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**African-American pastors say keep Juul out**

**ATLANTA –** On May 19, faith leaders across the country will become more vocal about the ways in which Juul is now marketing its harmful products to the African American demographic. They will also express concern for the apparent disregard the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) has shown toward minority youth in not issuing a ban on candy flavored little cigars like Swisher Sweets. No Menthol Sunday annually educates churchgoers about traditional tobacco use among African Americans. This year, the interfaith observance day will pivot to call attention to vaping, e-cigarettes, and menthol-flavored e-juices.

According to the recent National Youth Tobacco Survey, progress made in reducing youth smoking rates has been undermined by the rise in Juul and e-cigarette use. Although use of e-cigarettes by minority youth is significantly lower than White youth, African American health advocates have taken notice of efforts to market to them. Erroneously positioned as a way to help people quit smoking, JuulL ads are now heard on radio stations with large, African American audiences including R&B and hip-hop stations.

“We saw this same sort of thing in the 90s with Uptown cigarettes,” said LaTroya Hester, director of communications for NAATPN, Inc. Hester explained that Uptowns were a menthol cigarette brand designed specifically to attract African Americans. “The Black community protested and boycotted so the brand never made it off the ground. We can take the same approach with Juul,” she said.

The FDA’s potential ban on menthol in combustible cigarettes is promising, but it excludes menthol and mint-flavored e-juices. According to Delmonte Jefferson, executive director of NAATPN, Inc., this is a mistake.

“FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb knows that more than half of children who start smoking start with menthol cigarettes,” says Jefferson. “Why wouldn’t the same be true of e-cigarettes?”

Moreover, Jefferson states that while the FDA is keeping a close eye on Juul, the federal agency is still ignoring the continued prevalence of cigarillo and cigar use among African American youth. The topic, covered frequently over the past few months, is at the heart of No Menthol Sunday.

“NAATPN, Inc. will continue to go city by city and church by church to champion local policy changes just as we have been doing,” Jefferson said.

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