

# Partner Events on Tobacco Control and Health Equity

In the early months of 2021, national tobacco control advocacy and research partners convened several virtual events relating to health equity in tobacco control, a key priority captured in the [TCN Strategic Map](#). To ensure that this detailed and important partner information is captured and available to the TCN membership, this materials packet summarizes the expert presentations from five virtual events and provides timestamped links within each presentation (when possible) for those interested in listening in on specific discussions to learn more.

## Equitable Policymaking in Commercial Tobacco Control

[ChangeLab Solutions](#), presented as part of the [31st Annual CADCA National Leadership Forum](#)  
Feb. 3, 2021

### [Presentation Link](#)

### Event Description

The following training session was offered during CADCA's 31st Annual National Leadership Forum. Derek Carr, J.D., and Jessica Breslin, J.D., from ChangeLab Solutions present "Equitable Policymaking in Commercial Tobacco Control." This presentation addresses the importance and need for applying a health equity framework in every step of the policymaking and implementation process. It requires not only working to reduce tobacco-related health disparities, but also moving further upstream to address the social and structural determinants—the root causes—of tobacco use and poor health. Read Derek and Jessica's accompanying article at <https://www.geohealthequity.org/equitable-policy-making/>

### Presentation Summary

- [Jessica Breslin, ChangeLab Solutions](#): Jessica provided an overview of what health inequities are, why they exist, and how different policies represent drivers of inequities that inhibit individuals' opportunities to lead healthy lives. She then discussed how a community-centered approach to policymaking can help overcome these barriers.
- [Derek Carr, ChangeLab Solutions](#): Derek summarized the numerous sociodemographic disparities tied to tobacco use and tobacco-related health outcomes. Referencing Jessica's summary, he argued that tobacco-related inequities persist in great part because smoke-free protections are less likely to impact the underserved populations disproportionately shouldering the burdens of tobacco use. Derek offered an equity first approach to tobacco policymaking that moves upstream by addressing root causes of these inequities.
- [Jessica Breslin](#): Jessica discussed enforcement as another avenue in which inequities can present themselves in policy, describing several factors that can result in enforcement differing based on geography and/or population group. She presented several policy options

that can help encourage equitable enforcement and stressed the importance of evaluation to identify and address inadequacies in enforcement.

- [Derek Carr](#): Derek applied the previous information on equitable enforcement to some tobacco-specific policy examples, including purchase, use, and possession (PUP) penalties for youth use, and tobacco-free school discipline practices. He then overviewed additional resources on this topic from ChangeLab Solutions and took participant questions.

## A Cultural Conversation: Intergenerational Tobacco Use and its Cultural Impact on Black Communities

[Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids \(TFK\)](#)

Feb. 24, 7-8 p.m. ET

[Presentation Link](#)

### Event Description

The Campaign for the Culture is an initiative of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids focused on uniting, empowering, educating, and engaging people of color and other targeted communities around critical healthcare and human rights issues connected to tobacco use, with the goal of inspiring the young community members to avoid or quit tobacco use. This comprehensive initiative includes a cultural conversations series, HBCU listening tour, virtual summit, dinner series, and advocate profiles.

The campaign is focused on the following core pillars:

- Educating the public and building awareness in Black and other impacted communities about the harmful effects of tobacco use.
- Engaging the medical community and appealing to providers for support.
- Mobilizing NGOs, policy experts, community leaders, and key stakeholders to activate ground-level support for policies and actions.

For more information, visit: [www.tfk.org/c4tc](http://www.tfk.org/c4tc)

### Presentation Summary

- [Portia Reddick White, TFK](#): Portia provided an overview of the disproportionate burden that the Black community in the US faces as a result of tobacco use and discussed the work that TFK does to implement policies that address this disparity and to engage members of the Black community in this advocacy.
- [John Burns, Burns Brothers](#): John moderated a panel discussion featuring Portia Reddick White, Dr. Leon McDougale (National Medical Association), Shana Davis (Black Women's Health Imperative), and Lincoln Mondy (Advocates for Youth) that centered around strategies to engage different stakeholders in Black communities across the country to uplift and leverage

their voices to prohibit menthol cigarettes and other flavored tobacco products in pursuit of health equity.

- [John Burns](#): John moderated a second panel discussion featuring Derrick Johnson (NAACP), Dr. Kimberly Jeffries Leonard (The Links, Inc.), Carol McGruder (AATCLC) and Bria Gamble (Truth Initiative) that touched on the impact of tobacco use and menthol cigarette use specifically on the health outcomes of Black Americans. They also discussed the health equity and social justice motivations behind political advocacy to eliminate the sale of favored tobacco products and increase the delivery of cessation support to Black Americans and other underserved groups.

## Why Menthol? Why Now?

[Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.](#), the [African American Community Services Agency of San Jose](#), and the [African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council \(AATCLC\)](#)

Feb. 25, 9-10:30 p.m. ET

### [Presentation Link](#)

### Event Description

An event hosted by Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and the African American Community Services Agency of San Jose and supported by the African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council.

### Presentation Summary

- [Virginia Roberts, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority San Jose Alumnae Chapter](#): Virginia discussed the need for this event because of targeted marketing of the tobacco industry which has resulted in disproportionate tobacco use among Black Americans.
- [Carol McGruder, AATCLC](#): Carol discussed the urgent need for legislative action on menthol cigarettes to save Black lives. She argued that prohibiting the sale of menthol products, overwhelmingly the choice of Black Americans who smoke, is not a racist act but rather corrects a racist act done by the 2009 Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, which prohibited all characterizing flavors in cigarettes except for menthol.
- [Dr. Phil Gardiner, AATCLC](#): Dr. Gardiner provided a detailed overview of how the tobacco industry has targeted Black communities for decades in their marketing of mentholated cigarettes, especially through free product giveaways and print advertisements featuring Black men and women. Dr. Gardiner then shared some of the science on how menthol makes cigarette smoking more dangerous and presents a unique harm to Black consumers.
- [Dr. Valerie Yerger, AATCLC](#): Dr. Yerger overviewed the advocacy work of the Sigma Delta Theta sorority in support of menthol prohibition policies, especially in menthol hotspots throughout California.
- [Paula Baker, Santa Clara County Department of Public Health](#): Paula overviewed the burden of tobacco use in Santa Clara County (which includes San Jose) and how it varies significantly between different sociodemographic groups within the county.

- [Milan Balinton, African American Community Service Agency](#): Milan moderated a Q&A session in which speakers addressed questions from virtual event attendees.

## The Culture of Manipulation – How Tobacco Profiteers Use Culture to Con Us

[African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council \(AATCLC\)](#)

April 9, 1-2:30 p.m. ET

[Presentation Link](#)

### Presentation Summary

- [Tracy Brown, AATCLC](#): Tracy provided a welcome to everyone joining the event, including advocates, public health practitioners, lawmakers, educators, and members of the tobacco industry.
- [Carol McGruder, AATCLC](#): Carol overviewed the needs for this presentation to talk about the public health and social justice implications of both menthol cigarette use and hookah use, noting that appeals to tradition and cultural choice have served as motivations for lawmakers to exempt both products from public health legislation.
- [Dr. Steven Millner, Professor Emeritus](#): Dr. Millner overviewed the history of tobacco and its connection to colonialism and the slave trade in the United States, arguing that the widespread manipulation of Black American lives relating to tobacco persists today.
- [Dr. Wael El-Delaimy, UCSD](#): Dr. El-Delaimy described how the harms of hookah use differ from those of cigarettes, and how today's flavors and emerging products go far beyond what's understood as traditional use of hookah products. He argued that hookah is not ubiquitous in Middle Eastern culture – cigarettes are used more commonly than hookah throughout the Middle East – and that its industry members, including hookah bar/lounge owners, make arguments about hookah as cultural tradition in the interest of their own profits.
- [Dr. Phil Gardiner, AATCLC](#): Dr. Gardiner described how menthol in cigarettes and flavorings in hookah/shisha are not safe for inhalation and make the nicotine and other components of combusted tobacco more harmful to the user. He also referenced recent research indicating that flavored tobacco products are preferred by underage and young adult smokers.
- [Nicole Turkson, African Communities Public Health Coalition](#): Nicole introduced several video presentations, including an excerpt from Lincoln Mondy's short film "[Black Lives / Black Lungs](#)", other films, and Zoom discussions providing information on the consumption of menthol cigarettes and hookah products in the United States.
- [Dr. Arnab Mukherjea, CSU East Bay](#): Dr. Mukherjea led a panel discussion that provided additional insight on the presentations made earlier in the event and addressed participant questions. There was also an additional "after hours" panel joined by all speakers on the presentation.

## FDA Response Presser

[AATCLC, The Center for Black Health & Equity](#), and [Public Health Law Center \(PHLC\)](#)

Apr. 29, 10:30-11 a.m. ET

[Presentation Link](#)

### Event Description

On April 29, the FDA provided a court-ordered response to the citizen petition demanding they take action regarding the sale of mentholated tobacco products. This is a huge step in the right direction in continuing to save and protect Black lives! Get the replay of our press conference below.

### Presentation Summary

- Dr. Valerie Yerger, AATCLC (0:00): Dr. Yerger started the press conference describing the FDA announcement as a cause for celebration amidst the tragedy of 47,000 Black lives lost each year in the U.S. to tobacco-related causes. She also outlined FDA's basis for the announcement, describing how these rules will save lives of those disproportionately impacted by tobacco use once implemented.
- Dr. Phil Gardiner, AATCLC (4:18): Dr. Gardiner summarized the history of tobacco companies marketing menthol product brands specifically to Black Americans and the advocacy in opposition to this marketing, leading up to the 2013 citizens petition spearheaded by the PHLC requesting that FDA act on menthol cigarettes and the lawsuit brought against FDA by AATCLC and other partners.
- Delmonte Jefferson, The Center for Black Health & Equity (12:10): Delmonte overviewed the local and national advocacy that grew support for the regulation of menthol and other flavors that led up to that morning's FDA announcement, which he described as a huge victory. He called on FDA to work with Black community and advocacy groups to ensure that culturally appropriate cessation efforts are in place, and repudiated organizations drawing connections between policing of Black Americans and regulation of flavored tobacco.
- Carol McGruder, AATCLC (17:12): Carol summarized the collaborative advocacy work that took place leading up to the FDA announcement, and outlined a plan for future work that includes, state, county, and local legislation leading up to the forthcoming FDA rules being finalized.
- Joelle Lester, PHLC (23:36): Joelle described how the citizens petition on menthol came to be resulting from the work of the other partners on the call. She celebrated the FDA announcement as the type of action needed to affirm that Black lives matter and that Black communities deserve the opportunity to live healthy lives. She also thanked the parties who took on the task of suing the FDA to ask for action on menthol cigarettes.
- Natasha Phelps, PHLC (26:35): Natasha described her appreciation for the FDA announcement incorporating the language of health equity, which she contextualized with broader health equity movements in the Biden Administration and in localities around the country, and also with the oppression and stress that the Black community faces in the U.S.