

2024-2025

Introducing the Community Research Team



Meet the **exceptional team members**
that led the **strategic planning process**
for the Commission on Racial Equity in
Public Health

Health Disparities Institute (HDI) Staff



Linda Sprague Martinez, PhD

HDI Director

Focus: All people deserve the opportunity to thrive and that can't happen until we have systems designed to work for everyone. I am tired of hearing the system is broken, "it works for those it was designed to work for."

Strength: Engaging community members including young people in research and action.

Valen R. Diaz, MPH, MCHES

Projects Director

Focus: Racial equity is the most urgent need of our society. I do this work to contribute in my own small way to making a more just world, one that I want to live in and my children – and future generations – to grow up in.

Strength: Strategic thinking.



Trisha Pitter, MS

Director of Community Learning, Engagement, and Instructional Design

Focus: Systemic racism still impacts health, education, and economic opportunities, especially for Black, Hispanic, and immigrant communities. I use my voice and skills to help shift power, challenge injustice, and build solutions.

Strength: Creating social learning spaces, design thinking, and relationship building.

HDI Staff



Gillian Betz, MPH

Research Associate 1

Focus: To address health disparities, this work must be led by those most impacted. Data-driven community action is key to advance systemic change.

Strength: Motivation and active listening

Zaire Bartholomew, MPH

Research Associate 1

Focus: My commitment to racial equity stems from a deep passion for supporting people from all backgrounds in living safe, fulfilling, and joyful lives. Engaging in this work allows me to actively contribute to shaping a world where that vision can become a reality

Strength: The ability to translate academic research into accessible content for various communities.



Emil Coman, PhD

Assistant Professor and (Bio)Statistician

Focus: I specialize in applying precise research methods and statistics to investigate inequities, particularly in health. I focus on questions about the causes of inequities and disparities.

Strength: Extracting actionable evidence from descriptions of nuanced lived-experience information and combining that with numerical data.

Community Research Advisors



Amber Parker
(Norwich/New London)

Focus: Addressing societal views of ethnic races and the everyday impacts of disparities.

Strength: Motivation.

Katia Ruesta-Daley, MSW
(Windham/Willimantic)

Focus: Ensuring access to resources and dignity for all, uplifting marginalized voices for meaningful change.

Strength: Empathy.



Stephanie Lazarus, MPA
(Windham/Willimantic)

Focus: Advocating for marginalized individuals in the behavioral health field.

Strength: Lived experience and two decades of professional expertise with diverse populations.

Community Research Advisors



Leslie M. Brown, BS
(New Haven)

Focus: Amplifying the voices of the community and bringing them to the legislative table, where their perspectives can drive meaningful change in racial equity, ultimately improving community health, wellness, and prosperity.

Strength: Years of experience in community health, compassion, empathy, and a get it done attitude.

Amber M. Costin
(New Haven)

Focus: Driving transformation in the community and creating a legacy for future generations.

Strength: Ability to curate ideas.

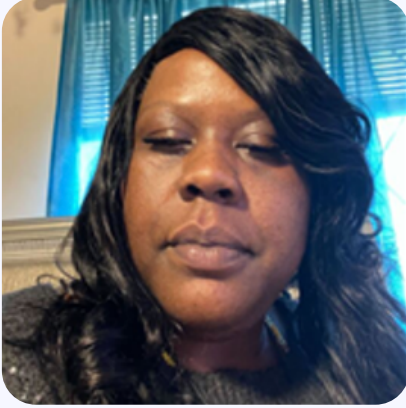


Millie Landock, BA, CCHW
(Bridgeport)

Focus: Helping eliminate disparities and improve outcomes through active participation.

Strength: Compassion.

Community Research Advisors



Quiana Mayo
(Hartford)

Focus: Eliminating racial disparities, improving outcomes, and advocating for policy and law changes.
Strength: Empathy.

Teth Pickens
(Hartford)



Community Faculty



Armando Jimenez

(Bridgeport/New Haven)

Focus: Believing in the potential of individuals and providing the right support to help them make a change.

Strength: Ability to encourage confidence.

Yadley Turnier, MPH

(Bridgeport/New Haven)

Focus: Witnessing the impact of racial inequity on family health and using public health and data analysis skills to drive change.

Strength: Analyzing and interpreting complex data to uncover disparities and inform equity-focused strategies.



Jennifer Ibarra, MPH

(Norwich/New London)

Focus: Building a better future for family, neighbors, and children, especially in terms of health outcomes and living environments.

Strength: Research experience and being a collaborative team player.

Community Faculty



DeLita Rose-Daniels, CHW
(Middletown & Windham/Willimantic)

Focus: Advocating for health equity, where quality of life is not determined by race, ethnicity, or zip code.

Strength: Creativity and boldness.

Pastor André L. McGuire, BA, JD
(Waterbury & Hartford)

Focus: Standing up for those coming behind, inspired by personal experiences and the support of those who have come before.

Strength: Personal experience combined with legal and pastoral background, years of advocacy, and training.

