



Top 20 Ways the Tobacco Industry Preys

Activism can be described as intentional action to bring forth political or social change. However, change will not occur if African Americans are unaware of the tobacco industry's predatory marketing tactics conducted in African American communities. Listed are the top 20 methods the tobacco industry uses to prey on African American youth and communities.

- 1. *Intense Case Studies & Research.*** The tobacco industry has invested a great deal of time and money into the study of African Americans. Their research assists in their marketing tactics and development of products.
- 2. *Cigarette Brands with Group-Specific Messages.*** Tobacco industry products and advertisements use symbols, names, and events that are held in high esteem by African Americans.
- 3. *Magazine Ads.*** Tobacco companies use catchy logos and sayings to lure in smokers, such as "You've come a long way, baby", "Be cool", and "Be true".
- 4. *Sex Appeal.*** Like most industries, the tobacco industry uses sex appeal to sell its product. However, the tobacco industry's use of sex appeal is often targeted at youth.
- 5. *Subliminal Messaging.*** The tobacco industry uses subliminal messaging to lure in smokers.
- 6. *Color Association.*** Tobacco companies use color association (without brand-names and logos) to attract youth and subliminally remind people of their brands.
- 7. *Strict Retail Contracts.*** Most retailers are pushed around and disrespected by the tobacco industry. However, they are forced to put up with tobacco industry practices because they need tobacco contracts. Tobacco contracts provide discounts on cigarettes, which make tobacco contracts extremely valuable to the retailer. Tobacco contracts allow the contracting tobacco company to control the product, price, presence, and promotion of their company's tobacco products in each contracted store. (See #'s 8-13.)
- 8. *Product Flavoring.*** Since the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement (that prohibits the tobacco industry from developing products that appeal to youth), the tobacco industry has developed candy, fruit, and alcohol flavors with high youth appeal. (Packaging for flavored products have had youth-oriented graphics, colors, and themes.)
- 9. *Product Placement.*** Higher quantities of mentholated products are placed in retail stores located in African American communities.

- 10. Price.** The tobacco industry offers higher discount rates on mentholated cigarettes in African American retail stores, thus making them much more attractive to the residents who reside in African American communities.
- 11. Presence (Retail Advertising).** The tobacco industry places a higher quantity of interior and exterior signs in retail stores located in African American communities.
- 12. Presence (Cigarette Displays).** The tobacco industry places a greater quantity of high profile cigarette displays in retail stores located in African American communities. (High Profile Displays are more flamboyant and have more lights to attract youth.)
- 13. Promotions.** Retail stores located in African American communities receive higher allocations of promotional offers like Buy X, Get X free.
- 14. Direct Mail Promotions.** Tobacco industry direct mail promotions are delivered directly to homes year round, but the majority are sent during the summer, spring break, and Christmas when children are left at home alone to check the mail.
- 15. Reward Programs.** Tobacco companies offer smokers prizes ("free gifts" with pack purchase) as incentives to promote youth smoking.
- 16. Secret Enhancement of Nicotine.** "We should continue to pursue the concept of nicotine enhancement," Lorillard Tobacco Company (1977). Higher nicotine content makes cigarettes more addictive and smoking harder to quit. The tobacco industry has frequently and secretly increased nicotine and menthol levels in brands like KOOL and Newport.
- 17. Lights vs. Full-Flavor.** Cigarettes advertised as "low in tar or nicotine" do not reduce smoking hazards. The tobacco industry claims tiny ventilation holes punched around the circumference of the filter controls tar intake. The holes are not visible, most smokers are unaware they exist, and lips and fingers prevent proper ventilation.
- 18. Tobacco Sponsorships.** The tobacco industry offers tobacco sponsorships to African American organizations in order to heighten the sale of cigarettes in African American communities. They know that they have a product that kills, so they try to maintain a positive image.
- 19. Exploitation of Hip Hop.** Music is a common marketing tool used by the tobacco industry. It is considered to be a very effective marketing tool because it helps consumers make emotional connections with brands, and it has potential to appeal widely to young audiences.
- 20. Brand Websites.** Brand websites feature juvenile games and prizes that appeal to youth.

To learn more about the predatory marketing practices conducted by Big Tobacco in African American communities, visit <http://www.naatpn.org/signs.html> or contact La Tanisha C. Wright at latanisha.wright@gmail.com and ask about *Follow the Signs: A Training to Raise Awareness on How Black Communities are Targeted by Tobacco Companies*.

