

# When Health Equity Is A Verb, Change Happens

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**MENTAL HEALTH EQUITY**  
at Morehouse School of Medicine

# Objectives

1. Encourage us to think differently about how we understand health equity.
2. To have us to see healthy equity as a verb, not an adjective such that its achievement requires action, not describing.



# Health Equity

Everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be healthier.

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‘With improved sanitary conditions, improved education and better economic opportunities, the mortality of the race may and probably will steadily decrease until it becomes normal.’

W.E.B. DuBois 1906



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11

The Atlanta University Publications, No. 11

The  
Health and Physique  
of the  
Negro American

A Social Study made under the direction of  
Atlanta University by the Eleventh  
Atlanta Conference

Price, 75 Cents

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA  
MAY 23 '57  
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The Atlanta University Press  
Atlanta, Georgia  
1906



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# White Supremacy

White supremacy, is a system or worldview that maintains legal, political, economic, educational, vocational, religious and **health** privilege for whites.



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# Public Health has to be clear about:

- Why we do what we do
- To whom do we do it
- Who decides and why
- Where are the decision makers and where do they come from
- Where do they live
- Who isn't at the table
- And what is that we aren't doing that we should and why





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# Key Findings

1. Potential economic gain of \$135 billion if racial disparities are eliminated; including \$93 billion in excess medical cost and \$42 billion in untapped productivity.
2. The U.S. economy would be \$2.3 trillion larger by 2050 if the educational achievement of Black and Hispanic/Latino children was raised to that of White children.
3. State and federal prison costs would be cut \$30 billion annually if Blacks and Hispanics/Latinos were incarcerated at the rate of Whites. Currently Black men are incarcerated at nearly six times the rate of White men, while Hispanic/Latino men are incarcerated at twice the rate of White men



Place-based Investments

People-based investments

Health is a construction of society



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# Resilience

“I think that people already have resilience. I think that it's labelled in a way, where they don't really understand that. If you have survived prison, if you have survived waking up day in and day out, just maintaining to get through that, trying, you're practicing resilience, right then. When you're dealing with the hardships, day in and day out, that's resilience.”

Terrance Coffie, MSW



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# Action Steps

Citizen-Advocates (this includes everyone)

Hold policy makers and those controlling budgets accountable

Make yourself seen and heard in a sustained way

Create strategic coalitions

Understand you have a right to be healthy

Evaluate whether what you are doing is having an impact



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Students (again this includes everyone)

If you are in school, some of the people you will learn the most from will not be teaching your classes

Everything you need to know can't be found in a book

Demand to be taught and experience those things that make a difference

Create strategic coalitions

Understand you have a right to be healthy

Evaluate whether what you are learning will make a difference



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## Everyone

Hold policy makers and those controlling budgets accountable

Hold yourself accountable

Create strategic coalitions

Have meaningful measures of impact

Understand that everyone has a right to be healthy

Evaluate whether what you are doing is making an impact



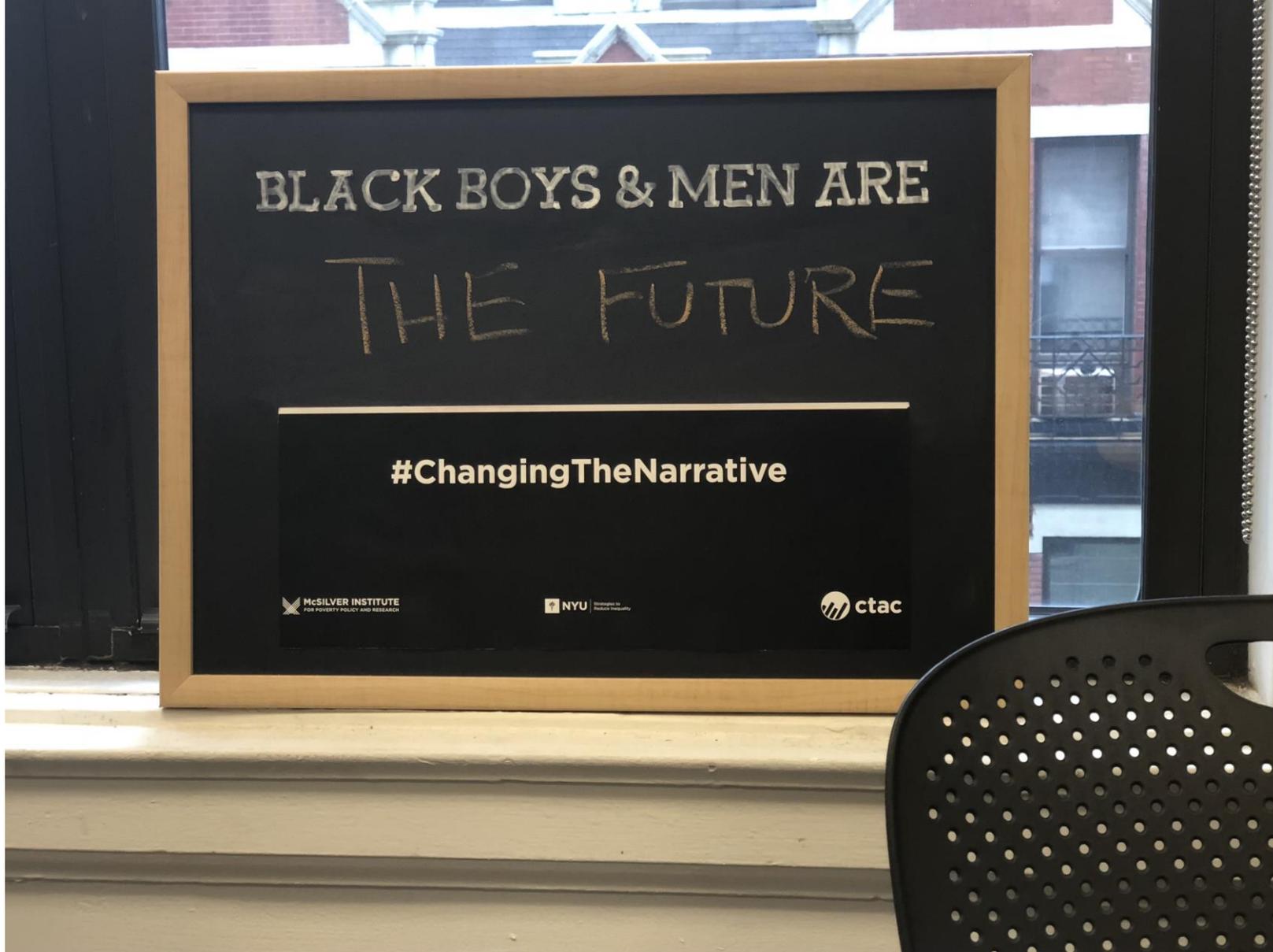
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Power concedes nothing  
without a demand. It never did  
and it never will.

- Frederick Douglass



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