



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.