CENTER FOR MULTICULTURAL HEALTH

Searching For Answers

◇ **Health without Harm in the Black Community** ◇

African Americans and Tobacco: The Historical Journey

"We used to pick it…now we smoke it."

The marriage between African Americans and tobacco began long before a billion-dollar industry targeted us with advertising, giving us jobs when no one else would and funding our schools and arts programs. Before the American plantations, it was a crop whose purpose was to bring a profit to the settlers of the New World.

History has told us that the survival of American slavery was built mostly on the crops of cotton and sugar; however, the cultivation of tobacco was the primary reason that slavery first flourished in America. Let us take a historical journey chronicling the grave burden of tobacco to the African American heritage, culture, and community, and identify methods to build smoke-free communities.

Tobacco first entered the colonial economy through the slave trade. By the beginning of the 1600s, tobacco had become more profitable than sugar to the New World settlers because of its role in the slave trade. American society originally initiated the inhumanity of slavery in the United States because it provided economic advantage. Tobacco is an eleven-month crop, and settlers needed slaves to cultivate tobacco cheaply. This was the first, but not last, method that tobacco manufacturers used to enslave African Americans.

Before the Civil War, tobacco production had doubled. North Carolina, Virginia, and Kentucky were the three largest tobacco-cultivating states. In the United States in 1860, an estimated 350,000 were involved in tobacco cultivation.

The Civil War seriously disrupted the South's tobacco growing and manufacturing. Tobacco warehouses were converted into prisons for Union soldiers. The Confederate Congress passed a joint resolution recommending that Confederate states refrain from planting tobacco and focus more on planting of food. That recommendation was ignored.

Unlike slavery, tobacco cultivation survived the Civil War, even though tobacco-rich states Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee sided with the Confederacy, and tobacco manufacturing shifted quickly to the North.

Article contributed by National African American Tobacco Prevention Network (NAAPTN) Insight E-newsletter, http://www.naatpn.org/insight/main.html

Inside this issue:

𝒴𝐸𝒮 Secondhand Smoke Hurts—It Kills…

Smoke from cigarettes, cigars, and pipes can cause health problems to non-smokers as well as smokers. Secondhand smoke can affect your health.

- Secondhand smoke can make asthma worse ---- causing more frequent and more severe attacks.

- Children and adults who live with smokers have more respiratory infections ---- including colds, bronchitis and pneumonia --- than those who don't live with smokers.

- Each year 37,000 people die from heart disease caused by secondhand smoke

Listed below are some strategies to reduce the rates of exposure to secondhand smoke to your family and loved ones.

Risk Reduction Strategies

Non Smokers
- Ask smokers not to smoke around you
- DO NOT allow smokers to smoke around your children
- If you live with a smoker, set up a place outside where they can smoke. Have them was their hands before they play with your children or handle infants
- Place No Smoking Signs in your home

Smokers
- Honor a non smokers request to not smoke around them
- Make a commitment not to expose others to secondhand smoke.
- Avoid smoking in closed areas such as homes, offices or cars where others may be exposed to second hand smoke
- Set a Quit Date!

What has tobacco stolen from you?

- What changes could have been brought about by activists who died too soon because of lung cancer…

- Imagine how many more hugs you could have received from your grandfather…grandmother…mother …father…sister… brother…

   Tobacco abuse touches all of us.

Tobacco Prevention & Control Program, Washington State Department of Health www.secondhandsmokesyou.com

At the Center for MultiCultural Health, we act as a liaison to ensure access to health & human service systems, as we have done for over 25 years.

For more information about secondhand smoke contact Brandie Flood, Health Educator, at 206-461-6910 ext. 203

Courtesy of NAATPN

From the Fields to the Factory: The House that Tobacco Built

After the abolishment of slavery, African Americans remained tied to tobacco. Ex-slaves had to adjust to freedom and a new labor system. The destruction of the cotton fields during the Civil War brought about a transformation of Southern society. The end of the Civil War and the beginning of the Great Migration (the movement of thousands of African Americans from the South to the North in search of better lives at the beginning of the 20th century) would allow former slaves to continue in the tobacco fields as factory workers, sharecroppers, and eventually landowners of tobacco fields.

"In the 1930s, almost half of the people working in the tobacco manufacturing industry were African American. That's because the tobacco industry provided some of the only industrial jobs for blacks at the time," said Dr. Valerie Yerger of the University of California, San Francisco.

The leading tobacco companies at that time were Philip Morris and RJ Reynolds (RJR). Both companies were arguably competing to see who could provide "equality" for African Americans. In 1938, William Reynolds, RJ's brother, donated money to found the Kate Bitting Reynolds Hospital for blacks in then-segregated Winston-Salem, N.C., home of the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company.
Just a few years later, when John H. Johnson established Johnson Publishing Company (JPC) in November 1942 with *Negro Digest*, advertisements placed by Phillip Morris in a new market brought the tobacco industry's relationship with the African American community to another level of exploitation.

It was not long before African Americans saw role models like Louis Armstrong, Jesse Owens, and Nat King Cole endorsing cigarettes through communications that were developed to empower the black community to experience a better way of life. Cigarette companies used African American models long before other corporations would, and the tobacco industry began advertising in African American publications before groups outside the minority community did.

According to some, the industry has been killing African Americans with kindness ever since. "Although tobacco is ingrained in our communities, the African American community is not receiving as much money as other communities," says Yerger. By the 1950s, tobacco companies had built image and credibility in the black community by financially supporting cultural events, colleges, elected officials, civic and community organizations, and scholarship programs. Tobacco industry executives began to align themselves with black organizations such as the National Urban League, NAACP, and UNCF. It was also during this decade that the proportion of black male smokers exceeded that of white men for the first time.
By the time the Civil Rights Bill of 1965 was signed, tobacco companies like Phillip Morris had attempted for more than 30 years to marry the black community to tobacco. The money that tobacco companies poured into the black community could be seen in all aspects of the culture. Billboards stood at major intersections of African American neighborhoods; there were cigarette advertisements in all major black magazines; and Philip Morris aired programs on more than 200 radio stations in 50 countries in honor of Black History Month.

According to a 2004 report of *Target Market News*' annual report on African American consumers, African Americans spend 2.8 billion dollars on tobacco products and smoking supplies. This is more than we spend on books, computers, and related equipment combined.
The tobacco industry has invested millions to identify itself with Black America's heritage and culture; however, it is the relationship that was developed between black political leaders and tobacco industry executives that has been most critical.
Philip Morris has brought together presidents of black colleges for a Martin Luther King Jr. birthday remembrance, backed the Dance Theater of Harlem, sponsored rhythm-and-blues concerts in cities with large black populations, and commemorated a Bill of Rights anniversary with ads featuring prominent African American leaders.
With the support of the Rainbow Push Coalition, NAACP, Congressional Black Caucus, and National Urban League, among others, the tobacco industry has been able to impart its influence to limit the effectiveness of a variety of legislative decisions, including excise taxes, local and state clean indoor air laws, and licensing.

The relationship between the black community and the tobacco industry has made a lot of people wealthy, but it has also caused a lot of premature death. In 1988, nearly 45,000 African Americans died because of smoking, according to the American Cancer Society. That is more deaths from diseases caused by smoking than from car crashes, AIDS, murder and drugs combined.

Article contributed by Insight E-newsletter http://www.naatpn.org/insight/main.html

Put out Your Cigarette

Are you ready to quit!?! Are you tired of handing all your money over to tobacco companies? Do you want to lead a healthier lifestyle for yourself, your family, and your community? Have you come to a place in your life when you are ready TO QUIT smoking! Today is the day to develop and individualized plan that will work for you and your family. Quitting is a promise you keep to yourself to obtain better health outcomes. Here are some steps to assist you in changing your behaviors to achieve your goals for a healthier self.

First, set a quit date two or three weeks ahead of time.   Tell your family, loved ones, and other support systems about the quit date you have chosen for yourself. It's much easier to quit using tobacco when you have support and when your support team takes a non judgmental approach to your tobacco use.

Second, talk to your provider about Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) options. You want to make sure you discuss any therapy options with your physicians---NRT may not work every individual. If you do not have a provider you can call the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) Tobacco Quit Line and receive free, personalized help 1-877-270-STOP.

Third, explore, discuss, and design a plan to overcome your roadblocks. Roadblocks are certain times of the day or situations that cause you to be vulnerable to smoking a cigarette.

Fourth, throw out all your cigarettes the night before, get rid of your lighters and matches, make sure you know how to use any NRT medications that have been prescribed by your doctor, or community health clinic.   Stock up on sugar free gum, mints, carrots any healthy option to ease your oral fixation for a cigarette. In fact, put the mints or gum in places where you used to keep your cigarettes. Your purse, shirt pocket, nightstand any secret place you used to stash your cigarettes. It will reduce your chance of reverting back to smoking a cigarette.

Last, but not least, identify supportive people who you can call on to help you pass through a cigarette craving.   Sit down with each one of your support people and discuss your goals and set some boundaries and outcomes and be clear about what type of relationship you want to have with your support team.

Try not to be sidetracked by others around you who may continue to smoke after you have made a commitment to quit. Obtain tobacco prevention materials to keep around you, or if you use prayer as a personal approach for other activities in your life---let your spirituality assist you in reducing stress.

Quitting is a hard task and one that shouldn't be taken lightly. Understand that it will be hard work and be patient with yourself and your support partners. Do not try to substitute your cigarettes with light categories because they have the same harmful effects.   If you are interested in receiving a quit kit (includes mints, gum, tea, and cessation support materials) contact Brandie Flood at 206-461-6910 ext. 203 or via email at brandie.flood@cschc.org.

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Resources
Pathways To Freedom: Winning The Fight Against Tobacco
http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/quit/pathways.htm