

# UNNATURAL CAUSES

...is inequality making us sick?

Research has shown that health is more than healthcare, behaviors, and genes—that the social conditions in which we are born, live and work actually get under the skin as surely as germs and viruses do. What can we do to help reframe the nation's debate over health and to address the root causes of our devastating socio-economic and racial health inequities?

**Here are a few ideas you can use to get started and encourage others to become involved in working towards health equity:**

- **Identify and connect people** interested in the root causes of health inequities.
- **Organize a “brown bag” screening** to discuss how social conditions—where we are born, live, work and play—impact health.
- **Form a committee** to identify assets, programs, or initiatives within your organization where you can use the series to educate, organize or advocate for health equity.
- **Screen and discuss the series** with PTAs, book clubs, neighborhood associations, churches, tenants groups, racial justice groups, and trade unions.
- **Identify three existing struggles** in your community that can improve health equity, e.g., land use, a living wage, paid sick leave, affordable housing mandates, toxic clean-ups, lead paint removal, etc. How can you become a partner?
- **Conduct an audit** of health threats and health promoters in your neighborhood.
- **Identify and build strategic partnerships** with community-based organizations and organizations in other sectors; link health outcomes to housing, education, employment, political power and other arenas.
- **Form** a community-wide health equity coalition.
- **Ask your public health department** to conduct a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) on proposed development projects and government initiatives and ordinances.
- **Provide local media with facts and resources** so they can incorporate a health equity lens in their reporting; help them identify a message point person to provide quotes, analysis and additional information.
- **Broaden the discussion:** look for opportunities to submit op ed articles, letters to the editor, call in to radio talk shows, and form discussion groups.
- **Organize a policy forum** to brief officials in government agencies about the social determinants of health inequities.

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