TOBACCO COMPANY MARKETING TO AFRICAN AMERICANS

"We don't smoke that s_ _ _. We just sell it. We reserve the right to smoke for the young, the poor, the black and stupid."[1]

R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company Executive

The tobacco industry has a long history of going to great lengths to target the African-American community. Decades of research affirms patterns of strategic marketing to African Americans through point-of-sale marketing, price discounts, branding, and traditional advertising venues, particularly for mentholated tobacco products and cheap little cigars and cigarillos. As a result of market research, the cigarette companies know that most African-American smokers prefer menthol cigarettes and they exploit this preference in their marketing efforts to African Americans, in general, and to African-American kids, in particular, as evidenced by internal industry documents:

Philip Morris: *"Marlboro would probably have a very difficult time getting anywhere in the young black market. The odds against it there are heavy. Young blacks have found their thing, and it's menthol in general and Kool in particular."[2]*

RJ Reynolds: *"Since younger adult Blacks overwhelmingly prefer menthol cigarettes, continued emphasis on Salem within the Black market is recommended. Salem is already positioned against younger adults. With emphasis on the younger adult Black market, Salem may be able to provide an alternative to Newport and capitalize on Kool's decline."[3]*

The industry's "investment" in the African-American community has had a destructive impact: African Americans suffer the greatest burden of tobacco-related mortality of any ethnic or racial group in the United States.[4] Research shows that tobacco company advertising and other marketing efforts greatly influence tobacco use initiation among youth non-smokers and is associated with increased tobacco consumption among youth who have already become regular smokers.[5] Nearly 80 percent of all smokers start before the age of 18 and, not surprisingly, the vast majority of kids smoke the three most heavily advertised brands. [6] One of these heavily advertised brands, Newport, is the cigarette brand leader among African-American youth in the United States. Nearly two-thirds of African American youth smokers prefer Newport cigarettes.[7]

Targeting African Americans at the Point of Sale

For decades, tobacco companies have specifically targeted minority communities, particularly African-Americans, with intense advertising and promotional efforts. A wealth of research indicates that African American neighborhoods have a disproportionate number of tobacco retailers, pervasive tobacco marketing, and in particular, more marketing of menthol products.[8]

Like many minority and low-income neighborhoods, African American neighborhoods tend to have more tobacco retailers:

- Nationwide, census tracts with a greater proportion of African American residents have higher tobacco retailer density.[9]
- A 2010 study of Boston tobacco retailers found that tobacco retailer density *near schools* is higher in minority or lower-income communities.[10] This is disturbing given that a higher density of such retailers near schools has been found to increase experimental smoking among high school students.[11]

Unfortunately, some evidence indicates that stores in African American neighborhoods are also more likely to sell to youth, increasing accessibility of these products to minors:

- A 2015 Washington, DC study found that illicit sales to minors were more common in retailers located closer to high schools in African American neighborhoods.[12]

- A 2014 California study found that stores in neighborhoods with more African Americans are less likely to request age identification.[13]

In addition to having more tobacco retailers, research indicates that African American communities tend to have more tobacco marketing:

- A 2013 study of retail outlets in Washington, DC found that exterior advertising for little cigars and cigarillos is significantly more prevalent in African American neighborhoods.[14] A 2015 study echoed these findings for exterior advertising of all tobacco products in DC.[15]

- A 2013 study of tobacco retail outlets in St. Louis found more tobacco advertising, including more menthol advertising, in areas with a greater proportion of African American residents.[16] Another 2013 study found similar patterns in Ramsey County, Minnesota.[17]

- A 1998 study in Los Angeles found that compared with White neighborhood thoroughfares, African American and Hispanic neighborhoods contained greater tobacco ad density, and all minority neighborhoods contained greater tobacco ad concentration along roadsides.[18]

- Studies from 1990-1998 found that there were 2.6 times as many tobacco advertisements per person in areas with an African American majority compared to white-majority areas.[19]

Disparities in advertising of tobacco products are particularly evident for menthol cigarette brands, which African Americans use more than any other racial or ethnic group:

- The 2011 California Tobacco Advertising Survey reports that there were significantly more menthol advertisements at stores in neighborhoods with a higher proportion of African-American residents and in low-income neighborhoods.[20]

- Another 2011 California study found that as the proportion of African-American high school students in a neighborhood rose, the proportion of menthol advertising increased, the odds of a Newport promotion were higher, and the cost of Newport cigarettes was lower.[21]

In addition to being heavily advertised and widely available, certain tobacco products have been found to be priced lower in African American communities, making them more appealing, particularly to price-sensitive youth:

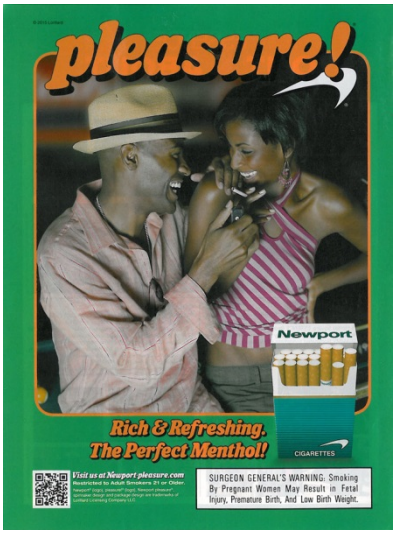
- A 2011 study of cigarette prices in retail stores across the U.S. found that Newport cigarettes are significantly less expensive in neighborhoods with higher proportions of African Americans.[22]

- A 2013 study of retail outlets in Washington, DC found that little cigars and cigarillos are more available and cheaper in African American neighborhoods.[23]

Appealing to African Americans through Branding

There is compelling evidence that tobacco companies not only advertise disproportionately in communities with large African-American populations, they also create advertising specifically targeted to these communities. Cigarette ads highly prevalent in African-American communities and publications are often characterized by slogans, relevant and specific messages, or images that have a great appeal among those in the black community or depict African Americans in an appealing light.[24] Contrary to how

blacks are typically portrayed in the media, cigarette ads portray images of African Americans who are happy, confident, successful and wealthy, in love, attractive, strong and independent.[25]



Newport advertisement in *Essence Magazine*, February 2015
Image courtesy of TrinketsandTrash.Org

Targeting African Americans through Magazine Advertisements

The tobacco industry is relentless in its promotion of menthol cigarettes to minorities. Expenditures for magazine advertising of mentholated cigarettes, popular with African Americans, increased from 13 percent of total ad expenditures in 1998 to 76 percent in 2006.[26] During the two years after the Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) in November 1998, the average annual expenditures for Newport in magazines with high youth readership increased 13.2 percent (from $5.3 to $6.0 million).[27] Between 1998–2002, *Ebony,* a magazine tailored to the African American culture, was 9.8 times more likely than *People* to contain ads for menthols.[28]

Targeting African Americans through Event Sponsorships

Kool Mixx cigarettes, 2004
Image courtesy of Stanford Research Into the Impact of Advertising

Brown & Williamson used music as a way to target African Americans beginning in 1975 with the Kool Jazz Festival. In the 1980s, as part of the Kool Market Development Program, vans traveled through inner-city Houston to distribute free cigarette samples. The Kool City Jam, a free two-day concert, was also a part of this program.[29]

Brown & Williamson consistently used music as a way to target African Americans. In 2004, they started an ad campaign for their Kool brand cigarettes clearly aimed at youth—and African-American youth, in particular. The Kool Mixx campaign featured images of young rappers, disc jockeys and dancers on cigarette packs and in advertising. The campaign also included radio giveaways with cigarette purchases and a Hip-Hop disc jockey competition in major cities around the country. The themes, images, radio giveaways and music involved in the campaign all clearly have tremendous appeal to youth, especially African-American youth. Simultaneously, Brown & Williamson promoted a new line of cigarette flavors like Caribbean Chill, Mocha Taboo, and Midnight Berry using images of African-Americans and themes attractive to African-American youth. These cigarettes were promoted through dance clubs and hip-hop music venues.

Kool advertisement, 1984
Image courtesy of Stanford Research Into the Impact of Advertising

Tobacco Industry Support of African American Organizations

Industry documents reveal that as early as the 1950s, the tobacco industry has made concerted efforts to forge ties with the African American community in an effort to build a positive brand identity. Since the 1950s, Phillip Morris and Brown & Williamson have been engaged with the National Urban League, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the United Negro College Fund, and have provided funding and organizational support to a laundry list of African American organizations.[30] In addition, the tobacco

industry has supported historically African American colleges and universities as far back as the 1890s when RJ Reynolds helped to finance the founding of Winston Salem State University.[31] However, industry documents reveal the companies' true intentions in forming these relationships:

Brown & Williamson:	*"Clearly the sole reason for B&W's interest in the black and Hispanic communities is the actual and potential sales of B&W products within these communities and the profitability of these sales…this relatively small and often tightly knit [minority] community can work to B&W's marketing advantage, if exploited properly."*[32]
Lorillard:	*"Tie-in with any company who help black[s] – 'we help them, they help us.' Target group age 16+."*[33]

Impact of Tobacco Advertising on the African American Community

The aggressive advertising of mentholated cigarettes by the major cigarette companies has paid off in terms of brand recognition and preference. A California study found that African American students are three times more likely to recognize the Newport brand than their peers, and students of all races who recognize the Newport brand are more likely to start smoking.[34] Newport is the leading brand of cigarettes among African American youth ages 12-17 (64.3%) and young adults ages 18-25 (73.6%).[35] Preference for Camel menthol and Marlboro menthol cigarettes has increased in recent years, too, particularly among adolescents and young adults.[36]

In addition, while the percentage of youth and young adults who smoke non-menthol cigarettes decreased from 2004-2010, the percentage of youth smoking menthol cigarettes remained constant, and the percentage of young adults smoking menthol cigarettes actually increased.[37] These statistics are especially disturbing because menthol cigarettes have higher carbon monoxide concentrations than non-menthol cigarettes and may be associated with a greater absorption of nicotine.[38] Moreover, research indicates that mentholated cigarettes may increase the risk of both lung and bronchial cancer by promoting lung permeability and diffusability of smoke particles.[39]

In 2013, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) released a report that found menthol cigarettes lead to increased smoking initiation among youth and young adults, greater addiction, and decreased success in quitting smoking. The agency concluded that, "these findings, combined with the evidence indicating that menthol's cooling and anesthetic properties can reduce the harshness of cigarette smoke and the evidence indicating that menthol cigarettes are marketed as a smoother alternative to nonmenthol cigarettes, make it likely that menthol cigarettes pose a public health risk above that seen with nonmenthol cigarettes."[40]

Consequently, while smoking rates among African Americans are lower than national levels, this ethnic group suffers disproportionately from smoking-caused chronic and preventable diseases.[41] Each year, approximately 45,000 African Americans die from a smoking-caused illness. An estimated 1.6 million African Americans alive today, who are now under the age of 18, will become regular smokers; and about 500,000 of these will die prematurely from a tobacco-related disease.[42]

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, June 23, 2016 / Laura Bach

Related Campaign Fact Sheets

- *Tobacco Use and African Americans,* http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0006.pdf
- *Tobacco Company Marketing to Kids,* http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0008.pdf

---

[1] Giovanni, J, "Come to Cancer Country; USA; Focus," *The Times of London*, August 2, 1992 [quoting Dave Goerlitz, RJ Reynolds' lead Winston model for seven years, re what an R.J. Reynolds executive replied to him when Goerlitz asked why the executive did not smoke].
[2] The Roper Organization, Inc., *A Study of Smoking Habits Among Young Smokers*, Philip Morris, July 1974, Bates No. 2024921279/1313.
[3] RJR, "Consumer Research Report," May 9, 1984, Bates No. 501254820-4850, http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/cit49d00.

[4] HHS, "Tobacco Use Among US Racial/Ethnic Minority Groups—African Americans, American Indians and Alaskan Natives, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics: A Report of the Surgeon General," 1998, http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/1998/complete_report/pdfs/complete_report.pdf.

[5] HHS, *Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General,* 2012, http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/2012/. See also, National Cancer Institute, *The Role of the Media in Promoting and Reducing Tobacco Use,* Smoking and Tobacco Control Monograph No. 19, NIH Pub. No. 07-6242, June 2008, http://cancercontrol.cancer.gov/tcrb/monographs/19/m19_complete.pdf. Pucci, LG & Siegel, M, "Exposure to brand-specific cigarette advertising in magazines and its impact on youth smoking," *Preventive Medicine* 29(5):313-20, November 1999; Sargent, JD, et al., "Effect of seeing tobacco use in films on trying smoking among adolescents: a cross sectional study," *British Medical Journal* 323(7326):1394-7, December 15, 2001.

[6] HHS. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2014. ICPSR36361-v1. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2016-03-22. http://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR36361.v1. See also, HHS, "Preventing Tobacco Use Among Young People: A Report of the Surgeon General," 1994, http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/sgr_1994/index.htm. CDC, "Cigarette Brand Preference Among Middle and High School Students Who Are Established Smokers – United States, 2004 and 2006," *MMWR,* 58(No.5); 112-115, February 13, 2009, http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5805a3.htm.

[7] HHS. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2014. ICPSR36361-v1. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2016-03-22. http://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR36361.v1. See also, CDC, "Cigarette Brand Preference Among Middle and High School Students Who Are Established Smokers – United States, 2004 and 2006," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)* 58(5), February 13, 2009 http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/wk/mm5805.pdf; Sutton, CD, "Newport: 'Fastest Growing Cigarette in the Country,'" The Onyx Group, [updated] January 30, 2002, http://www.onyx-group.com/Newport.htm.

[8] Lee, JGL, et al., "A Systematic Review of Neighborhood Disparities in Point-of-Sale Tobacco Marketing," *American Journal of Public Health*, published online ahead of print July 16, 2015.

[9] Rodriguez, D, et al., "Predictors of tobacco outlet density nationwide: a geographic analysis," *Tobacco Control,* published online first on April 4, 2012.

[10] Seidenberg, A, et al., "Storefront cigarette advertising differs by community demographic profile," *American Journal of Health Promotion* 24(6): e26-231, 2010.

[11] McCarthy, WJ, et al., "Density of Tobacco Retailers Near Schools: Effects on Tobacco Use Among Students," *American Journal of Public Health* 99(11):2006-13, 2009. Henriksen, L, et al., "Is Adolescent Smoking Related to the Density and Proximity of Tobacco Outlets and Retail Cigarette Advertising Near Schools," *Preventive Medicine* 47(2):210-14, August 2008. Leatherdale, ST, et al., "Tobacco Retailer Density Surrounding Schools and Cigarette Access Behaviors Among Underage Smoking Students," Annals of Behavioral Medicine 33(1):105-11, February 2007. Feighery, EC, et al., "An examination of trends in amount and type of cigarette advertising and sales promotions in California stores, 2002-2005," *Tobacco Control* (published online), February 26, 2008. Laws, MB, et al., "Tobacco availability and point of sale marketing in demographically contrasting districts of Massachusetts," *Tobacco Control* 11:71-73, 2002.

[12] Kirchner, T, et al., "Tobacco retail outlet advertising practices and proximity to schools, parks and public housing affect Synar underage sales violations in Washington, DC," *Tobacco Control* 24: e52-e58, 2015.

[13] Lipperman-Kreda, S. "Contextual and community factors associated with youth access to cigarettes through commercial sources," *Tobacco Control* 23: 39-44, 2014.

[14] Cantrell, J, et al., "Marketing Little Cigars and Cigarillos: Advertising, Price, and Associations with Neighborhood Demographics," *American Journal of Public Health,* published online ahead of print August 15, 2013.

[15] Kirchner, T, et al., "Tobacco retail outlet advertising practices and proximity to schools, parks and public housing affect Synar underage sales violations in Washington, DC," *Tobacco Control* 24: e52-e58, 2015.

[16] Moreland-Russell, S. "Disparities and Menthol Marketing: Additional Evidence in Support of Point of Sale Policies," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 10: 4571-4583, 2013.

[17] Widome, R, et al., "The relationship of neighborhood demographic characteristics to point-of-sale tobacco advertising and marketing," *Ethnicity & Disease* 18(2): 136-151, 2013.

[18] Stoddard, JL, et al., "Tailoring outdoor tobacco advertising to minorities in Los Angeles County," *Journal of Health Communication* 3(2), April-June 1998.

[19] Primack, BA, et al., "Volume of Tobacco Advertising in African American Markets: Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," *Public Health Reports* 122(5):607-615, September/October 2007.

[20] Schleicher, N, et al., "Tobacco Marketing in California's Retail Environment (2008-2011), Final report for the California Tobacco Advertising Survey. Stanford, CA: Stanford Prevention Research Center, July 2013.

[21] Henriksen, L., et al., "Targeted Advertising, Promotion, and Price for Menthol Cigarettes in California High School Neighborhoods," Nicotine & Tobacco Research, June 24, 2011.

[22] Resnick, EA, et al., *Cigarette Pricing Differs by U.S. Neighborhoods—A BTG Research Brief.* Chicago, IL: Bridging the Gap Program, Health Policy Center, Institute for Health Resarch and Policy, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2012, www.bridgingthegapresearch.org.

[23] Cantrell, J, et al., "Marketing Little Cigars and Cigarillos: Advertising, Price, and Associations with Neighborhood Demographics," *American Journal of Public Health,* published online ahead of print August 15, 2013.

[24] Hutchinson, EO, "Joe Camel Dominants More Than Billboards in Black America," June 23, 1997, http://www.pacificnews.org/jinn/stories/3.13/970623-cigarettes.html

[25] Villarosa, L, "Body and Soul," *Women's Review of Books* 11(10-11):13-4, 1994.

[26] Alpert, H, Koh, HK, & Connolly, GN, "After the Master Settlement Agreement: Targeting and exposure of youth to magazine tobacco advertising," *Health Affairs* 27(6):w503-w512, 2008.
[27] King, C, et al., "The Master Settlement Agreement with the tobacco industry and cigarette advertising in magazines," *New England Journal of Medicine* 345(7):504-11, August 2001.
[28] Landrine, H, et al., "Cigarette advertising in Black, Latino and White magazines, 1998-2002: An exploratory investigation," *Ethnic Disparities* 15(1):63-7, 2005.
[29] Hafez, N. & Ling, P.M. "Finding the Kool Mixx: how Brown & Williamson used music marketing to sell cigarettes," *Tobacco Control 15:* 359-366, 2006.
[30] Yerger, V.B. & Malone, R.E. "African American leadership groups: smoking with the enemy," *Tobacco Control,* 11: 335-345, 2002.
[31] Gardiner, P.S. "The African Americanization of menthol cigarette use in the United States," *Nicotine & Tobacco Research* 6(S1): S55-S65, 2004.
[32] Yerger, V.B. & Malone, R.E. "African American leadership groups: smoking with the enemy," *Tobacco Control,* 11: 335-345, 2002. Quote from Bateman, M. [Total Minority Marketing Plan]. Brown and Williamson. September 7, 1984. Bates No. 531000141-0144. http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/eph40f00.
[33] Davis, R, Black Marketing Research - Findings & Recommended Actions to Date, Lorillard, June 9, 1978, Bates No. 84274935/4944.
[34] Dauphinee, A, et al., "Racial differences in cigarette brand recognition and impact on youth smoking," *BMC Public Health,* 13:170, 2013.
[35] HHS. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2014. ICPSR36361-v1. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2016-03-22. http://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR36361.v1.
[36] Giovino, GA, et al., "Differential trends in cigarette smoking in the USA: is menthol slowing progress?" *Tobacco Control*, doi:10.1136/tobacco-control2013-051159, published online first August 30, 2013.
[37] Giovino, GA, et al., "Differential trends in cigarette smoking in the USA: is menthol slowing progress?" *Tobacco Control*, doi:10.1136/tobacco-control2013-051159, published online first August 30, 2013.
[38] Clark, P, et al., "Effect of menthol cigarettes on biochemical markers of smoke exposure among black and white smokers," *Chest* 110(5):1194-8, November 1996.
[39] Jarvik, ME, et al., "Mentholated cigarettes decrease puff volume of smoke and increase carbon monoxide absorption," *Physiology and Behavior* 56(3):563-70, September 1994. McCarthy, WJ, et al., "Menthol v. Nonmenthol Cigarettes: Effects on Smoking Behavior," *AJPH* 85(1):67-72, January 1995. Stoddard, JL, et al., "Target Tobacco Markets: Outdoor Advertising in Los Angeles Minority Neighborhoods," *AJPH* 87:1232-3, July 1997. HHS, "Tobacco Use Among US Racial/Ethnic Minority Groups—African Americans, American Indians and Alaskan Natives, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics: A Report of the Surgeon General," 1998, http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/1998/complete_report/pdfs/complete_report.pdf.
[40] FDA, "Preliminary Scientific Evaluation of the Possible Public Health Effects of Menthol Versus Nonmenthol Cigarettes," http://www.fda.gov/downloads/ScienceResearch/SpecialTopics/PeerReviewofScientificInformationandAssessments/UCM361598.pdf, 2013.
[41] HHS, "Tobacco Use Among US Racial/Ethnic Minority Groups—African Americans, American Indians and Alaskan Natives, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics: A Report of the Surgeon General," 1998, http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/1998/complete_report/pdfs/complete_report.pdf.
[42] HHS, "Tobacco Use Among US Racial/Ethnic Minority Groups—African Americans, American Indians and Alaskan Natives, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics: A Report of the Surgeon General," 1998, http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/1998/complete_report/pdfs/complete_report.pdf.