



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!