



Why Menthol, Why Now?

The marketing and selling of mentholated and all flavored tobacco products to vulnerable populations is a social justice issue that has plagued African Americans, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Women's Health, Behavioral Health, and LGBTQ communities in metro Atlanta and across the U.S. for far too long. Approximately 45,000 African Americans die each year from a tobacco related disease and menthol is a major factor in both the initiation of and addiction to tobacco products. To promote optimal health and to reduce the burden and harm associated with menthol and all flavored tobacco products in metro Atlanta and surrounding areas, the *No Menthol Movement ATL* coalition was formed. *No Menthol Movement ATL* is a broad-based strategic initiative designed to end the sale and use of menthol and all other flavored tobacco products in metro Atlanta and surrounding areas through environmental policy solutions and community education.

Why Menthol? Be apprised that 85% African American adults and 94% of Black youth who smoke are using menthol products (Giovino, 2013). These striking statistics arise from the predatory marketing of these products in the Black Community, where there are more advertisements, more lucrative promotions, and *cheaper prices* for menthol cigarettes compared to other communities (Henriksen et al., 2011; Seidenberg et al., 2010). These predacious practices for the past 60 years have led to Blacks folks dying disproportionately from heart attacks, lung cancer, strokes, and other tobacco related diseases (RSG, 2014). Also, menthol, as if to add insult to injury, masks the harsh taste of tobacco and allows for deeper inhalation of toxins and greater amounts of nicotine. The greater the nicotine intake, the greater the addiction. Hence, it is no surprise menthol cigarette users find it harder to quit than non-menthol cigarette users (Ton et al., 2015; Levy et al., 2011). The "cool refreshing taste of menthol" heralded by the tobacco industry is just a guise; ultimately, menthol and all flavors allow the poisons in cigarettes and cigarillos "to go down easier!"

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is disproportionately affecting poor communities of color, nothing could be more important than getting menthol and all candy flavors out of the ATL. We are calling on you to join us in this effort.

How will this initiative help our communities?

- Prevent predatory marketing to vulnerable populations through dense marketing and price discounts
- Advocate for environmental policy solutions that will promote health equity and reduce the burden of tobacco use on vulnerable communities
- Educate community members on false narratives regarding tobacco use and Black criminalization that are delivered by trusted community members but are paid for and sponsored by the tobacco industry.

Who do we need to support this initiative?

- Community Members
- Community Organizations
- Nonprofit Organizations
- Local Health Department
- Council Members
- Colleges and Universities

Outcome and Measures

This strategic initiative will reduce the burden of tobacco related diseases on communities in metro Atlanta and surrounding areas and provide opportunities for optimal health outcomes.



The Reality of FDA Ban of Mentholated Cigarettes

On April 29th, 2021, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced it would finally take action to prohibit the sale of menthol cigarettes and flavored tobacco products.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE BAN?

A ban on the sale of menthols will protect all citizens because menthol increases smoking harmful smoking habits, smoking initiation, and makes it harder to quit. Here are the unfortunate facts about mentholated cigarettes and the industry and their practices:

- Unfortunately, tobacco use is the number one preventable cause of death/disease among African Americans, and almost 9 out of 10 African Americans who smoke choose menthol cigarettes, compared to less than 30% of white smokers.
- For decades, the tobacco industry targeted Black communities with menthol for tremendous profit, researching and appropriating Black culture along the way.
- The industry has taken advantage of racial economic inequity to gain cultural influence by funding and sponsoring Black publications, cultural events, educational institutions, and civic leaders all while buying political influence to thwart live-saving public health policies.

RESPONSE TO CRITICISM

Critics of this ban have already started to disseminate falsehoods about the true intentions of the ban and who it affects.

- Some critics are saying that it will lead to an illicit market.
 - The fact is that there is no illicit market for menthol cigarettes/flavored cigarettes in operation or existence.
- Some are saying taking away menthol cigarettes will be discriminatory.
 - The predatory practices and targeted marketing of the tobacco industry, which lead to these mentholated cigarettes/flavored cigarettes being the preferred choice of cigarettes in Black and Brown communities, is discriminatory considering that other communities don't see as much target marketing towards smoking.

Here are the facts:

- The ban is only targeted towards manufacturers, distributors, and retailers of menthol cigarettes and other flavored products including flavored cigars.
 - The FDA has no authority or intention to enforce the ban on individuals who use, purchase, or possess the products.

THE CONCLUSION

Menthol cigarettes and flavored products including little cigars have been and are the main vectors for death and disease in the Black and Brown Community. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a national spotlight was thrown on the underlying health disparities and unequal treatment that poor communities of color have faced for hundreds of years in the United States. At this time, nothing could be more helpful in saving Black and Brown lives than getting menthols cigarettes and flavored little cigars straight out of the Black and Brown community!



NO MENTHOL MOVEMENT ATL

END THE SALE OF MENTHOL & OTHER FLAVORED TOBACCO PRODUCTS

The marketing and selling of menthol to Black and underserved communities is a social justice issue. The No Menthol Movement ATL coalition is an initiative formed to promote optimal health and reduce the harm of menthol and other flavored tobacco products in Metro-Atlanta through environmental policy change and community involvement.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM WITH MENTHOL?

85%

Menthol makes smoking **easier to start and harder to quit**. Plus there are increased amounts of ads and cheaper prices for menthol in Black neighborhoods. As a result, 85% of Black adults and 94% of Black youth who smoke use menthol and other flavored tobacco products.

Menthol masks the taste of tobacco and contributes to greater addiction.

WHO CAN GET INVOLVED TO MAKE CHANGE?



- Community Residents
- Nonprofits & Community Organizations
- Local Health Departments
- City Council & County Commissioner Members
- Colleges and Universities

HOW WILL THE INITIATIVE HELP OUR COMMUNITY?



Ending the sale of menthol and other flavored tobacco will prevent predatory marketing, **promote health equity** and reduce the burden of tobacco use on Black and under-resourced neighborhoods. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is greatly affecting communities of color, **nothing could be more important.**

Approximately 45,000 African Americans die each year from a tobacco-related disease, and menthol is a major factor for starting and becoming addicted to tobacco.

Together, we can save Atlanta lives!



The marketing and selling of menthol and all other flavored tobacco products to vulnerable populations is a social justice issue that has plagued African American communities in metro Atlanta and across the U.S. for far too long. Approximately 47,000 African Americans die each year from a tobacco-related disease and menthol is a major factor in both the initiation of and addiction to tobacco products. **No Menthol Movement ATL** is a broad-based strategic initiative designed to restrict the sale of menthol and all other flavored tobacco products in metro Atlanta and surrounding areas through environmental policy solutions and community education.

SUPPORT THE CAMPAIGN TO END MENTHOL

Our organization supports restricting the sale of menthol and all other flavored tobacco products in metro Atlanta to promote optimal health and to reduce the burden and harm associated with mentholated tobacco products. List our organization as a supporter on **No Menthol Movement ATL** campaign materials

Organization Name _____

Contact Person _____

Mailing Address _____

City State Zip

Email Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Our organization is willing to do the following to help eliminate menthol and all other flavored tobacco products (check all that apply):

- Attend **No Menthol Movement ATL** events
- Attend city council and county commissioner meetings
- Distribute campaign information to our employees and members
- Write letters to the editor on behalf of the campaign
- Contact city council and county commissioners
- Provide spokesperson(s) to the campaign
- Contribute financially to the campaign

Please return form to D'Jillisser Kelly at dkelly@learntogrow.org
Follow the No Menthol Movement ATL campaign on Instagram, Facebook, and twitter
@nomentholmovementatl