

I am an afro-Latina and a life-long resident of the Northern Manhattan community. As a research worker at the Columbia Center for Children's Environmental Health, I have had the opportunity to work in a longitudinal study with participants that primarily reside in Northern Manhattan, and the South Bronx: "Low-income communities of color." These communities have often been burdened with disparate exposures to harmful chemicals, poor health outcomes, and less access to resources and education. There is regularly an association of need, and powerlessness ascribed to these communities, to my community, yet there is also tremendous strength here.

One of the most important things to me, as a research worker, is recognizing the strength in the families we work with, our participants' perseverance, their ability to progress, and using the means at their disposal to thrive and grow. Many of our participants understand the importance of the research, particularly of having research that reflects their community and their voices, to help future generations be healthier.

We are working every day to learn about the harmful effects of chemicals and the disparate burden that many of our participants often bear. Rather than being overwhelmed by these disparities, we are increasingly working together with our participants to learn how to best reduce these gaps in information and access. We use the research to translate knowledge into action and effect change through education to our participants, the community, and through partnership with community agencies and environmental justice organizations.

I am incredibly excited by some of our new community outreach and translation initiatives, including a Youth council with participants 18 - 23 that we have launched this year. It has been a fantastic opportunity to engage our cohort youth, learn about issues of importance to them, and encourage those most affected by issues to identify the possible solutions. - Anabel Cole, CCCEH Officer of Research and COTC Project Coordinator