

INTO THE LIGHT

NO MENTHOL SUNDAY

African American Clergy Defend Their Communities preceding The Wrongful Death Lawsuit of Tony Gwynn's Family Against the Tobacco Industry

Mt. Sinai Missionary Baptist Church of Los Angeles joined religious institutions across the nation as it hosted the first NoMenthol Sunday observance in Southern California. NoMenthol Sunday is a national interfaith effort that educates congregants about the role mentholated and candy-flavored tobacco products play in addicting African Americans to tobacco products. Over 45,000 Black people die every year from tobacco related diseases; it is by far the Number #1 preventable cause of death. NoMenthol Sunday is the African American expression of World No Tobacco Day, which is an international day of observance and resistance against multi-national tobacco companies. It was started by the World Health Organization in 1988 to bring attention to the serious global health issue of tobacco.

The Save Lives-Ban Menthol Coalition was created and took the day as their own when menthol was the only characterizing flavor not banned by the Food and Drug Administration when it was given authority to regulate cigarettes in 2009. The National African American Tobacco Prevention Network, the African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council, and African American leaders, including the Congressional Black Caucus, took umbrage at menthol's exclusion. Adding menthol to cigarettes makes smoking easier to start and harder to quit. By adding this flavoring, tobacco companies have successfully recruited both youth and marginalized populations. This exclusion quickly became a social justice issue because over 80% of Black smokers use mentholated cigarettes, which is a direct result of the pernicious tobacco industry targeting of Black communities. Studies show that placing a ban on menthol may save lives and prevent 9 million people from starting to smoke.



Tony Gwynn
Baseball Hall of
Famer

NoMenthol Sunday preceded the recent lawsuit filed by the family of baseball Hall of Famer Tony Gwynn. Gwynn died of salivary gland cancer in 2014. A wrongful-death lawsuit against the tobacco industry charges that Gwynn had been manipulated into

the addiction that ultimately killed him. The complaint says that while in college, Gwynn was the victim of an industry scheme to get him, a rising star athlete, addicted to smokeless tobacco, even as the industry knew the health dangers it posed to him. The suit says the industry mounted an aggressive targeted campaign to market its products to African-Americans.



**Mt. Sinai Pastor
George E. Hurtt**

Mt. Sinai's Pastor George E. Hurtt prayed and spoke lovingly of the need for congregants to embrace and uplift Black smokers as they seek information and support to stop smoking. Mt. Sinai has a strong health emphasis and regularly includes health promoting activities. The service was well received, with 200

members in attendance.

The NoMenthol Sunday effort was coordinated by Mt. Sinai members Tavon Morrison and Sharmaine White, under the leadership of Dr. Susan Bradshaw, MD, MPH. Dr. Bradshaw works with the Division of Chronic Disease & Injury Prevention for the Department of Public Health in Los Angeles County. As a tobacco treatment specialist and researcher, Dr. Bradshaw spoke passionately about how young people are lured with cigarette packaging that looks like candy, how easy it is to get addicted to nicotine, how hard it is to quit, and more importantly, the deadly impact that tobacco has had on her community. After the services, her team shared resources and information.



**Dr. Susan Bradshaw addresses
Mt. Sinai Congregants**

NoMenthol Sunday events will continue throughout the month of June. To get more information or host an event at your faith institution, please contact Y'Lonn Burris at 888.881.6619 Ext. 104/email: yburris@aatcl.org



**Sharmaine White, Mt. Sinai; Dr. Valerie Yerger, The LOOP Project
Director; Tavon Morrison, Mt. Sinai; Dr. Susan Bradshaw, The
LOOP fellow; Carol McGruder, The LOOP Leadership Specialist**



