

**“Swisher Ain’t Sweet Community Campaign”  
Action Kit**

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## **“Swisher Ain’t Sweet” Campaign**

### **History**

Swisher International Group, Inc. has introduced a little, menthol cigar called “Swisher Sweets Little Cigars in Menthol”. It was advertised in the October 15, 2001 issue of *JET* Magazine. This little cigar is the latest introduction of a menthol product targeted to the African American community. The company manufactures the cigar in Florida but the headquarter’s address is:

Swisher International Group, Inc.  
20 Thorndal Circle  
Darien, CT 06820  
203-656-8000-phone  
203-656-3151-fax  
Chairman of the Board & CEO: William Ziegler III  
President: Timothy Mann  
Sr. Vice-President of Marketing: Peter Ghiloni

### **The campaign**

#### **Goal**

The goal of the “Swisher Ain’t Sweet” campaign is to remove the product from the market. This goal can be accomplished through community mobilization of youth and adults using the following action steps:

**Action Step #1:** Ask local retailers not to sell Swisher Sweets Little Cigars in menthol.

Community residents and organization can identify retailers that are selling the product such as Walgreens, mini markets, “Mom and Pop” stores, etc. and ask retailers not to sell this product.

**Action Step #2:** Ask magazines not to accept advertising for Swisher Sweets Little Cigars In Menthol

Community residents and organizations will identify magazines and other print media that advertise the product and initiate a letter writing campaign asking that the ads be removed.

**Action Step #3:** Ask the company to withdraw the product from the market

Community leaders, residents and organizations can write to the company asking them to stop the sale and advertising of the product.

## NEWS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release**

**November 28, 2001**

**Contact: Jesse Brown**

**215-450-9416**

### **COMMUNITY AND TOBACCO CONTROL ADVOCATES SAY “SWISHER AIN’T SWEET”**

New Orleans, LA - Community and tobacco control advocates from around the nation have joined with the National Association of African Americans for Positive Imagery (NAAAPI) to denounce the promotion, marketing and sale of little cigars called Swisher Sweets Little Cigars in Menthol. “This product is the latest in the arsenal of weapons aimed at the well-being of the African American community, particularly its youth”, noted Reverend Jesse W. Brown, Jr., head of the National Association of African Americans for Positive Imagery (NAAAPI). “Black youth continue to have one of the lowest smoking rates in the nation and that makes them targets for profit-hungry tobacco manufacturers like Swisher International Group, Inc., who markets and distributes this product”, Rev. Brown continued.

Community groups have voiced their concerns about the advertising of this product, commenting that the ads “are sexually charged”, “promote alcohol use” and “cater to the drug culture”.

“For nearly a decade, African American communities have vigorously opposed all new brands that target Black youth-beginning with the defeat of the test market of Uptown cigarettes in Philadelphia in 1990 and continuing with protests against X cigarette in Boston, Camel Menthols nationally and Marlboro Milds in Pittsburgh and Atlanta. In each case, we have triumphed”, Reverend Brown said.

Stores around the country are being asked to stop selling the product. Publications have been asked to stop promotion of it and Swisher International Group, Inc. has been served notice to stop promoting and marketing Swisher Sweets in Menthol.

“We will continue to mobilize communities to fight the war on the target marketing and promotion of tobacco products to protect the health and well-fare of African Americans, especially the youth of Black America”, proclaimed Rev. Brown

The National Association of African Americans for Positive Imagery was established in 1991 to mobilize communities to eliminate the excessive marketing and promotion of tobacco, alcohol and other harmful products in the African American community and other communities of color.

# Swisher Ain't Sweet!!!

Attention Neighborhood Merchants:

Join us in a Campaign against  
Swisher Sweets Little Menthol Cigars

Refuse to sell them in your stores!

Remove advertising that lures  
the youth of this community!

Thank you for your support!

**Merchant Invitation to Join Campaign  
Swisher Ain't Sweet!**

Dear Merchant:

We, the residents of \_\_\_\_\_, ask you to join this community against the cigar industry by not selling or advertising ***Swisher Sweets Little Cigars in Menthol***. We believe this new product poses an added risk to the children and youth of this community. We ask that you voluntarily agree to remove any ***Swisher Sweets Little Cigars in Menthol*** from your stock and related advertising from your store. Further, we ask that you notify Swisher International Group, Inc. and its local representatives that you will not carry this product now or in the future.

We are asking you to take this action because we believe ***Swisher Sweets Little Cigars in Menthol*** target African American and Latino youth who are the primary audience of mentholated tobacco products. We believe that these groups are the primary targets for the advertising, promotion and sales of Swisher Sweets Little Menthol Cigars.

We are asking you to sign a written pledge showing your support of our community and its children through the removal of Swisher Sweets Little Menthol Cigars and all related advertising and promotion.

We thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

**“Swisher Ain’t Sweet” Community Campaign**

**Pledge of Support**

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**Name of business**

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**Address of business**

To support children and youth, our business establishment has voluntarily agreed to remove all *Swisher Sweets Little Cigars in Menthol* products, related advertising and promotion from our store. We recognize that the health and welfare of our community and its children supersedes any financial gain we may receive from the sale of this cigar.

By taking this action, we hope to stand as a model to other local businesses by putting the needs of our community and its youth first.

I agree with this statement and have the power to make this pledge on behalf of the above-named business establishment.

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**Print Name**

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**Signature**

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**Title**

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**Date**

**“Swisher Ain’t Sweet” Community Campaign**

**Community Petition**

**To:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

We, the undersigned residents of this community, are dismayed by the refusal of your business to voluntarily remove *Swisher Sweets Little Cigars in Menthol* products, advertising and promotion from your location as requested. We, therefore, **demand** such removal immediately and support actions of the community that will facilitate the total withdrawal of all *Swisher Sweets Little Cigars in Menthol* products and advertising.

We take this stand as a way to protect the health of our children and youth.

**Name**

**Address**

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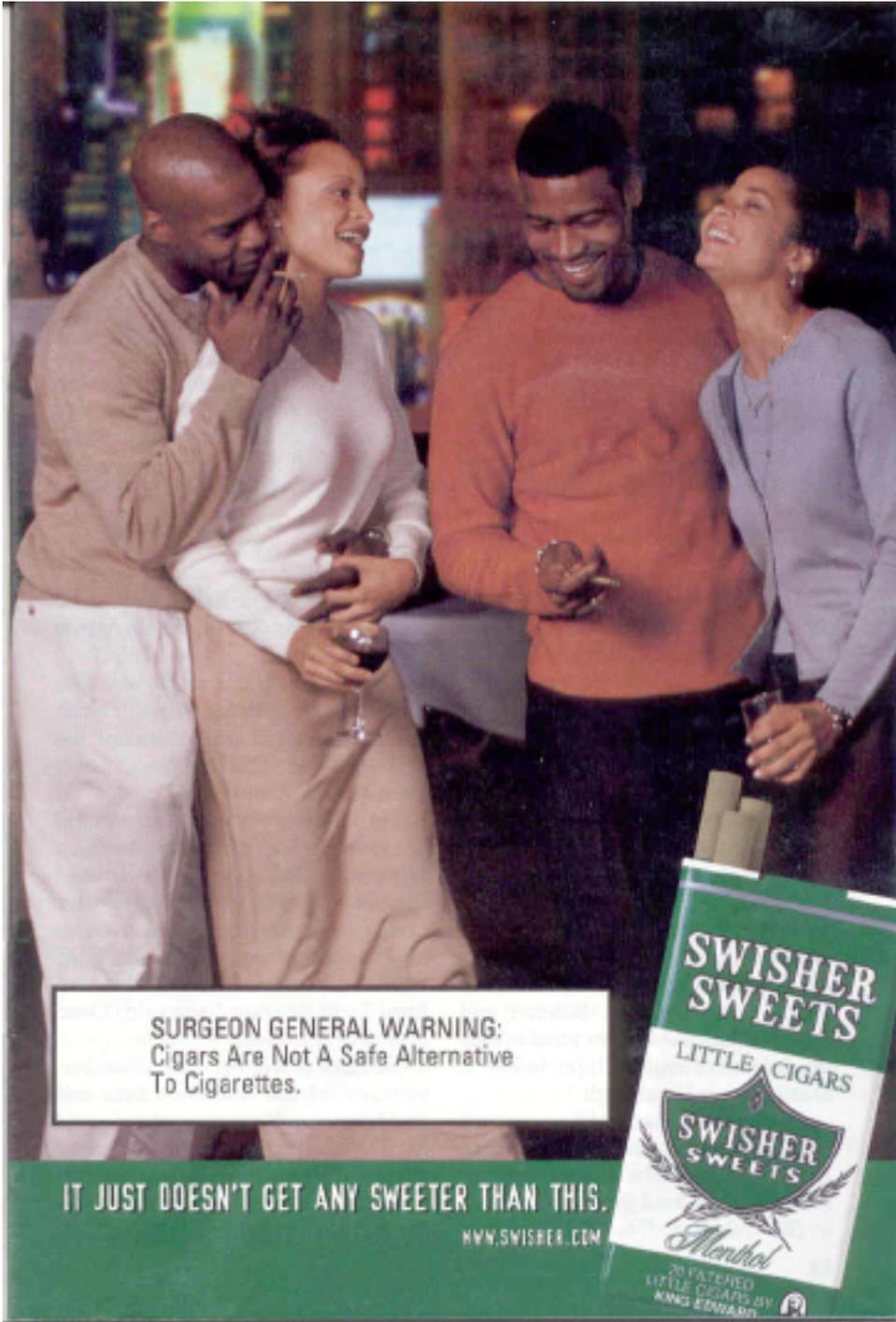
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Copy of the JET Advertisement



**SURGEON GENERAL WARNING:**  
Cigars Are Not A Safe Alternative  
To Cigarettes.

**IT JUST DOESN'T GET ANY SWEETER THAN THIS.**  
[WWW.SWISHER.COM](http://WWW.SWISHER.COM)

**SWISHER SWEETS**  
LITTLE CIGARS  
**SWISHER SWEETS**  
*Menthol*  
20 FILTERED  
LITTLE CIGARS BY  
KING EDWARD

November 15, 2001

William Ziegler III  
Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer  
Swisher International Group, Inc.  
20 Thorndal Circle  
Darien, CT 06820

Dear Mr. Ziegler,

I am writing this letter on behalf of the National Association of African Americans for Positive Imagery (NAAAPI) regarding your advertising, promotion, marketing and distribution of the little cigars called ***Swisher Sweets Little Cigars in Menthol***. This product is but another in the arsenal of weapons aimed at undermining the well being of the African American community, particularly its youth.

The tobacco product market is saturated with menthol products which are used by three-fourths of African Americans. The advertising and promotion of your little cigars is sexually charged, promotes alcohol use and caters to the drug culture. This type of advertising is a great lure to the youth of Black America and encourages them to develop a habit that will deliberately shorten their life span.

NAAAPI and its coalition of tobacco control advocates demand that you stop the advertising, promotion and marketing of this product immediately. Communities around the country must be rid of the tobacco industry invasion of it with weapons of illness and death.

Sincerely,

Reverend Jesse W. Brown, Jr.  
Acting Executive Director

November 19, 2001

John H. Johnson  
Publisher and Chief Executive Officer  
Johnson Publishing Company, Inc.  
820 S. Michigan Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60605

Dear Mr. Johnson,

The National Association of African Americans for Positive Imagery (NAAAPI) is writing this letter regarding the advertisement of **Swisher Sweets Little Cigars in Menthol** in your October 15, 2001 issue of *JET* Magazine. We were dismayed to see the promotion of another tobacco product to the African American community in a publication held in high regard in the Black community, especially among families. This ad is yet another example of target marketing of tobacco products to African American youth.

The tobacco product market is saturated with menthol products which are used by three-fourths of African American smokers. These same African Americans are disproportionately affected by the illnesses and death caused by the use of these products. This type of advertising is a great lure to the youth of Black America and encourages them to develop a habit that will debilitate, shorten their life span and, as reliable statistics show, encourages drug-related violence. This particular advertisement is sexually charged, promotes alcohol use and caters to the drug culture.

NAAAPI and its coalition of tobacco control advocates demand that you stop the advertising and promotion of this product immediately. The African American community has enough negative images to fight without having to fight against another one in a publication that African Americans have learned to trust.

Sincerely,

Reverend Jesse W. Brown, Jr.  
Acting Executive Director

## AFRICAN AMERICANS AND TOBACCO FACT SHEET

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### **African Americans and Cigars**

- Cigar use is the second most preferred product used in middle school. African American middle school students (8.8%) were significantly more likely to smoke cigars than white students (4.9%).
- A host of factors have been identified as contributing to the increases in African American smoking rates the glamorization of tobacco products, especially cigars...
- Some African Americans empty out the insides of cigars and refill them with marijuana and/or crack/cocaine, among other substances. These concoctions called “Philly Blunts” have augmented cigar and tobacco use among teenage Blacks.

### **African Americans and Menthol**

- Approximately 3 of every 4 African American smokers prefer menthol cigarettes.
- Dangerous elements of mentholated cigarettes, including a form of rat poison added to cigarettes, are more poisonous because smokers inhale light-tasting menthol cigarettes more deeply.
- Menthol brands are more additive than any other brand.

### **African Americans and Target Marketing**

- A one year study found that three major African American publications – Ebony, JET and Essence- received proportionately higher profits from cigarette advertisement than did other magazines.
- The tobacco industry has historically developed brands of menthol cigarettes in an attempt to appeal to African Americans. Menthol brands are heavily advertised in African-American communities and black-oriented magazines.
- The release of tobacco industry documents confirms years of suspicion that tobacco companies especially targeted African Americans. Documents show that as early as the 1960’s, the motivations of the “Negro” tobacco consumer was a major concern.

## **Sources-African Americans and Tobacco Fact Sheet**

*(American Legacy Foundation in association with the CDC Foundation, "The 1999 National Youth Tobacco Survey)*

*(New York Times, Barry Meier, "Data on Tobacco Show a Strategy Aimed at Blacks", 1998)*

*(New York Times, Jane Gross, "Young Blacks Link Tobacco Use to Marijuana", April 22, 1998)*

*(Centers for Disease Control, "Tobacco Information and Health Promotion", November 2, 2000)*

*(Office of Missouri Attorney General, "NEWS, Jeremiah W. Nixon, "September 6, 2000)*

*(U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "Tobacco Use Among U.S. Racial /Ethnic Minority Groups", 1998)*

*(U.S. Department of Health, "Improving the Health of the Poor")*

## ***The National Association of African Americans for Positive Imagery***

### **FACT SHEET**

The National Association of African Americans for Positive Imagery (NAAAPI - pronounced "nappy") is a non-profit, educational organization that was formed in 1991 in Greensboro, NC by African American activists. Its headquarters are currently in Philadelphia, PA.

The primary goal of NAAAPI is to eliminate the marketing of tobacco, alcohol and other harmful products in communities of color throughout the nation. In doing so, NAAAPI provides technical assistance to local groups around the country in support of media and advertising images of African Americans that are positive and healthy. It opposes images that are negative and harmful.

NAAAPI has succeeded in reducing the impact of the tobacco and alcohol industry by mobilizing communities throughout the United States in eliminating products targeted to African Americans.

- Leading a national campaign to mobilize communities to oppose the marketing of Swisher Sweets Menthol Cigars.
- Lead organization in support of *World No Tobacco Day* (May 31<sup>st</sup>) in the United States as lead organization
- Spearheading a landmark civil lawsuit against the manufacturers of menthol cigarettes
- Established a national campaign against the menthol cigarette Marlboro Milds which resulted in a revamped marketing strategy by the tobacco industry (2000)
- Increased awareness of the impact of environmental tobacco smoke through radio PSA's in the *Let Children Breathe Free* campaign (2000)
- Campaigned with the National Center for Tobacco-Free Kids in exposing the excessive marketing of Newport cigarettes to Black youth (1999)
- Conducted the *Say No to Menthol Joe* community crusades that influenced stopping the sale of Camel menthol cigarettes by Walgreen pharmacy chains. Gave the FTC supportive documentation to regula Camel advertising icon (1997)
- Opposed the marketing of malt liquor in Black communities resulting in the recall of Phat Boy, PowerMaster and Crazy Horse malt liquors (1991 - 1995)
- Led campaign to whitewash tobacco billboards in communities of color (1991 - 1993)
- Defeated the marketing of Uptown cigarettes, Hang Time Chewing Gum (resembled chewing tobacco and endorsed by Michael Jordan) and X cigarettes (1990 - 1995)

Funding for NAAAPI comes from individual contributions, foundations and governmental support.

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### ***Mobilizing Communities To A Healthier Lifestyle***

*1231 North Broad Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19122*

*215.235.6488 (Tel)  
215.235.6491 (Fax)*

[http://www.nola.com/news/t\\_p/neworleans/index.ssf?/newsstory/o\\_smoke29\\_.html](http://www.nola.com/news/t_p/neworleans/index.ssf?/newsstory/o_smoke29_.html)  
New Orleans News

## **Drugstore removes cigar from shelves**

### **Manager persuaded by activists' protest**

**11/29/01**

**By John Pope**

Staff writer/The Times\_Picayune

Surrounded by about 50 ministers and public-health experts, a Canal Street drugstore manager earned cheers Wednesday afternoon by giving in - at least temporarily - to their request to pull Swisher Sweets menthol cigars from the shelves.

"I think if enough people ask me to do something, I should look into it," Brian Tehas told the group, which had marched to the Walgreens at Baronne Street from a national anti-smoking conference three blocks away at the Marriott Hotel.

"Sir, you have gained my respect," Bishop Sherwood Carthen of Sacramento, Calif., said as he shook Tehas' hand.

Although Tehas' action blunted the protest, the removal may be temporary, he said, depending on what Walgreens' national office tells him to do.

The rally was part of a national campaign organized by the National Association of African Americans for Positive Imagery because the cigars' advertising campaign is designed to get more young black people to light up, said the Rev. Jesse Brown of Philadelphia, the group's leader, at a pre-march press conference and pep rally.

This type of marketing is "an insidious kind of approach," said the Rev. B.T. Rice of St. Louis.

It apparently is working because young African-Americans are smoking more cigars than their white counterparts, said Charyn Sutton, a consultant who researched the subject for Brown's organization. According to a national survey of middle-schoolers, nearly 9 percent of black youngsters who smoked used cigars, compared with nearly 5 percent of white pupils.

"That is a frightening statistic," she said.

No one at Swisher International Group Inc., the cigar's manufacturer, could be reached for comment.

The demonstration, which was part of the National Conference on Smoking or Health, followed a session in which an Assumption Parish teen-ager urged leaders to be more active in keeping children from lighting up.

That action will have to be something besides the standard messages about the risks of cancer and heart disease because that approach isn't working, Ritney Castine said. A survey by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found the state's lung-cancer death rate to be nearly 22 percent above the national average.

"If somebody isn't telling the kids about the hazards of smoking at a level they can relate to, no doctor or politician is going to make them stop," Castine said.

According to CDC figures, Louisiana is 47th in the country in tobacco-control spending, with a budget of \$1.6 million this year. Of that amount, \$1.1 million comes from the federal government.

"We're at the bottom of the barrel," said Dr. Richard Scribner, a preventive medicine specialist at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center. "We're doing nothing, and it's getting worse."

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