

Achieving Health Equity: The Opportunity and the Mandate

2023 Georgia Cancer Summit

Advancing Cancer Health Equity through Innovation and Partnerships

Renée Branch Canady, PhD, MPA

CEO, MPHI

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“If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.”

Antoine de Saint-Exupery

The Narratives We Build:

Cancer prevention is action taken to lower the risk of getting cancer. This can include **maintaining a healthy lifestyle, avoiding exposure to known cancer-causing substances, and taking medicines or vaccines that can prevent cancer from developing.**

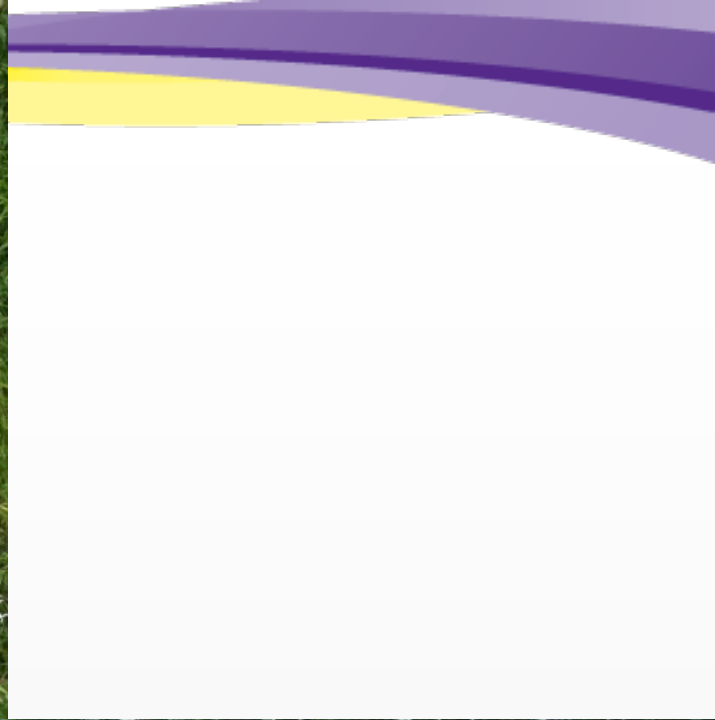
<https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention>

The Stories We Tell:

10 Commandments of Cancer Prevention

1. *Avoid tobacco in all its forms*
2. *Eat properly*
3. *Exercise regularly*
4. *Stay lean*
5. *If you choose to drink, limit yourself to an average of one drink a day*
6. *Avoid unnecessary exposure to radiation*
7. *Avoid exposure to industrial and environmental toxins*
8. *Avoid infections that contribute to cancer*
9. *Make quality sleep a priority*
10. *Get enough vitamin D*













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

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

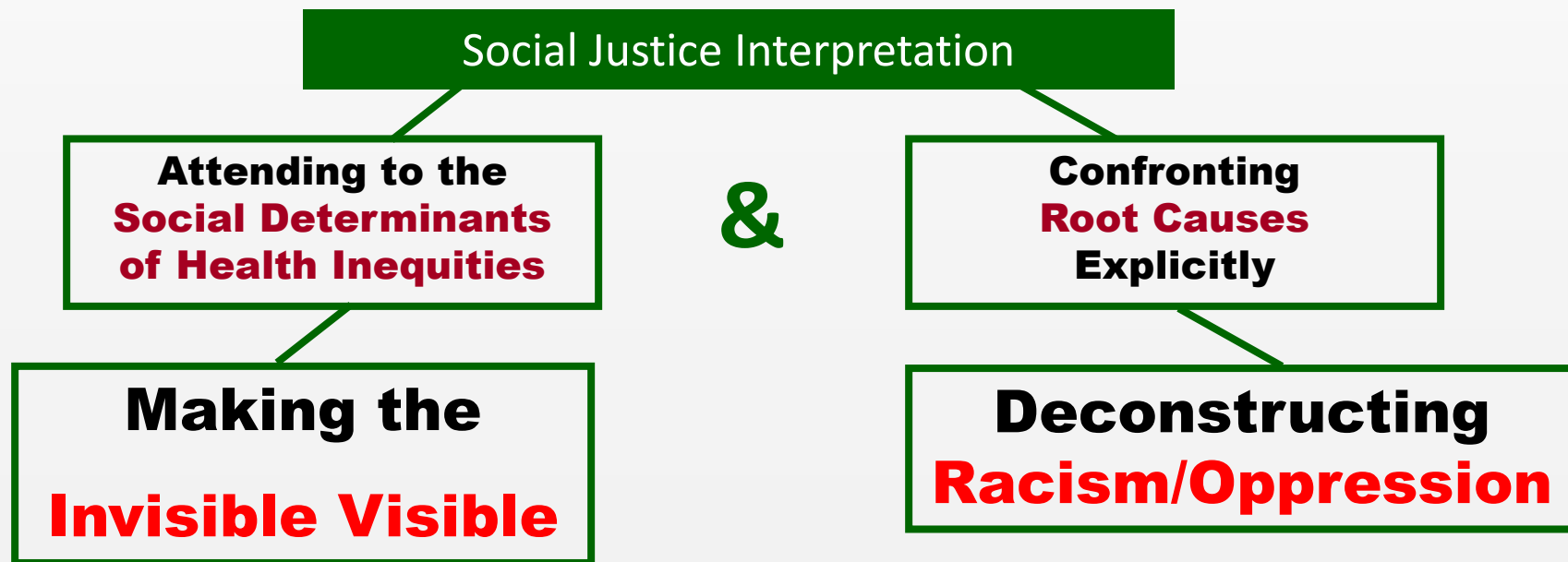
Preventing Environmental Exposures

Cancer 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



Advancing Health Equity

What does change look like?

Seeing Differently

What does change sound like?

Saying Differently

What does change act like?

Doing Differently

Be Cool, Follow The Rules

Not Cool

Not Cool

POOL RULES

1. Lifeguards are in charge when on duty.
Swimming is at your own risk.
Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult while using the pool.
Even during lifeguard hours.
No running on the deck, please walk.
No diving in the shallow end of the pool.
No pushing or throwing objects into the pool.
No glass or food within 10 feet of the pool.

Cool

Not Cool

Not Cool

Cool

Not Cool



American
Red Cross



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“SAYING DIFFERENTLY”

Building a Shared Vocabulary

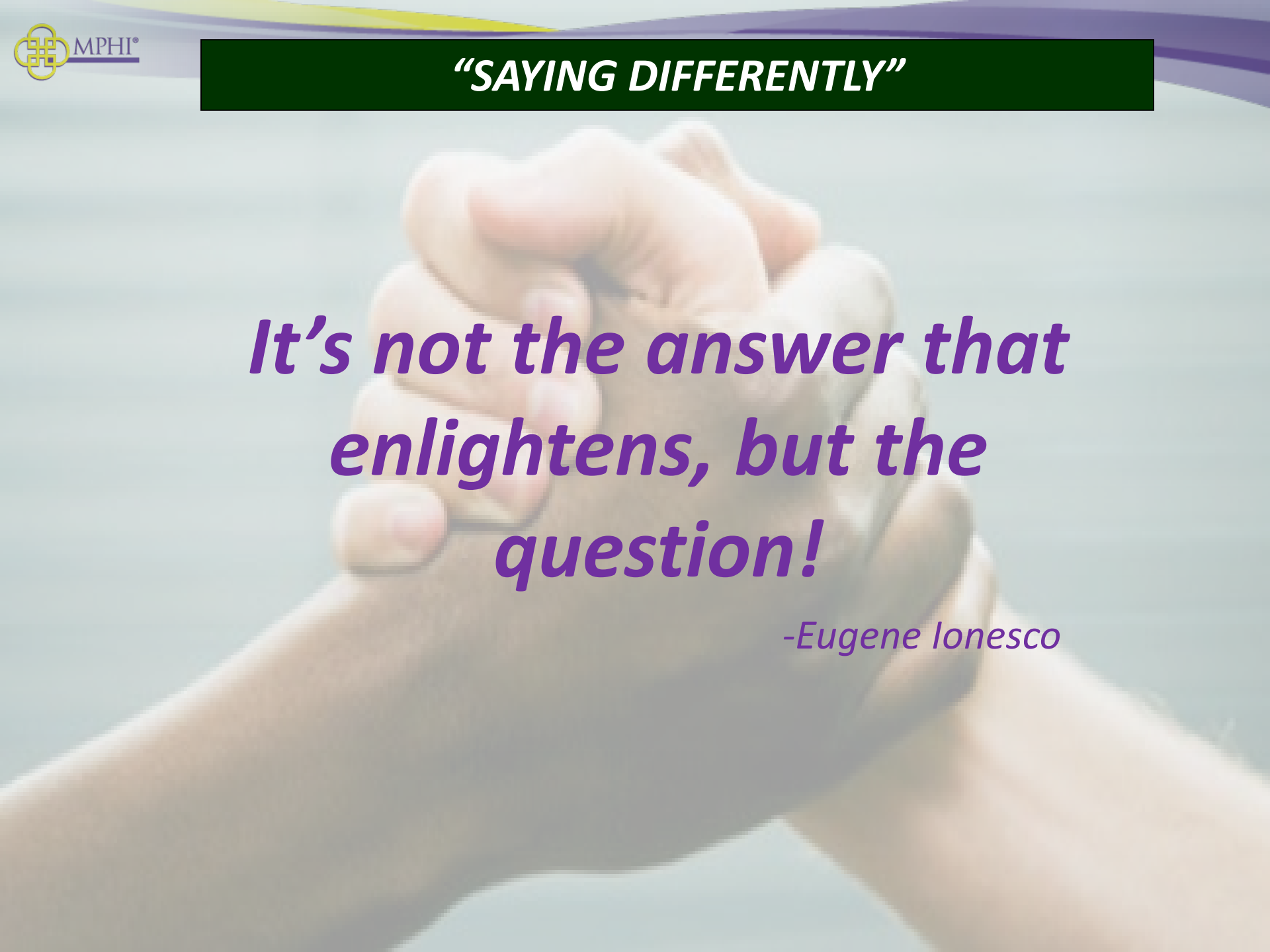
Health Disparity

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”

A background image showing two hands of different skin tones clasped together in a firm grip, symbolizing unity and strength. The hands are positioned centrally, with fingers interlaced.

***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?

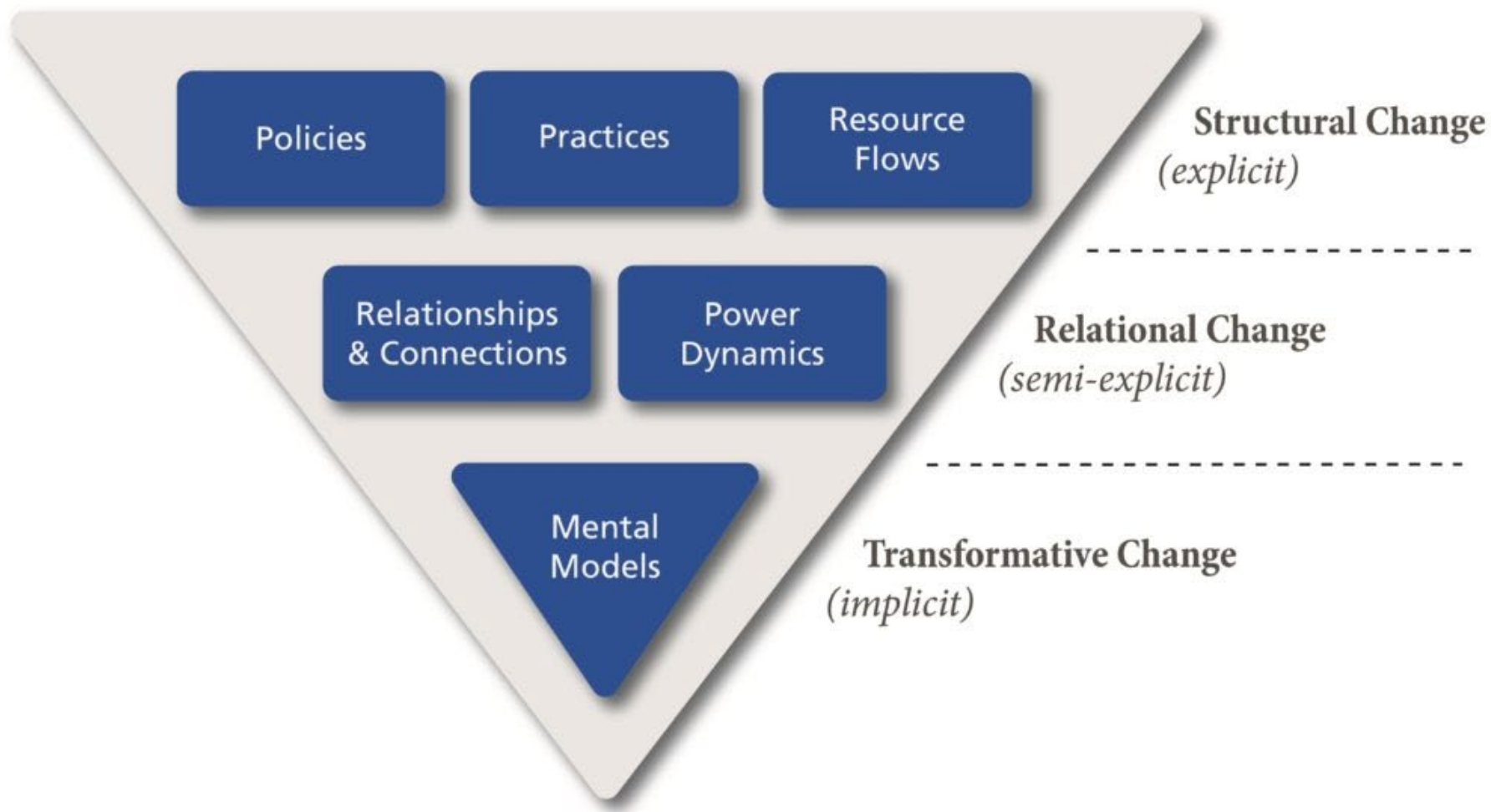
What institutional policies and practices maintain rather than counteract people's access to cancer screening and supports?

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

RECOGNIZING 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."

Six Conditions of Systems Change



“DOING DIFFERENTLY”

Health Equity Leaders

Mission & Controversy

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

Getting Upstream as Mainstream

Recognize that treating the consequences of inequity through programs and services **alone** will never eliminate health inequity.

Mandate a re-examination of public health priorities, practices, and the use of resources.

Communicate **facts** about the **forces that produce or undermine health** to their constituencies, responsible public institutions, and political leaders.

Develop a policy agenda for health equity and identify **strategic activities** with constituencies that support this agenda.

Engage with communities to develop their capacity and resources to participate fully in social and political processes.



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

THE MANDATE

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

-The Apostle Paul



Thank you!

Renée Branch Canady, PhD, MPA

CEO, MPHI

rcanady@mphi.org