



Health Equity: the Opportunity & the Mandate

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Michigan Value Collaborative

Fall Collaborative Meeting

I have no financial disclosures to share.

*I have the audacity to believe
that peoples everywhere can
have three meals a day for
their bodies, education and
culture for their minds, and
dignity, equality, and freedom
for their spirits.*

*Martin Luther King, Jr.
Norway, 1964*



The Audacious pursuit of change...

- **Systems Change**

- Shifting the conditions that are holding the problem in place.

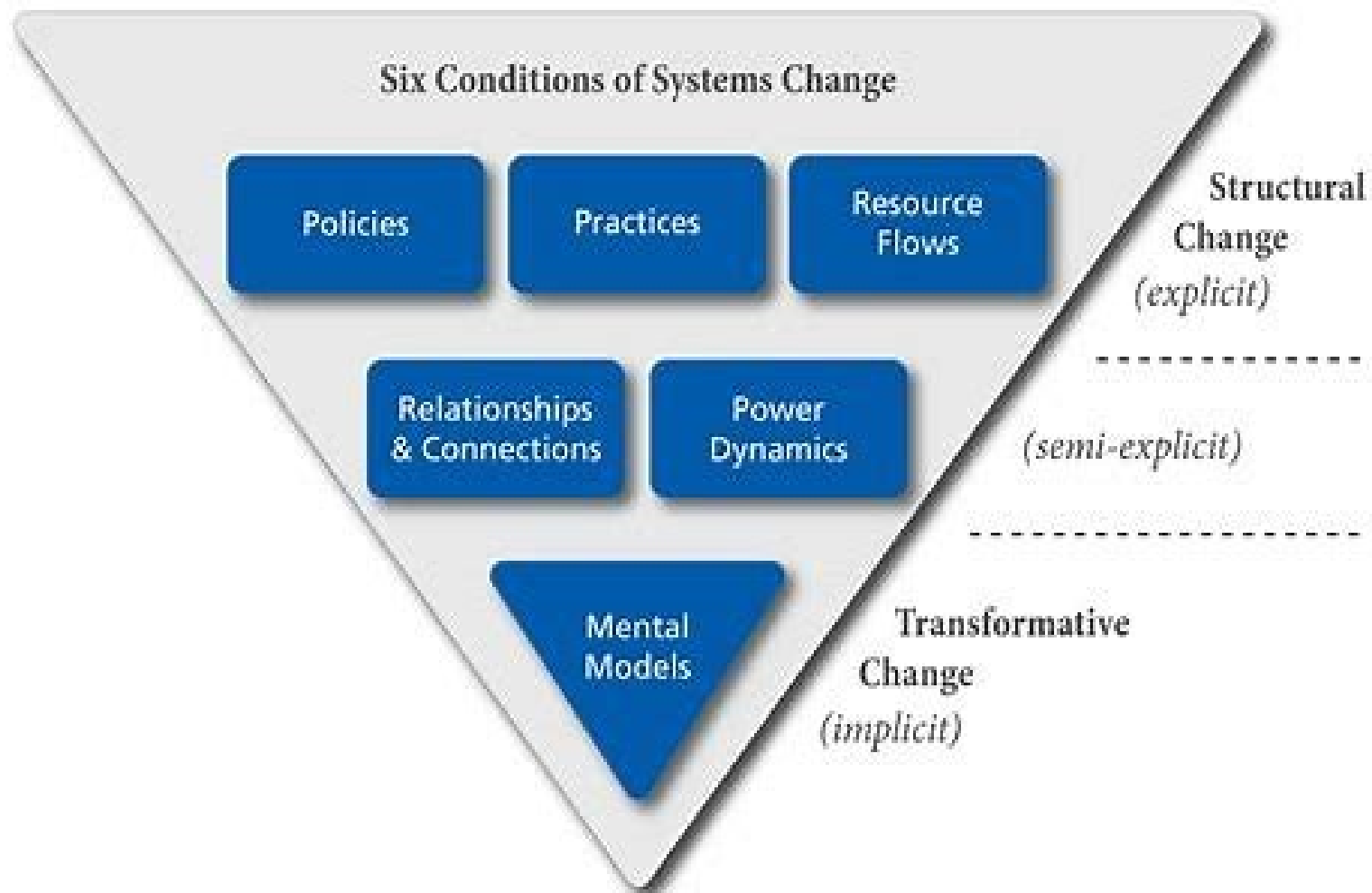
- **Systems Thinking***

- Ability to see how organizational systems, sub-systems, and their parts interact with and influence each other; and
- Ability to recognize how these systems create and contribute to specific problems.
 - *WELL-MEANING* vs *WELL-DOING*

Downstream thinking:

The tendency we have, as individuals and as decision-makers, to focus on one-off, individual lifestyle-based, short-term solutions rather than long-term interventions that address the root-causes of wellbeing.

--Rachel Malena-Chan,
thinkupstream.net



Source: John Kania, Mark Kramer, Peter Senge, The Water of Systems Change, FSG

Advancing Health Equity

What does change look like?

Seeing Differently

What does change sound like?

Saying Differently

What does change act like?

Doing Differently

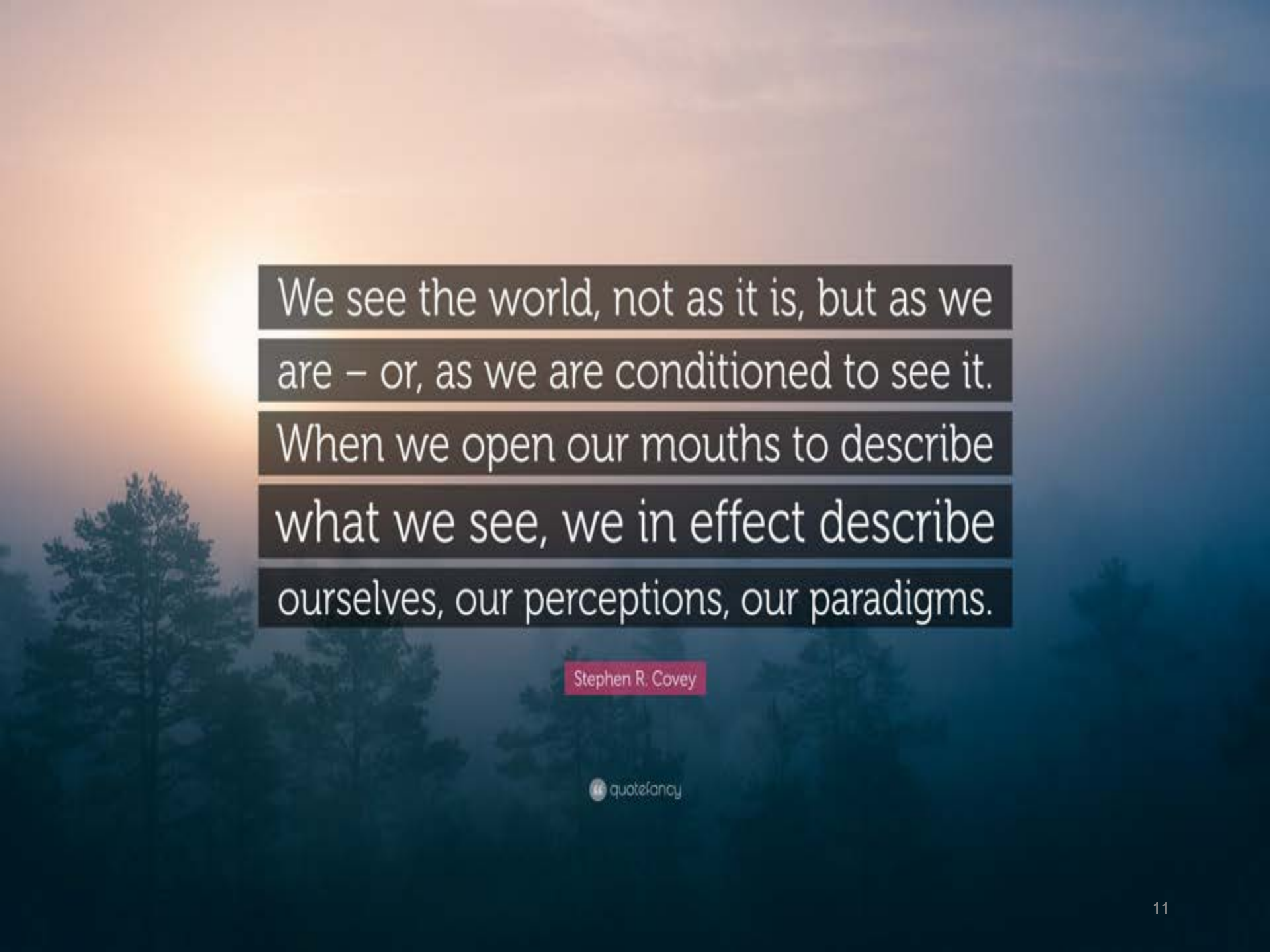
THE DOMINANT NARRATIVE IN PUBLIC HEALTH

"...asks us to deeply dig into long-held assumptions, in a web of meaning mostly invisible, unexpressed, and taken for granted."

"SEEING DIFFERENTLY"







We see the world, not as it is, but as we
are – or, as we are conditioned to see it.
When we open our mouths to describe
what we see, we in effect describe
ourselves, our perceptions, our paradigms.

Stephen R. Covey

“SAYING DIFFERENTLY”

Health Disparity

A disproportionate difference in health between groups of people; observable & measurable

Health Inequity

“Differences in population health status and mortality rates that are **systemic, patterned, unfair, unjust, and actionable**, as opposed to random or caused by those who become ill.” Margaret Whitehead

“SAYING DIFFERENTLY”

***It's not the answer that
enlightens, but the
question!***

-Eugene Ionesco

Getting Upstream as Mainstream

Instead of only asking:

Why do people smoke?

Who lacks access to healthy food options and why?

How do we connect individuals to cancer screening and supports?

Who lacks health care coverage and why?

Perhaps we should also ask:

What social conditions and economic policies predispose people to the stress that encourages smoking?

What economic shifts would redistribute healthy food resources more equitably in our community?

What institutional policies and practices maintain rather than counteract people's access to cancer screening and supports?

What policy changes would redistribute health care resources more equitably in our community?

“DOING DIFFERENTLY”



“Injustice is not always associated with action. Usually it is an inaction.”

Marcus Aurelius

Roman Emperor and Philosopher

Primary Prevention: A Downstream/Conventional Framework

Primary Prevention

The prevention of diseases and conditions before their biological onset

Downstream Interpretation

- *Eat Healthy**
- *Regular exercise**
- *Take Vitamin**
- *Early Screening**

- *Get Screened**
- *Get Enough Sleep**
- *Avoid radiation & toxins**

- *Quit Smoking**
- *Avoid Drinking too much Alcohol**
- *Avoid infections**

Conventional Interpretation

Education to Reduce Risky Behaviors

Improving Resistance To Disease

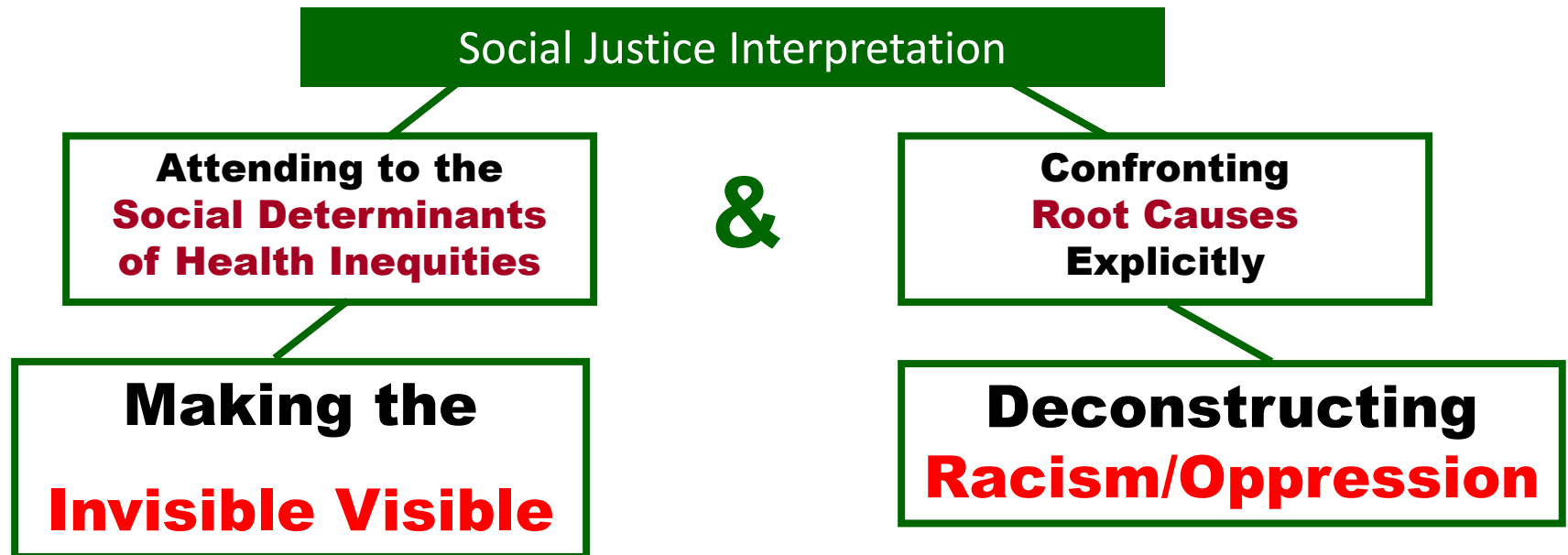
Preventing Environmental Exposures

Primary Prevention: A Social Justice Framework

Upstream Prevention

*The absence of unfair, unjust advantage or privilege based on race, class, gender, or other forms of difference.

*Public Health is what **we** as a society do **together** to advance the conditions necessary for good health



“DOING DIFFERENTLY”

Health Equity Leaders

Generally driven by a
profound and
fundamental sense of
mission.

A sense of purpose
motivates them to
leave the comfort of
the sidelines and wade
into controversy



PRODUCTIVE
OUTRAGE





Productive Outrage...

- “A sense of indignation that drives action and sustained change”
- Productive Outrage moves us from simply “admiring the problem”
- The antidote for risk-averse leaders



Productive Outrage...

- **Is not righteous indignation** that inspires us but doesn't equip us
- **Is not political will or social will** that starts us but doesn't sustain us



Productive Outrage...

- Is **disruptive**, not destructive
- Fuels **transformation**, not accommodation

Doing Equity Leadership:

- Relationships are primary...
- E'ery body grinning' ain't tickled!
- The Fairness Oxymoron
- *Knowing & Thinking*
- Have to/Want to/Get to
- Keep people whole & keep people at the table





“Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season you will reap if you faint not!”

Saint Paul

The Apostle

THE OPPORTUNITY

Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief.
Do justly, now. Love mercy, now. Walk humbly, now.
You are not obligated to complete the work,
but neither are you free to abandon it.

~ from The Talmud ³⁰³



A photograph of a wooden boardwalk leading through tall grass to two people on a dune at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, pink, and purple. The boardwalk is made of wooden planks and leads from the foreground towards the horizon. Two people are standing on the boardwalk in the distance, looking out over the landscape. The grass is tall and golden-brown, typical of a coastal dune environment.

Thank you!

"DEI is about the culture we build and the values we hold."

Dr. Renée Branch Canady,
CEO of Michigan Public Health Institute



Room at the Table

A book about equity, inclusion,
and leadership in public health

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