

# Menthol is a Critical Public Health Issue for the Black Community

Dr. Valerie Yerger  
Professor in Health Policy  
University of California San Francisco

African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council

Founding Member

IN SUPPORT OF SB 233

February 13, 2020

## Actual Causes of Death Among African Americans (2017)



Source: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, CDC, NCHHSTP AtlasPlus.

# Smoking with the Enemy

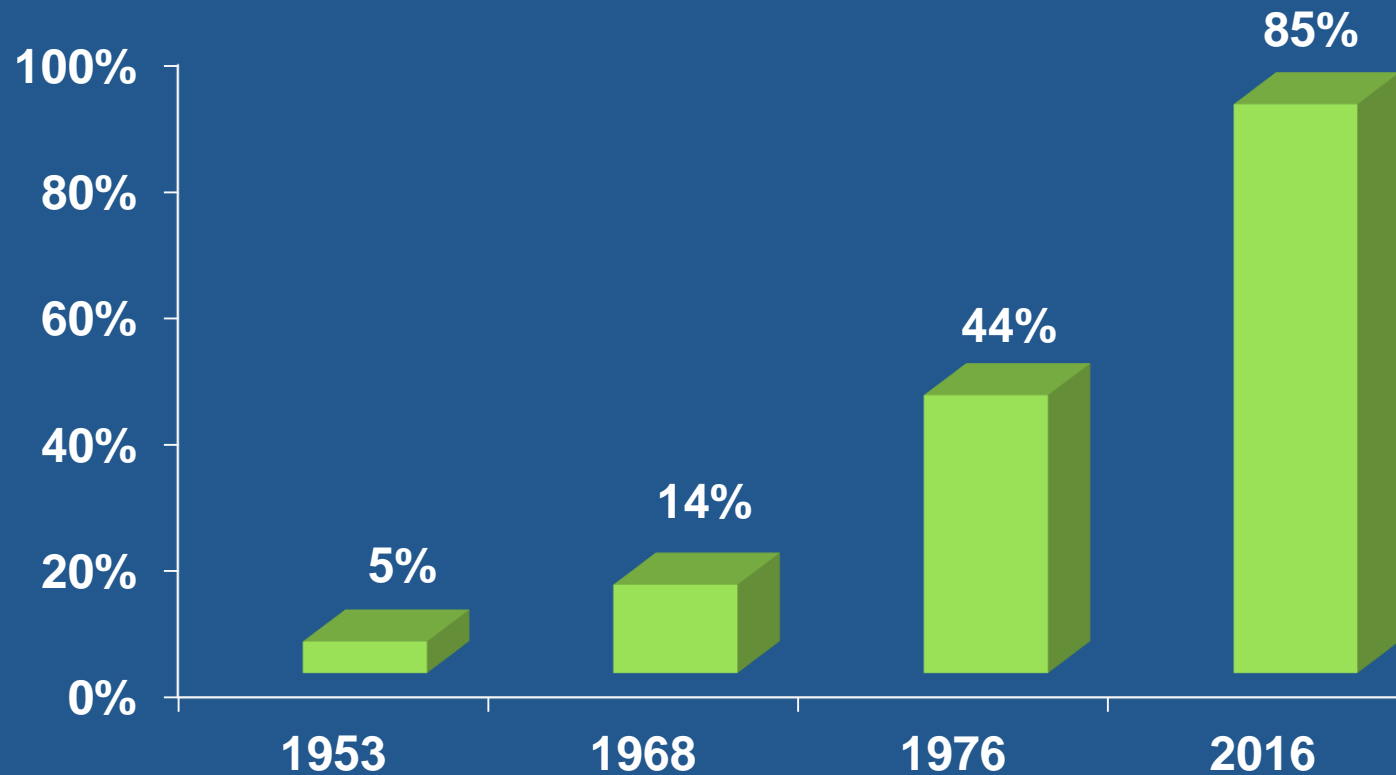
Yerger & Malone (2002) Tobacco Control, 11(4), 336-345

- Create and maintain positive images of tobacco and tobacco companies to keep African Americans engaged as consumers
- Defuse opposition from within African American communities and silent their leaders
- Get African American organizations to act as front groups to assure and build support for tobacco industry policy positions

# “The Racialized Menthol Wars”

- Major tobacco companies aggressively competed against one another in low-income neighborhoods
- Tobacco companies targeted these neighborhoods with highly concentrated menthol marketing
- Used innovative marketing tactics to adapt to inner city challenges and to exploit residents
- Inner city communities represented efficient sites for an industrial exploitation (1980s and 1990s)

# Menthol Use Among African American Adult Smokers



Sources: 1) Gardiner PS. The African Americanization of menthol cigarette use in the United States. *Nicotine Tob Res* 2004;6 suppl 1:S55-65. 2) Lorillard, 1986; TID: ybv44a00; Giovino et al 2016.



## Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, 2009

Granted the FDA the authority to regulate tobacco products to protect the public health

## #1 Menthol



Reynolds American Inc.  
acquired Lorillard  
(Newport) in 2015 for

**\$27 Billion**

British American Tobacco  
bought out  
Reynolds American  
(including Newport) in  
2017 for

**\$53 Billion**

**DELTA SIGMA THETA SORORITY, INC.**

---

**A SERVICE SORORITY**

**Grand Chapter**

**PROHIBTING THE USE OF MENTHOL AS A  
CHARACTERIZING FLAVOR IN CIGARETTES**

**Passed at the 51<sup>st</sup> National Convention July 2013 with 40,000 members in attendance.**





DELTA SIGMA THETA SORORITY, INC.

---

A SERVICE SORORITY

Grand Chapter

**A RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT STATE AND LOCAL EFFORTS TO RESTRICT THE  
SALE OF MENTHOL CIGARETTES AND OTHER FLAVORED TOBACCO PRODUCTS**

**Passed at 53<sup>rd</sup> National Convention Las Vegas, Aug 2017**



# NAACP Adopts Menthol Resolution

July 19, 2016

Calling on chapters to support state and local efforts to regulate menthol cigarettes and other flavored tobacco products

October 15, 2016

National Board of Directors ratified resolution

