



# Making the Case for Systems Change

---

Building Public Will to Achieve Health Equity

**Dr. Tiffany Manuel**

Email: [DrT@TheCaseMade.com](mailto:DrT@TheCaseMade.com)

Presentation Notes

*“Building the public will necessary to transform the systems that shape health outcomes in our communities, is one of the most critical challenges of our time.”*

Dr. Tiffany Manuel

### Objectives for This Session of the Convening


Dr. Manuel’s session outlined three primary goals – to help session participants:

- recognize both the challenges and the importance of public will building around health equity
- rethink how they are currently making the case for health equity
- identify areas where their casemaking could be leveraged to strengthen public support.

### Now, more than ever, we need to invest in building public will.

The work to build the public will to advance health equity may be tougher than many of us realize. While we are lifting data, policy and programmatic solutions, we are often missing the opportunity to change the narrative about *why* health equity matters; *what* “health

equity” means; *why* health equity is a shared public concern; and *what* systems changes are needed to advance better health outcomes for all.


 **Too often we let our data, research and evidence stand-in for a strong call-to-action. And when we do, it often backfires. That is, our data ultimately becomes the negative flash point for people who feel disconnected from these issues more generally, or who disagree with the broader agenda around equity.**

We often overestimate the extent to which data, research and evidence can move public support for action. Surely, data are important for designing, implementing and evaluating health equity programs, but they must be embedded in a broader effort to make the case for equity and systems change, if they are to be helpful in elevating public support.


*“...the more problematic issue here is that the economic plight of low-income Americans is worsening, and we do not have the public support we need to scale policies that would improve their well-being and transform the racially/ethnically segregated neighborhoods in which they live....”*

Dr. Tiffany Manuel

*Who Gets to Live Where, and Why? The Answer May Be Settled by Our Narratives*

 **Building public will around equity requires us to be more intentional about HOW we make the case for systems change.**

As advocates for health equity, we have all learned and mastered the art of making the case for change by presenting logical arguments with our data and evidence. However logical those arguments are, they miss the mark when they do not recognize and anticipate how those arguments will be received by public audiences – audiences who already have predisposed beliefs about how the world works. Our task is to be intentional about how we make the case for health equity – at very least to do no harm and at most, to change the public conversation in ways that lift up the need for systems change.

 **If our goal is to build public support for equity, we need to redefine what it means to “make the case” for the policies, programs and investments we know would help.**

At the most basic level, effective casemaking to support systems change is defined and shaped by several principles.

## case • making


[keys-mey-king] *noun*

**1:** the act of making a convincing or persuasive argument about how the world can ought to work to advance equity and the collective responsibility we have to manifest that world through intentional systems change work.

**2:** enrolling support from key stakeholders in a course of action, a way of thinking, or new belief system by limiting social distance.


*“Achieving health equity in our communities is only possible to the extent that we can convince others that it is a goal worthy of collective and corrective action.”*

Dr. Tiffany Manuel


 **The good news is that there are a number of evidence-based strategies for strengthening how we make the case for systems change.**

Dr. Manuel introduced several evidence-based elements of effective casemaking:

- Establishing Trust, Belonging & Stake from the Start
- Creating a sense of *“We”* & *“Why”*, Before *“What”* or *“How Many”*
- Carefully navigating the dominant narratives the often reduce support for collective solutions
- Using our data to anchor solutions, not to further credential the problems we are trying to mitigate
- Positioning equity as a “systems problem (a challenge for smart, adaptive leaders to solve, NOT a challenge of failed or flawed people)
- Telling the “Story of Us” rather than the “Story of Marginalized People”
- Reposition listeners in the context of our collective future.

 **Effective casemaking does not mean that we’re able to convince everybody that equity is an important goal. It means that we are able to reshape the public conversation so that those whose opinions can be redirected, will be.**

It is unrealistic to expect that our improved practice of casemaking will impact all people in the same way. While we won’t win over everybody with a more thoughtful casemaking approach, we **HAVE TO** win over some of them. When deployed effectively, casemaking can be instrumental in building stronger public support for equity by reducing the social distance or disconnection they feel from the issues we are raising as advocates.

 **I was there the day the conversation changed...**

Change does not happen overnight, but the best way to judge if your casemaking redirections are working is by listening to the public conversation on the other side of it.

Additional casemaking resources by Dr. Manuel:

- [Anchoring to Strengthen Your Region's Case for Systems Change](#)
  - [Who Gets to Live Where, and Why? The Answer May Be Settled By Our Narratives](#)
  - [Triumph over NIMBY attitudes is not only possible, but necessary](#)
  - [Using Data to Create Opportunity](#)
  - [Finding, Measuring, and Addressing Urban Equity](#)
- 

For more information about trainings, workshops, consulting and resources around casemaking, email Dr. Manuel at: [DrT@TheCaseMade.com](mailto:DrT@TheCaseMade.com)



Our mission is to transform communities all over the world by helping leaders build the public will to intentionally tackle the issues of equity and inclusion. We work across sectors and issue areas to help leaders understand the power of effective casemaking and to use it as a critical instrument for systems change. Our approach is to use trainings, workshops, community engagement and consulting to deliver resources that are transformative. Connect with us through our website, social media or email - @TheCaseMade.