Meeting women where they are: Using social media to reduce Black women’s exposures to toxic chemicals in consumer products
Silent Spring Institute is a leading scientific research organization dedicated to understanding the links between environmental chemicals and women’s health.

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.
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

# Environmental injustice of beauty

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

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

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

About the Product Options in Women-Engaged Research (P.O.W.E.R.) Project
Stores
- Sephora
- Target
- CVS

Online

Characteristics
- "Natural"
- Fragrance
- Effectiveness
- Black-owned / representation

Supplier

Category
- Lotions and creams
- Facial soap, cleanser, or wipes
- Deodorant
- Toothpaste

Recommendations
- Friends / family
- Social media
- Professionals (dermatologist / hairstylist)

Product Use
- P.O.W.E.R. Project
- CVS
- Effectiveness
- Professionals (dermatologist / hairstylist)

Supplier

Characteristics

Category

Recommendations
Second Year of the Project

1. Identified 50 social media content 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
@robynmneal
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.).
A wide range of content is being created
## Audience feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>74%</td>
<td>Increased their concern about how chemicals in products may affect their health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83%</td>
<td>Previously heard about chemicals in products affecting health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43%</td>
<td>May start avoiding chemicals of health concern in the products that they purchase</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on 146 survey participants

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"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."
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our impact</th>
<th>Metrics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Eye Icon]</td>
<td>114,000+ Views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Heart Icon]</td>
<td>8900+ Likes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Bookmark Icon]</td>
<td>900+ Saves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Share Icon]</td>
<td>1700+ Shares</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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