were breaking the law. **[True.** The Taft-Hartley Act made solidarity strikes (secondary boycotts) illegal.]
10. During the wave of labor strikes of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it was illegal for industrialists to hire private security services as strike breakers. **[False.** Businessmen were allowed to hire private agencies to do a wide range of things: infiltrate unions, keep suspected union organizers out of factories, and intimidate workers.]

**Step 3:** Debrief the small groups. Ask the groups:

- What, if anything, surprised you?
- What did you feel during the discussion and negotiation about whether a statement was true or false?
- What does this suggest about what makes something legal or illegal?

Encourage a variety of people to talk. Do not try to respond to what each person is saying, or you will dominate the conversation. You may want to acknowledge what was said by repeating part of it back.

### *Troubleshooting Tip:*

Someone may feel that we are suggesting that nothing should be illegal, that we don't support the rule of law, that we are being “soft on crime” or unconcerned about public safety. It is a good thing if people feel challenged in this way. Remind them that our concerns are with addressing what is unfair about the current criminal

justice system. We want to make it work well for everyone, and we think it will work better if it is fair. Also reassure people that it is okay to disagree about some aspects of criminal justice. It would be surprising if there were no disagreement.

**Step 4:** Summarize the exercise.

- What is legal or illegal changes in ways that reflect shifts in societal values and ideas. What's illegal today may be legal tomorrow.
- We can see from this activity that a lot of things have been illegal in the past because they benefitted certain interests and agendas.

## Appendix C: The Lies That Crush Us

*Created by Charlene Sinclair from the Center for Community Change*

**Materials:** Everyone should have a piece of paper and pencil/pen.

**Independent and Small Group Work:** Have participants close their eyes and breathe. Ask the first question. Give about 20 seconds for them to think with their eyes closed. Tell participants to open their eyes and write a response. Repeat the process for questions two and three. Then break into small groups of two to three to discuss responses.

### Questions:

1. What is the dominant operative lie (the lie you hear in society) that crushes you? The lie that crushes your people?
2. Why is it easier to trust the lie rather than the truth?
3. What is the cost to you/your people when you uphold the lie?

After the small group discussion, have a short large group discussion and debrief. Encourage popcorn responses from the room.

**Summarizing the Exercise:** This exercise was about worldview — what we hear in the world that is accepted as truth by the masses. Worldview is very powerful and yet we operate from the perspective that power shows up in only three faces:

1. Force/coercion/violence of the state
2. Organized money
3. Organized people

For our work we need to think about the fourth face of power:

4. Worldview/organized and coherent ideas/ideology

### Large Group Discussion:

- Discuss other manifestations of worldview — about the role of prisons, the role of government, how identities are shaped, race and gender, inequality, and existing power relations.
- Think about something that was common sense within your lifetime — something that was taken for granted as the way things are — that has now shifted. It could be something about civil rights, gender, sexuality, or marriage equality. How has the commonsense shifted?
- Discuss the power of something being “commonsense.”

## Appendix D: Shifting Public Narrative: Do's and Don'ts

Created by the Grassroots Policy Project for the Healthy Minnesota 2020 Narrative Team

### DO

- *Unmask* – Name the dominant public narrative when you see it at work. Point out that what you just saw on the news or heard from a friend, or the law that was just passed, was based on particular values and beliefs. “Do you believe that everyone is solely responsible for their own health?”
- *Uncover and elevate* – Lift up and name the values and beliefs that you want to see lived out in the world. Connect those values and beliefs to places where your audience may see them being enacted already. “Do you believe that everyone should have the opportunity to be healthy? Do we have any shared responsibility to make sure that is true?”
- *Contrast* – Lay out what might be different if your values/convictions were the ones shaping what happens in the world. Be specific about how we have the choice to approach situations through a different belief system. Invite a rethinking of the situation. “Do you want a state where people have to fend for themselves to stay healthy or where we work to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to be healthy?”
- *Draw on your own journey* – While it's important to personalize the narrative, it's also important to do it in a way that anyone can see themselves in it. Describing your own realizations and shifts will help others find their own way in the conversation. “I can understand your reaction — we have been told for so long that health is our individual responsibility. It's taken me awhile to realize that the conditions we live in have a huge impact on our health and that we can only address those conditions together.”
- *Sustain your efforts and connect with others* – Shifting public narrative does not happen quickly. It takes sustained effort, over time, with many people working at it together.
- *Demonstrate public narrative* – Don't just write or talk about it. Our actions say as much or more about our values and beliefs as our words.

### DON'T

- *Focus on challenging facts or interpretations of information* – This will not challenge narrative thinking. Your arguments, as convincing as they may be, will ultimately lose out to the dominant public narrative.
- *Attack people for their own narrative* – Many people operate out of the dominant public narrative, even if unconsciously. Shifting public narratives will take personal conversion and transformation. You cannot move people if you attack them.
- *Name the dominant public narrative as “wrong”* – Our assumption is that competing values and beliefs live within people. We want to provide people a chance to choose the ones they want to live out of and/or balance these competing narratives.
- *Try to convert or convince people* – We are trying to bring out the best of what is already in people and help them find the resonance for themselves. This is, in part, an emotional journey, and our usual approaches to argument and logic aren't as effective in this arena.

## References

1. Interview with David Mann, November 7, 2017.
2. Healey, R. Narrative, Worldview and Framing – or, what happened to Ideology? <<NOTE: I can't easily find this resource through an online search. More detail is necessary to make this resource accessible for those who wish to find it.>>
3. Healey, R. Narrative, Worldview and Framing – or, what happened to Ideology?
4. Interview with David Mann, November 7, 2017.
5. Interview with David Mann, November 7, 2017.
6. Healey R, Hinson S. The Four Faces of Power. Berkeley, CA: Grassroots Policy Project; 2017. Available from: [http://grassrootspolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/GPP\\_4FacesOfPower.pdf](http://grassrootspolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/GPP_4FacesOfPower.pdf).
7. Hinson S. Worldview and the Contest of Ideas. Berkeley, CA: Grassroots Policy Project; 2016. Available from: [http://grassrootspolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/GPP\\_WorldviewAndTheContestOfIdeas.pdf](http://grassrootspolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/GPP_WorldviewAndTheContestOfIdeas.pdf).