

# Meeting women where they are: Using social media to reduce Black women's exposures to toxic chemicals in consumer products



**SILENT SPRING INSTITUTE**  
Researching the Environment and Women's Health



**Resilient  
Sisterhood  
Project**

A Window into Women's Reproductive Health and Wellness

## ***Silent Spring Institute***

Silent Spring Institute is a leading scientific research organization dedicated to understanding the links between environmental chemicals and women's health.



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## ***Resilient Sisterhood Project***

RSP is a non-profit organization raising awareness and empowering women and young adults of African descent affected by diseases of the reproductive system.



A Window into Women's Reproductive Health and Wellness

# Why study products used by Black women?



## Black women

- suffer more from hormone-related health problems including **fibroids, infertility, pre-term birth, early puberty**, and increasing rates of **breast and endometrial cancers**
- have **higher levels** of many personal care product chemicals in their bodies
- use more/different** personal care products than other women



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*Helm, J. S., et al. (2018). Environmental Research, 165, 448-458.*

# Environmental injustice of beauty

External factors	Vulnerable populations	Product use	Chemical exposures	Potential adverse outcomes
Colorism	Dark-skinned people	Skin-lightening cream	Mercury	Mercury poisoning, neurotoxicity, kidney damage
Texturism	People of African descent	Chemical hair modifiers	Paraben and estrogenic chemicals	Uterine fibroids, premature puberty, endocrine disruption
Odor discrimination	African American people	Douches and other intimate care products	Phthalates and talc powder	Gynecologic cancers and endocrine disruption

Adapted from Zota & Shamasunder. *Beauty products, environmental chemicals, health disparities. Am. J. Obstet. Gynecol.* 2017.



# First study to test hair products used by black women



- Found 45 of 66 targeted chemicals
- Multiple endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs) per product (4-30)
- Some concentrations higher compared to other products
- Found seven chemicals regulated in CA or banned in EU cosmetics
- The highest levels of five were found in hair relaxers marketed to children



## About the Product Options in Women-Engaged Research (P.O.W.E.R.) Project

# First Year of Project



1.

- Recruited 25 women to join the conversation
- Held five virtual workshops
- Discussed product use and considerations when selecting personal care products

2.

- Participants logged their product use over three days using a smartphone app
- App users entered information about their products and frequency of use
- We inventoried products logged

3.

- Held two follow-up workshops
- Shared summaries of the discussions and app-inventoried products
- Discussed recommendations to limit exposures to harmful chemicals in consumer products

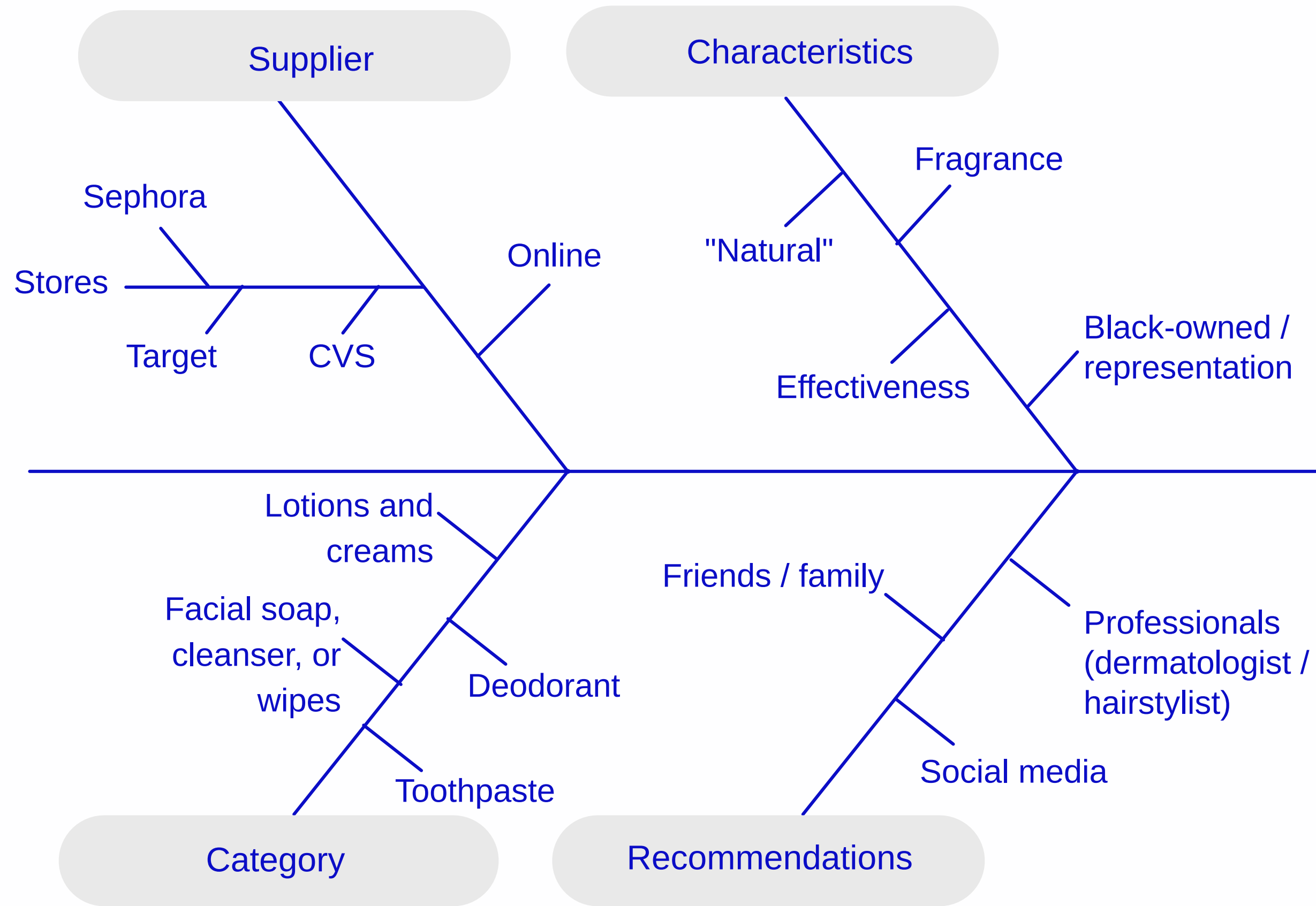


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# Product Use



# Second Year of the Project



1

Identified 50 social media creators across multiple niches

2

Pitched over 30 creators to be a part of the POWER team

3

Onboarded a team of 10 social media influencers





# Production team



Karina

@dr.karinab

Health | Beauty



Jo

@jawms

Beauty | Lifestyle



Kristen

@thepolecologistphd

Pole fitness | Liberation



Robyn

@robymneal

Food | Lifestyle



Lisa

@fitlisag

Fitness | Health



Korie

@teamkorie

Science | Lifestyle



Camille

@iamcamillesmith

Beauty | STEM



Beverly

@curlybeviie

Beauty | Lifestyle



N'Dea

@bmekween

Sustainability | Lifestyle



Ijeoma

@ijeomakola

Lifestyle | Empowerment

## Influencer Deliverables

Attend interactive and informational workshop

Create and post 1-2 content pieces for social media

Share a survey with their audience

Report post analytics and audience feedback





**Tip #1: REASSESS**  
*Check the labels of your haircare and beauty products. Be on the lookout for things like phthalates, parabens, and fragrances. Be especially mindful of hair lotions and children's relaxers, which have been shown to have the highest levels of harmful chemicals.*

**Tip #2: RESTORE**  
*Eating more fresh fruits can reduce your exposure to certain chemicals, so load up on those apples, bananas, and mangos, or whatever your favorite fruits are and skip the processed foods!*

**Tip #3: REDECORATE**  
*In the market for a new couch? Make sure you ask for upholstered furniture without flame retardant chemicals. Also, ditch vinyl (shower curtains, flooring, toys, etc).*

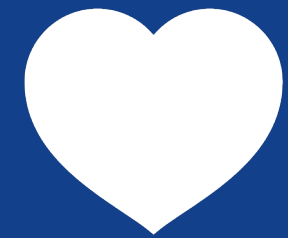
@IJEOMAKOLA | #POWEREJPROJECT

reduce chemical exposures

# Instagram Post Metrics



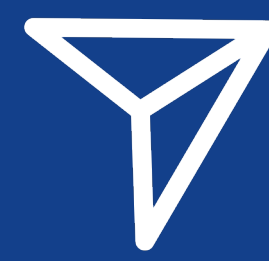
25,000+ Views



1800+ Likes



80+ Saves



60+ Shares

Like, Comment, Share, and Save icons

Liked by amay0516 and others

ijeomakola What do haircare products, processed foods, and furniture have in common? 🤔

Like, Comment, Share, and Save icons

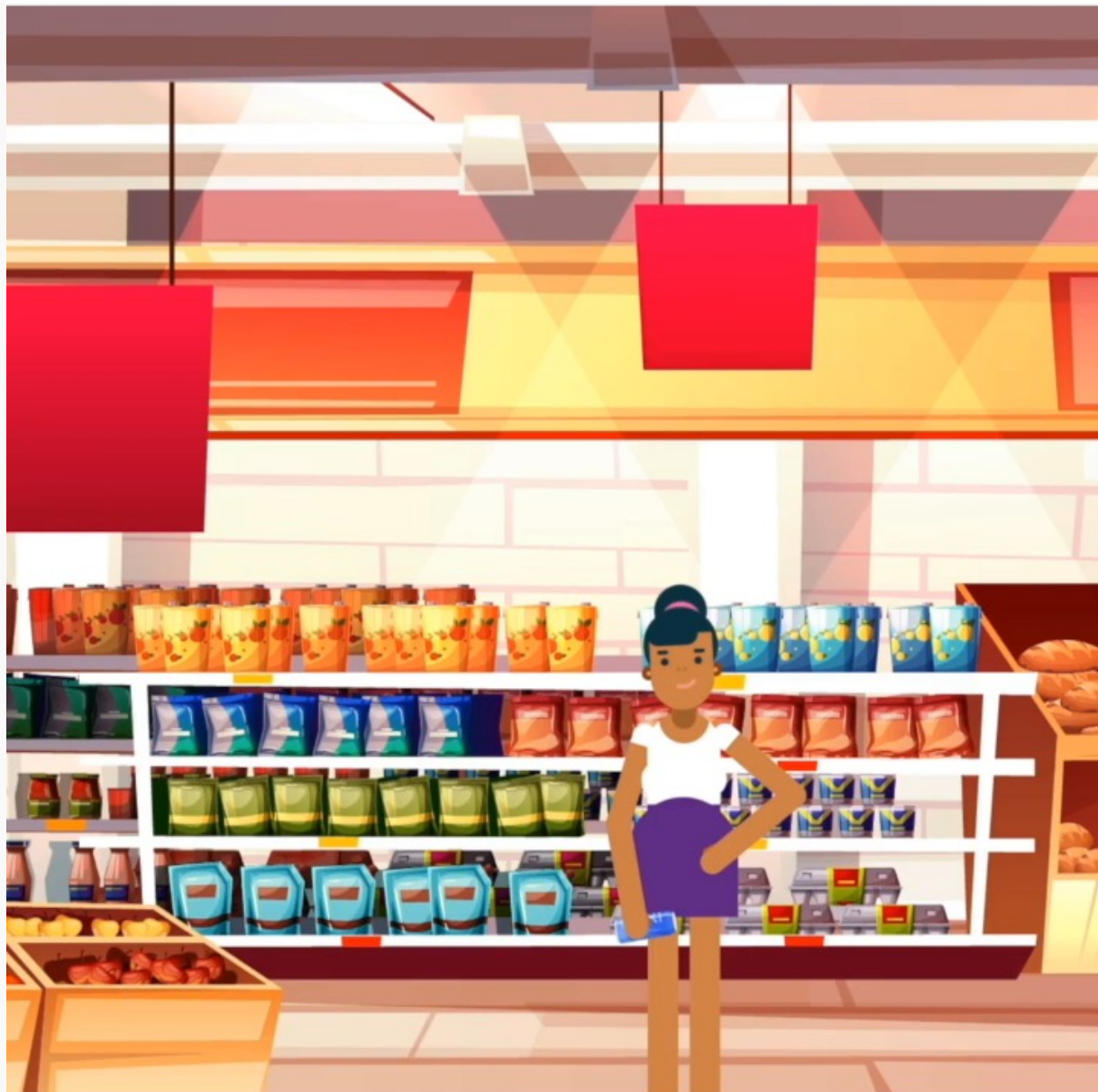
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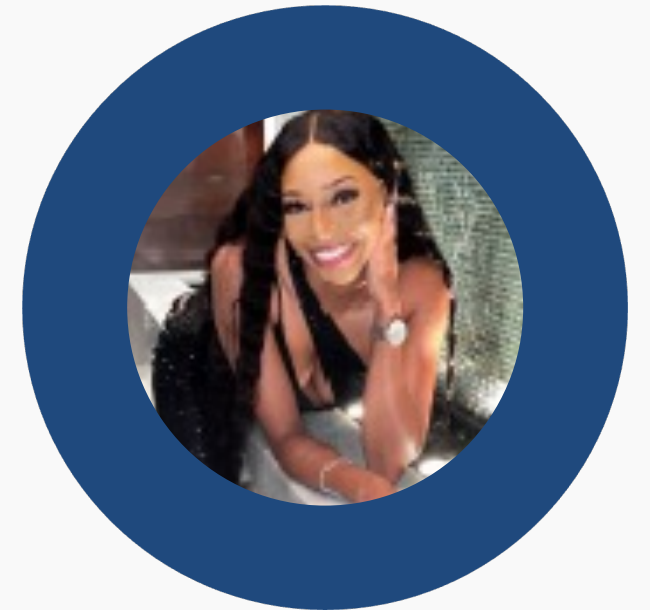
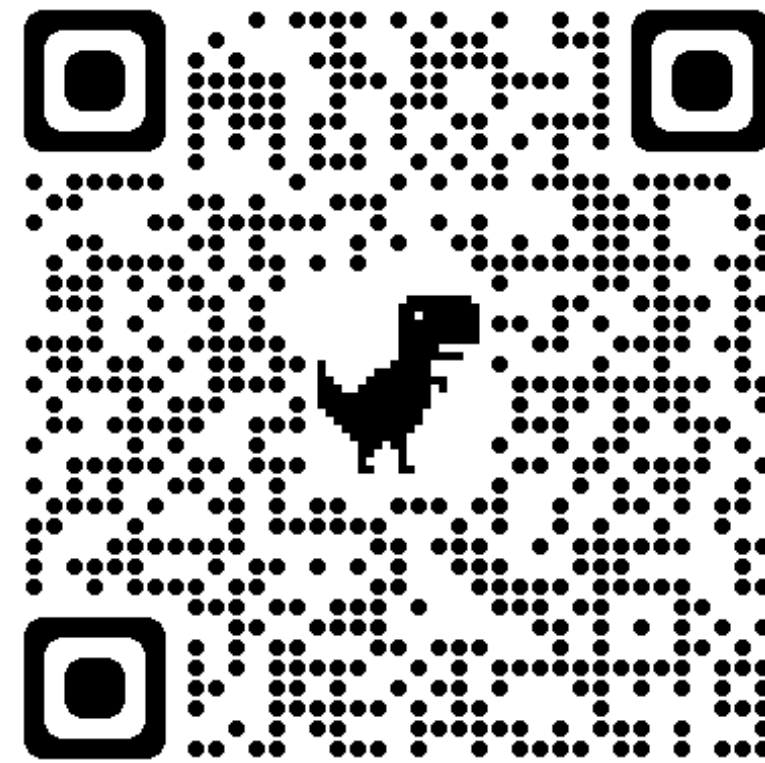
**DID**

**YOU**

**KNOW?**



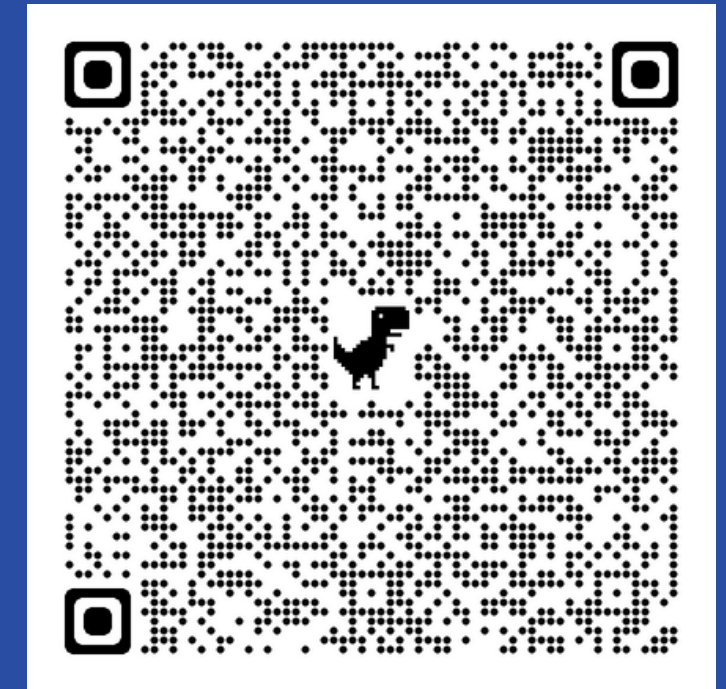
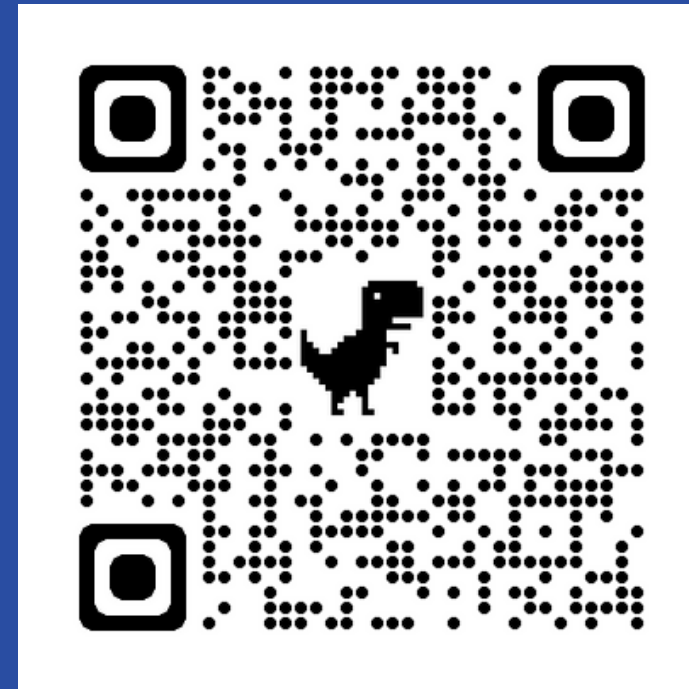
@RobynMNeal



**Robyn**

@robynmneal  
Instagram Reel

# A wide range of content is being created



N'De  
@bmeekween  
TikTok



Beverl  
@curlybeviie  
Beauty | Lifestyle



Kori  
@teakorie  
LinkedIn

# Audience feedback

**74%**

Increased their concern about how chemicals in products may affect their health

**83%**

Previously heard about chemicals in products affecting health

**43%**

May start avoiding chemicals of health concern in the products that they purchase

Based on 146 survey participants

“ So true and very personal for me since I have also had similar struggles! Thanks for sharing and working towards educating more black women about how we can take more informed care of our bodies. 🙌❤️ ”

“ Thanks, [...] for this Call to Action! [...] This beautiful reminder recharges us to take ownership. ”

“ I really love this! I’m really critical about what I put in and put on my body but I still have so much to learn about the different chemicals that go into these everyday products.. ”

From LinkedIn and Instagram viewer comments

# Our impact

## Metrics



114,000+

Views



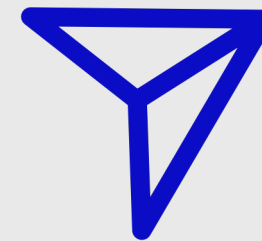
8900+

Likes



900+

Saves



1700+

Shares

# Organizing Team

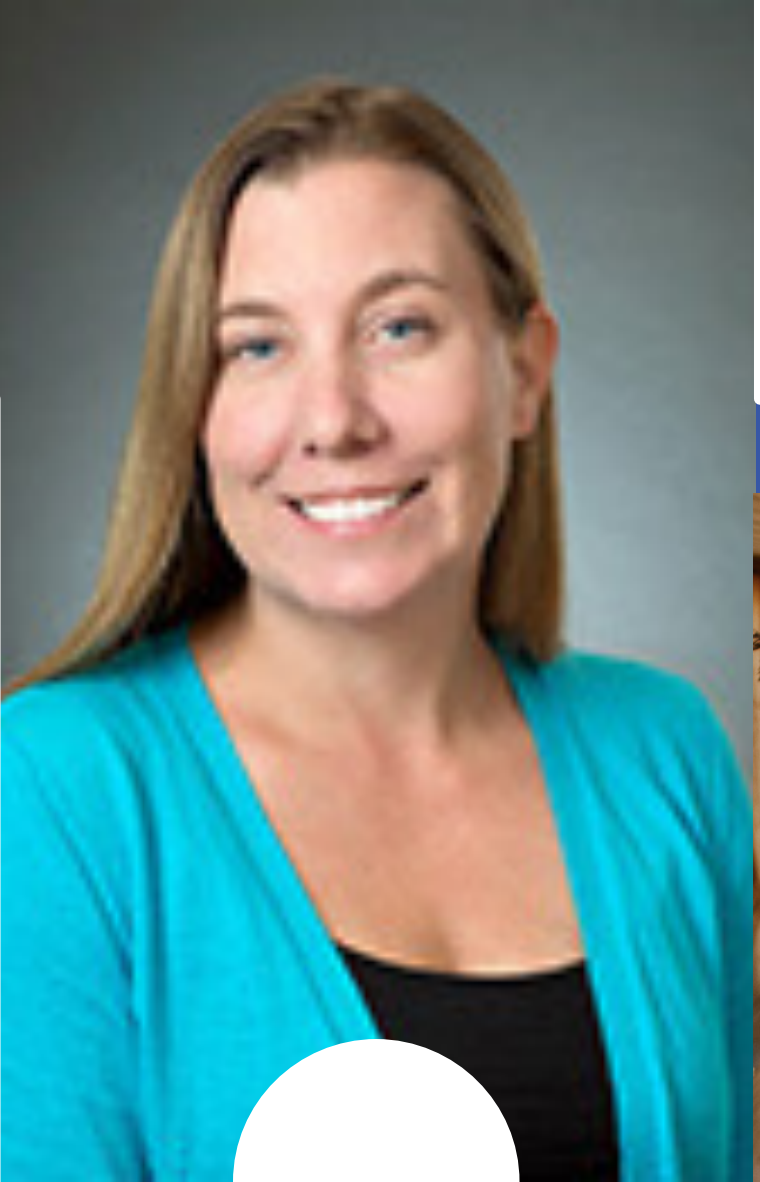
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