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BLACK HEALTH & EQUITY

# Tailored Interventions and Outreach to Address the Impact of Tobacco Use among Specific Groups

Natasha Phelps

Eliminate Tobacco Use Virtual Summit – Panel #2 – April 20, 2022



# Who We Are



The Center for Black Health & Equity is committed to the pursuit of health justice for people of African descent by...

- Building community capacity
- Developing infrastructure
- Developing and promoting equity-centered policy

We believe in investing in communities, providing high quality service, and developing genuine and trusted connections with experts on Black health.



# Learning Objectives:



1. Perspective: Health Equity = Racial Equity
2. Tobacco & Flavored Tobacco: a Racial & Health Equity Lens
  - a. Menthol = a Black health issue
3. Equitable Interventions, Considerations, & Approaches
  - a. Campus policy
  - b. Off-campus policy



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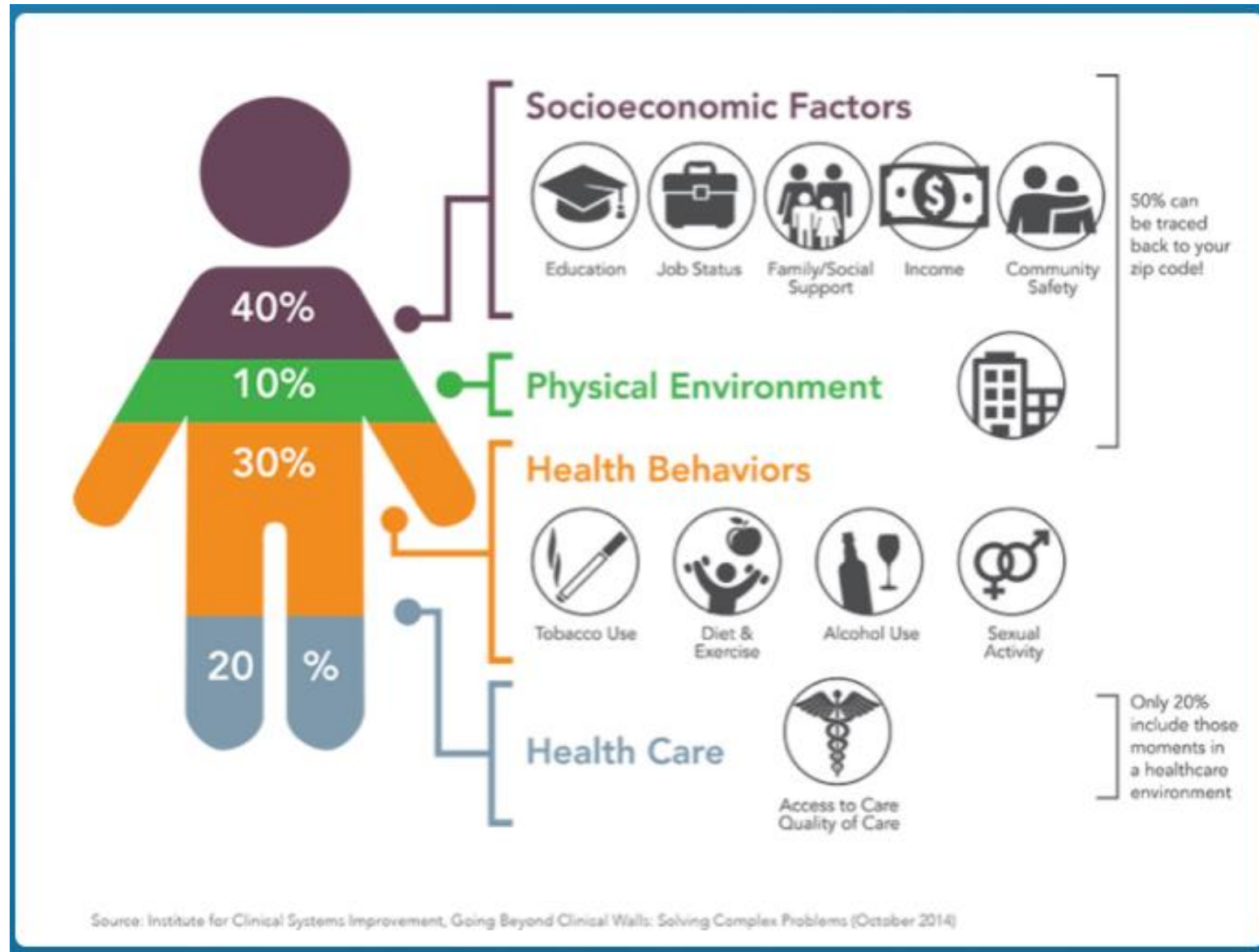
**Health Equity = Racial Equity**



# Health Equity = Racial Equity



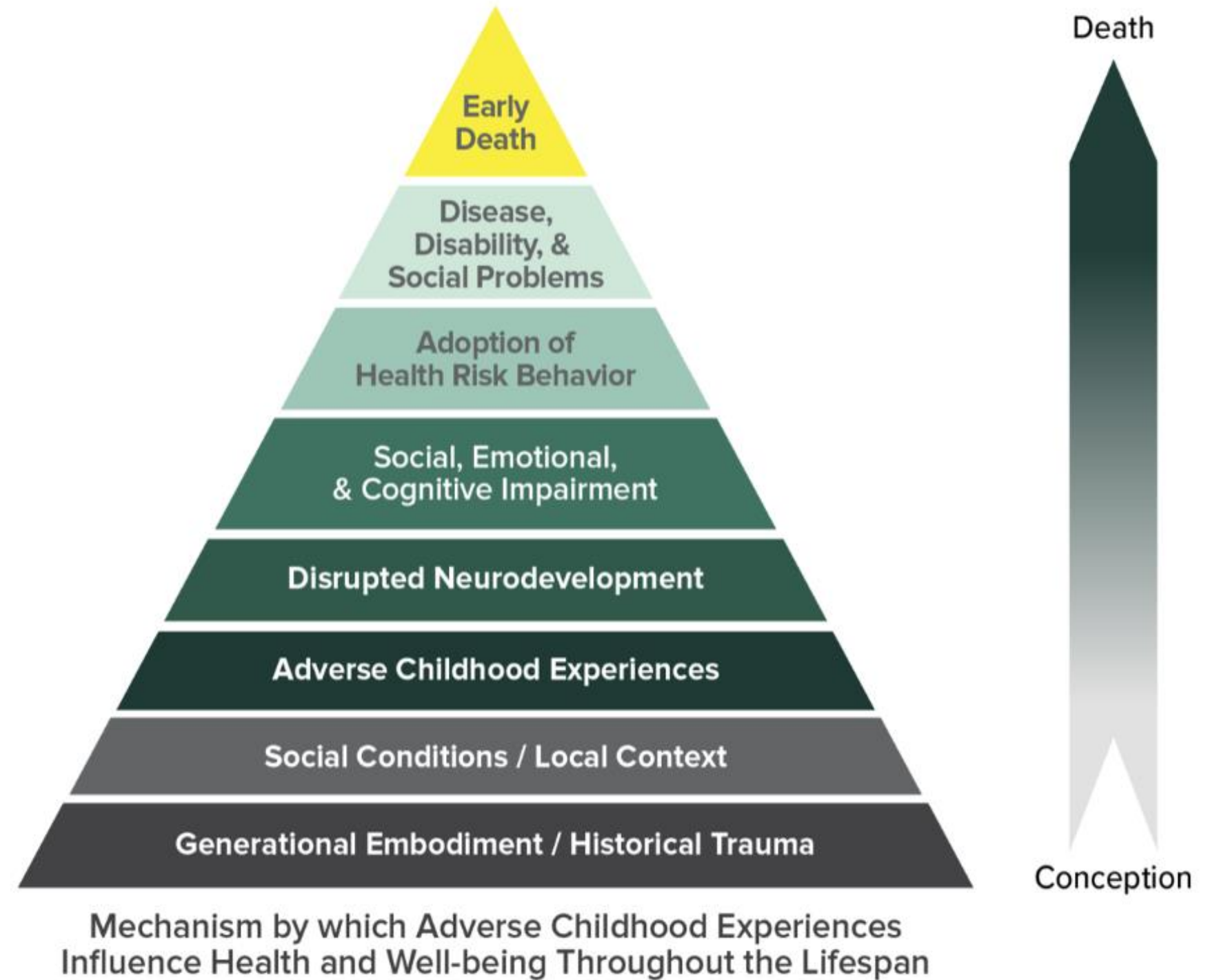
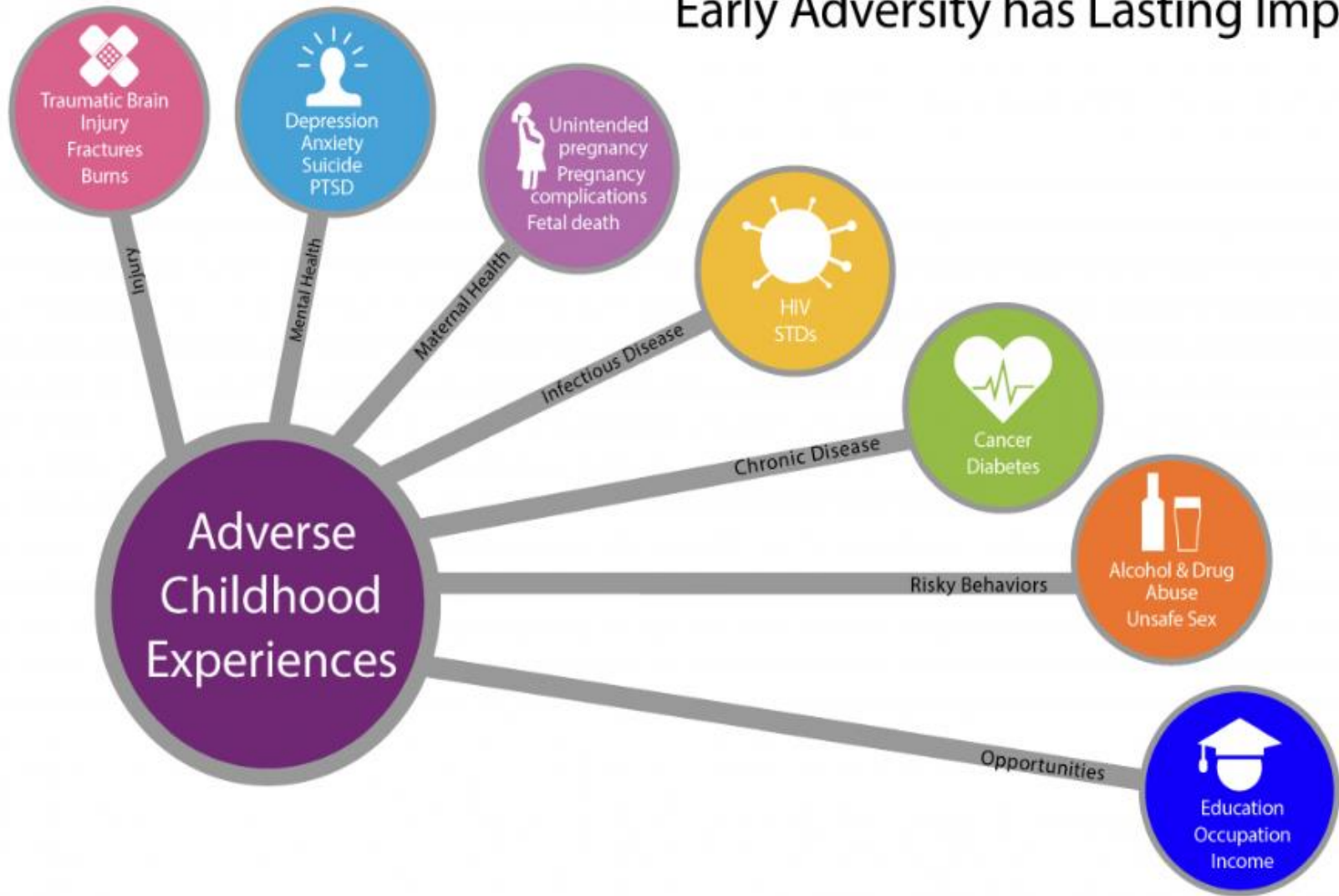
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A variety of conditions contribute to a person's health.

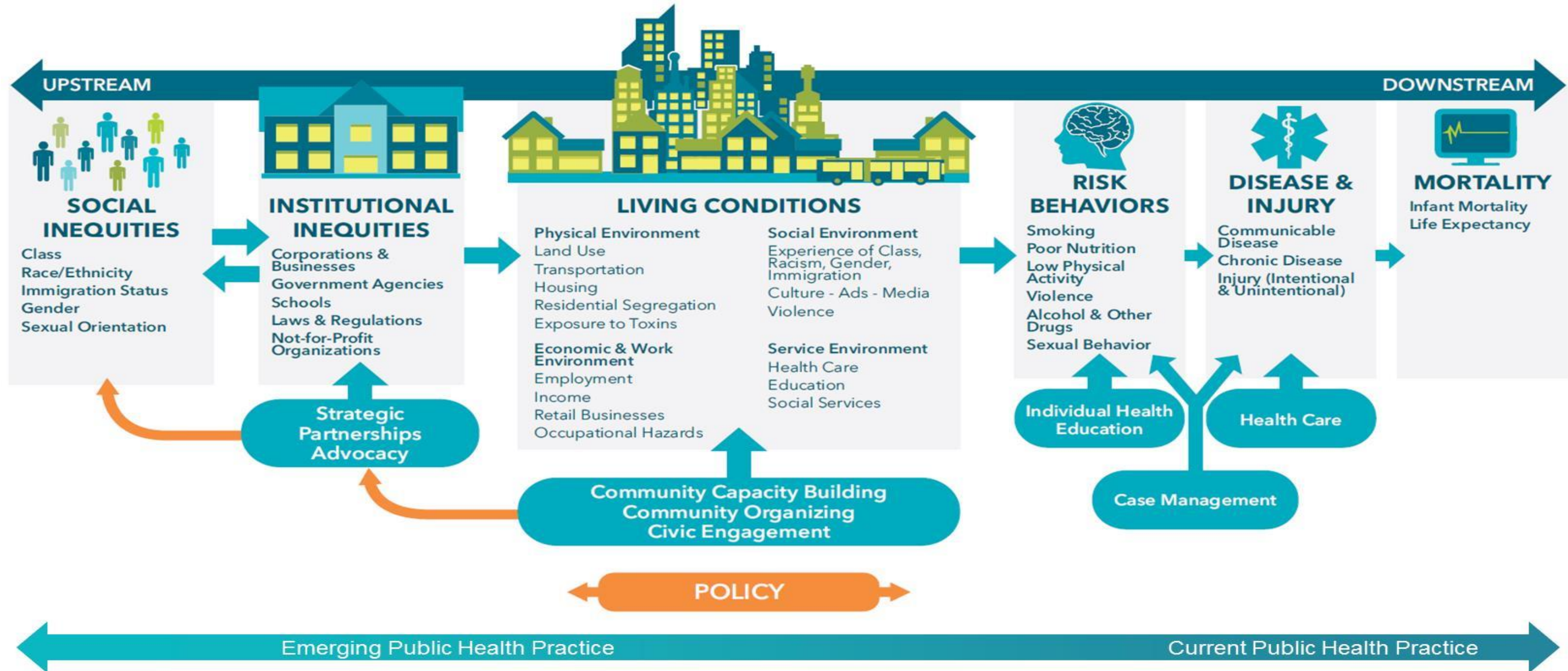


## Early Adversity has Lasting Impacts



At all stages of a person's life.





Societal systems and structures create and influence the social, economic, and environmental conditions that impact our health.

# Health Equity = Racial Equity



Health inequity is the result of **avoidable**, inequitable **social, economic, and environmental conditions** that result in disparate health and life outcomes.

Racism drives health inequity.

Racism create harms and barriers (negative determinants of health) and allow for exploitation, oppression, and marginalization because of its existence (e.g., by industries like Big Tobacco).





# Health Equity = Racial Equity



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Race = top indicator of health because racism (systemic/structural/institutional/interpersonal) is:

1. Detrimental in and of itself
2. A cause and aggravating factor of all other negative determinants of health.

“Racism is detrimental to health in all its forms.”

American Medical Association,

May 29, 2020



# Health Equity = Racial Equity

## Racial Equity

“[J]ust and fair inclusion into a society in which all people, immaterial of their race or ethnicity, can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential.” (PolicyLink)

**We all win when we all win. We are far from reaching racial equity.**

## Health equity

The highest possible standard of health for all people and giving special attention to the needs of those at greatest risk of poor health, based on social conditions. (Braveman)

**We all win when we all win. We are far from reaching health equity.**

**Advancing public health is advancing health equity. Working to advance health equity = working to advance racial equity.**





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# Tobacco & Flavored Tobacco: Racial & Health Equity Lens



# Tobacco = Racial Justice Issue



*“We don’t smoke that s\*\*\*. We just sell it. We reserve the right to smoke for the young, the poor, the Black, and stupid.”*

*- RJ Reynolds Tobacco Company Executive*



# Tobacco = Racial Justice Issue

*“the young, the poor, the Black, and stupid.”*

Privilege

Racism (all forms)

Anti-Blackness

Capitalism

Poverty

Political power

Suppression

Manipulation

Exploitation

Intentionality

Deception



# Tobacco = Racial Justice Issue



*The tobacco industry was born out of slavery, came into its modern existence through the horror of Reconstruction, and has since grown and thrived through the oppression of Black and other marginalized groups.*



# Tobacco = Racial Justice Issue

- 1617-1793, Slavery and racism: tobacco the most valuable export to Europe from American colonies, used as collateral to fund the Revolutionary War.
  - Legalizing racism and anti-Blackness – generational enslavement based on race.
  - Tobacco addiction – the driver of the American antebellum economy.
  - The foundation of health injustice – productivity as the only relevance.
- 1881 – mass cigarette production begins (200 cigarettes per minute– 60x faster than hand rolling)
- Post-Civil War / Reconstruction: Sharecropping
  - Just another name for slavery – unpaid labor, violence, oppression under the Black Codes
  - “Formerly-enslaved” African Americans harvested tobacco crops
- Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Cont’d discrimination, oppression, violence, exploitation -- establishment of systems to limit political, economic, and social power.



# Tobacco = Racial Justice Issue

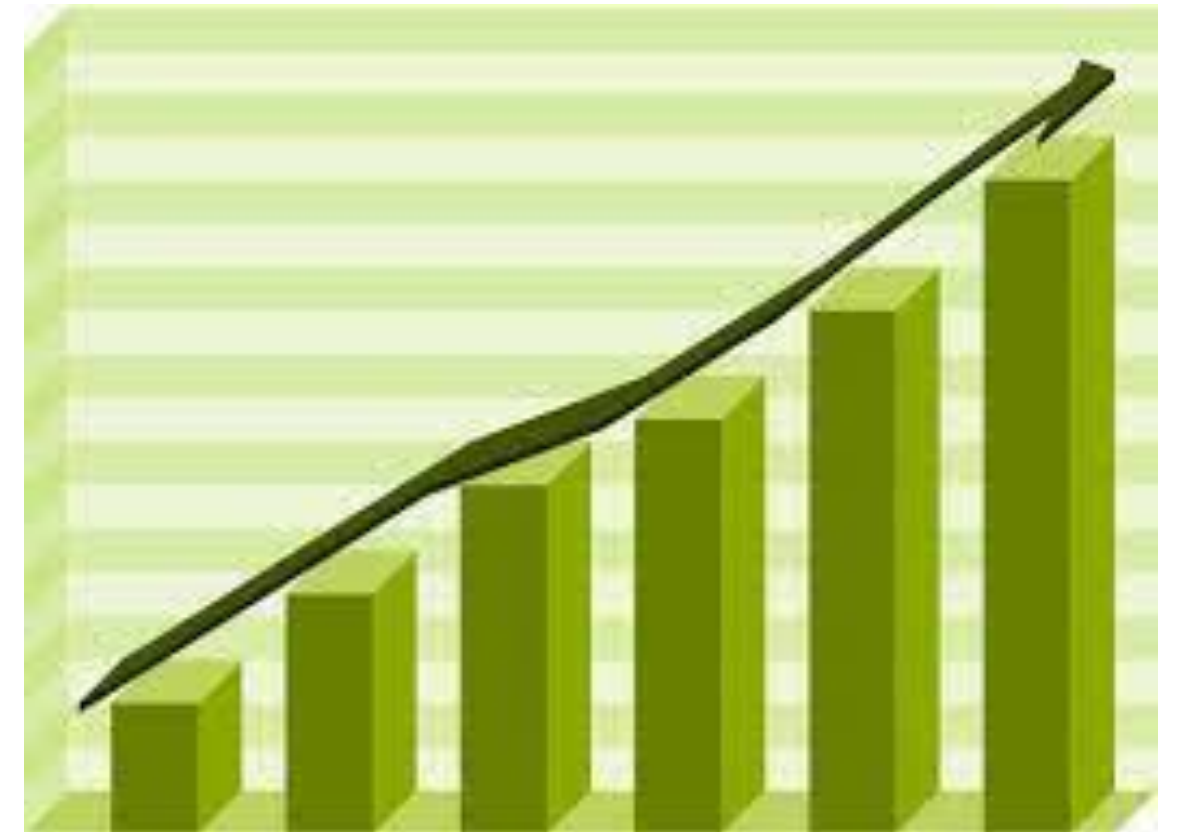
- 20<sup>th</sup> century to today:
  - Continued exploitation
  - Continued neglect
  - Continued oppression
  - Continued violence
  - Continued trauma
- Generations experiencing and witnessing obstruction, theft, violence, trauma, neglect, injustice, deficient resources, oppressed political and financial power, and other violations to Black bodies and communities.
- The tobacco industry was built on oppression. It has grown and thrived in it. Continues to exploit it. Contributes to it. Has significant interest in its maintenance.
  - Flooding communities with cheap menthol and other flavored products
  - Sponsoring events/figures/politicians
  - Thwarting commercial tobacco policy and suing communities





# The Menthol Conversation

- 1952: Menthol-flavored cigarette created by Lloyd Hughes. (Reid, 1993)
- 1952: Menthol-flavored cigarettes 3% of cigarette market. (Sutton & Robinson, 2004)
- Before 1960s: Black Americans who smoked used menthol-flavored and non-menthol-flavored cigarettes at similar rates to overall population (substantially non-menthol-flavored cigarette use). (Sutton & Robinson, 2004)
- 2006: Menthol-flavored cigarettes 20% of the market. (Lawrence, et al, 2010)
- 2007: 75% of Black *adults* who smoked, smoked menthol-flavored cigarettes. (*Id.*)



# Menthol & Flavors



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- Today, almost 9 of 10 African Americans ages 12 and older who smoke use menthol cigarettes (Truth Initiative, 2020)
- Disproportionate use by intersectional Black populations (e.g., Black LGBTQ+, low socioeconomic, unhoused)
- Flavored cigar and cigarillo popular among African American young adults, who also reflect a **high dual usage** prevalence with cigarettes. (Chen-Sankey, et al, 2019)



# Menthol & Flavors



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- Commercial tobacco use a major contributor to the three leading causes of death among African Americans—heart disease, cancer, and stroke. (CDC) Significantly increases risk of developing fourth leading cause of death – diabetes.
- Black Americans who smoke tend to smoke fewer cigarettes per day, initiate smoking later, and are more likely to attempt to quit than other racial groups but are also less likely to sustain nicotine cessation attempts and more likely to die from tobacco-related disease than other racial groups.



# Menthol & Flavors

Not an accident:

- Decades of predatory marketing by cigarette manufacturers.
- Reasons:
  - Black youth ID'd as consumer trend setters
  - Ability to exploit lack of political and economic power
  - Structural/systemic racism
  - Appropriation of cultural impact messaging with lack of representation and funding

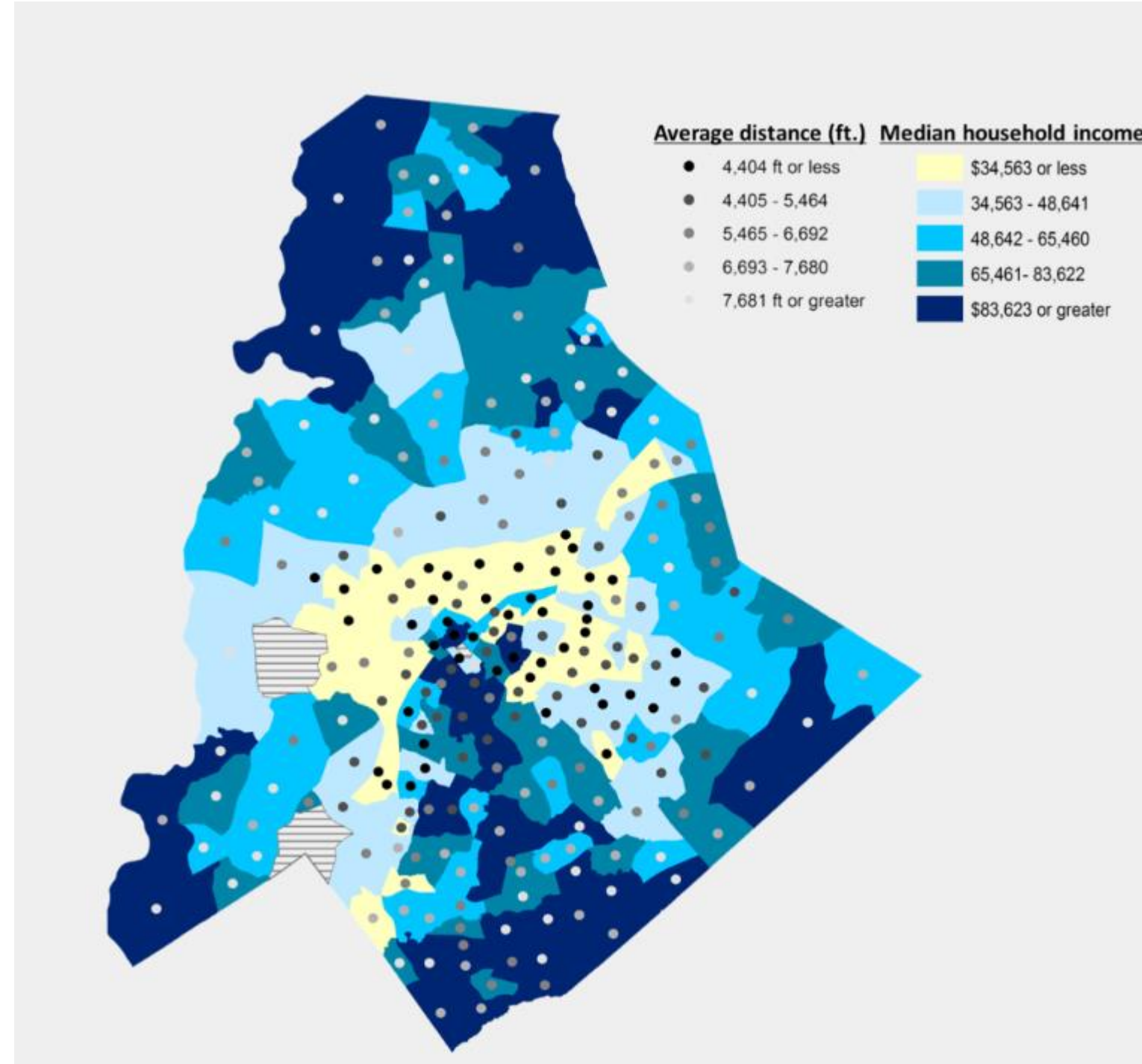
An Analysis of the  
Black Young Adult Consumer Market

Prepared for  
Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp.  
November, 1985

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CounterTools  
UNC Chapel Hill | Amanda Kong



# Menthol & Flavors

Note: Big Tobacco includes e-cigarette manufacturers/sellers.

Same playbook – targeting communities with less political and economic power



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Los Angeles Times

BUSINESS

Column: Studies show how Juul exploited social media to get teens to start vaping



HEALTH AND SCIENCE

## Tobacco giant Altria takes 35% stake in Juul, valuing e-cigarette company at \$38 billion



### Juul pitched products to Native American tribes, congressional investigation finds

BY JESSIE HELLMANN - 02/05/20 01:19 PM EST

MPRnews Sections ▾ Members ▾ More ▾



ON AIR 0:00  
On Point with Meghna Chakrabarti

Health

### Philip Morris is buying an asthma inhaler company. Health groups are suspicious

Bill Chappell September 16, 2021 12:01 p.m.

Share



Book Cover, part of the "Think. Don't Smoke" antismoking campaign by Philip Morris (2000)



## subliminal advertising

the campaign was widely criticized for delivering an underlying subliminal message about cigarettes:

"the snowboard looks like a lit match. The clouds look like smoke, the mountains look like mounds of tobacco at an auction."

Philip Morris, reported that even though the company had changed they would "think long and hard because maybe people are not yet ready for us to supply something like a book cover."

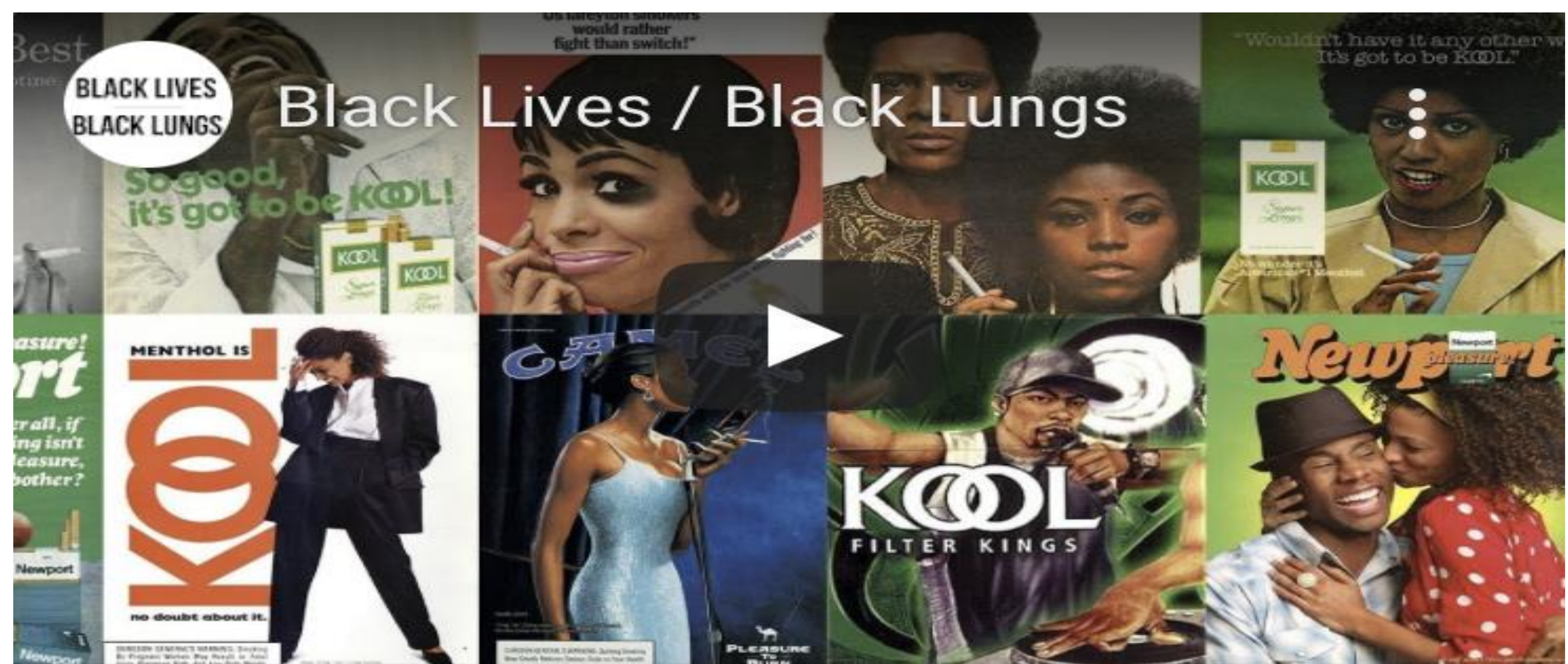
the implication: the problem rested with the community, who had not accepted the new, responsible company policies.

YouTube

Search



Rep. Krishnamoorthi Examines Juul's Marketing Strategy



# Black Lives / Black Lungs

**For more on predatory history of Black community:**  
Lincoln Mondy Black Lives / Black Lungs  
On YouTube or [LincolnMondy.com](http://LincolnMondy.com)







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# Equitable Interventions, Considerations, & Approaches



# Equitable Interventions: On Campus

## Commercial Tobacco-Free Grounds Policy:

- Regulates activity (commercial tobacco use)
  - Covers all products
  - Apply to staff, students, guests/visitors
  - Indoors and outdoors (100% grounds)
  - Addresses tobacco product waste disposal
    - Allows for education and engagement
- Opportunity for staff responsibility and education on products
- Prevent tobacco industry funding/sponsorship



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# Policy Considerations & Approaches: On Campus

## *Context*

- Determinants of health to ensure policies both reflect and work to cure disparities
- Historical context: slavery, historical targeting ... sacred, traditional tobacco (nicotiana rustica, red willow, and/or other native plants)
- Nicotine addiction extremely difficult to treat/quit

## *Equitable enforcement*

- Somewhat a self-enforcing policy – buy-in is important, shared responsibility
- Graduated / progressive disciplinary action instead of zero-tolerance
- Provide student/staff resources (e.g., Employee Assistance Program, Student Health Services)
- Focus: confiscation, student chemical health assessment, tobacco product education, cessation and counseling, programming

## *Approaches*

- Human rights / racial justice
- Environmental impact (plastic pollution)



# Equitable Interventions: Off-Campus

## Full Flavor Bans

Increase Product Prices (tax, min price, coupons)

Reduce Tobacco Retailer Density & Proximity to Schools

Tobacco-Free Generations / Bans on All Tobacco Sales

Addresses product availability and accessibility

Supports students/staff addressing nicotine addiction

School voices needed in public health policy change

State and Local Policies



Flickr | Richard Hurd | Creative Commons

# Policy Considerations & Approaches: Off-Campus

Fund/allow student group involvement,  
research/coursework

Community-Led  
Culturally-Competent

Holistic Approach  
Racial Justice, Human Rights

Enforcement/Penalties: focused on the tobacco  
industry, not individuals



# Nicotine Addiction

## Cessation

Representative Data  
Community-Led Research

Culturally-Competent  
Community-Focused  
Intersectional (Black +)  
Trauma-Informed  
Accessible

Coordination with Student Services  
Insurance Coverage

BIPOC Health Professionals



*Thank you*



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