



Award Designation and Category: BRONZE Multicultural

Campaign Title: Read Between the Lies

Year the campaign took place: 2020



Brand: truth

Creative Agency: 72andSunny

Media Agency: Assembly

Research Company: Assembly

Additional Affiliated Companies: Crux Research, Bridge Analytics

Summary of the marketing challenge, methodology, insight discovered, creative execution and business impact.

Big Tobacco has a long racist history of targeting the Black community. Truth provided a platform for Black youth to spotlight Big Tobacco's racism by letting them read aloud what Big Tobacco has said about or done to their community. Black youth recognizing Big Tobacco as racist and agreeing that JUUL is exploiting youth in Black communities reduces their chances of ever vaping or smoking.

Consumer Insight

After hearing Big Tobacco's repulsive racist words, Black people were less likely to use tobacco products.



Marketing Challenge

Our challenge was to establish Big Tobacco as a clear and present danger to the Black community. Truth Initiative is a U.S. nonprofit committed to achieving a culture where all young people reject smoking, vaping, and nicotine. We've helped drive down the youth smoking rate from 23% in 2000 to 3.5% in 2019.¹ But the horrifying truth is, even after decades of progress, tobacco-related disease is still the number one case of death in the Black community. More than 72,000 African Americans are diagnosed with a tobacco-related cancer each year.²

Big Tobacco has a long history of targeting the Black community with predatory marketing – and its racist tactics continue today. In cities like Washington DC, Big Tobacco advertises 10X more in Black neighborhoods.^{3,4} They've aggressively targeted the Black community with menthol cigarettes for decades all while financially contributing to and aligning themselves with Black leaders and politicians to fight menthol policy efforts that would save Black lives.

When police brutality ignited Black Lives Matter protests around the globe in the summer of 2020, nearly every part of society was examined through a lens of racial justice. Young Black Americans led the way. What didn't make their list was Big Tobacco. This was not surprising: Tobacco takes a lifetime to kill... its effects and impact on the Black community are divorced from day-to-day life.

We couldn't let the next generation of young Black people fall victim to Big Tobacco's playbook of racial exploitation. truth® research has shown that 40% of Black youth are unaware that Big Tobacco targeted them with tailored advertising. Our research also shows that youth who recognize that they are being exploited by Big Tobacco's racist tactics are almost 2x as likely to say they didn't intend to try their products.



Methodology

1. Pre-Campaign Benchmark / Assessment

The first step in developing the creative content was to reframe Big Tobacco as a modern threat to the Black community. Our research shows that increasing anti-industry sentiment towards Big Tobacco reduces young people's likelihood to trying tobacco products.⁵ We found similar trends using Truth's ongoing tracking study that surveys over 200 young people (15% Black) weekly. This data showed that knowing they were being targeted by Big Tobacco correlated strongly with young Black attitudes against tobacco and lower intentions to smoke: Black participants who agreed with the statement that JUUL is exploiting youth in Black communities were almost 2X as likely to say they didn't intend to try tobacco, compared to those who didn't agree with the statement.

2. Copy Testing

A second formative stage included testing our ads with 300 respondents age 15-24 years old to measure appeal, receptivity, relevance and self-identification with the message. Our message was perceived as relevant to their generation, reinforcing that we were effective in reaching broad audiences. More Black respondents reported that ads got their attention than their non-Black counterparts. Ads appealed more to the Black community than their non-Black counterparts, and Black participants reported that they found the ads meaningful. The ads drove people to take action, with more Black respondents reporting they would "definitely" or "probably" be part of a movement than their non-Black participants.

3. Continually Tracking In-Market Success

Next, we measured the performance of the ad with post-campaign evaluation measures. This included a real-time monitoring survey to follow trends in ad likeability and receptivity over time. In-market testing occurred while the ad executions were aired across media platforms. In-market tracking allowed us to determine if we lowered intention to use tobacco/vape products among Black youth. When people understand Big Tobacco's manipulation, they're less likely to use their products. We benchmarked self-reported intent to use tobacco products against our gold standard measure – a standard that averages the 13 best performing ads Truth has aired since 2014 and ranks our top performing ads in likeability and receptivity amongst our youth.



audience. Post launch, we saw a dramatic increase from the baseline statistic in Black youth who agreed that JUUL is exploiting youth in Black communities, and our audience reported that they would be less likely to use tobacco/vaping products.



Creative Execution

Bringing the Idea to Life

Read Between the Lines put young Black voices in the driver's seat to confront Big Tobacco's racist words and actions. The leap between our idea and our execution is intentionally small. The most powerful way to bring it to life was to get out of the way to let young Black people show their generation what it looks like to come face to face with Big Tobacco's words and actions. In other words? This wasn't about truth saying that Big Tobacco exploits Black people; this was about Black people saying Big Tobacco exploits Black people.

Our North Star

In June 2020, the unconscionable murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery ignited Black Lives Matter protests globally. With it came a summer of brands that seemed to be hopping on the Black Lives Matter movement bandwagon. Lest we come off as another such brand, we developed this campaign with a clear north star: be of service, not performative. This meant ensuring our work did not come off as victimhood or trauma voyeurism. We wanted to ensure the entire campaign created a sense of empowerment and agency as the Black community took on Big Tobacco. This guided us creatively as we put our audience and their reaction at the center of the story and in media, delivering this message from the Black community to the Black community first, then scaling more broadly.

Make it personal

Young Black people first confronted Big Tobacco on social media. We kicked off with an activation on Tik Tok and Twitter that invited influencers and activists to react to Big Tobacco's racist words and actions. Presented with a quote from Big Tobacco, they reacted in whatever way was true to their online persona and channel.

Scale the emotion

After we had primed the conversation, we launched our film campaign with micro-targeting to the Black community and then scaled to non-Black young people. The concept was simple: what Big Tobacco has said about or done to the Black community – read by the Black community. It was designed to be as raw and real as possible. Deadpan to camera, with a strong empathic



realness. For the production, we handed over the keys to director Rodney Lucas, whose mission is to “direct soulful content - through the eyes of Black voices.”

Let them go deeper

We encouraged our audience to dive deeper into the truth on our website and yet again asked young Black voices to steer the narrative. Here, a young Black activist created an hour-long documentary called “Black Lungs, Black Lives”, adding depth to our story. Our director also detailed his motivations for joining the project in a behind-the-scenes featurette.

Media Budget: \$500,000-\$999,000



Business Results/Lessons Learned

Result 1:

The Black community recognizes Big Tobacco is a modern threat. In pre-market testing the campaign proved more motivating, inspiring, powerful, and hopeful to our target audience of young Black people compared to the general population.

Result 2:

When surveyed 8 weeks post-launch, young Black people are significantly more likely to agree with statements about Big Tobacco's racist actions, compared to their Non-Black counterparts. **We saw an increase post-campaign in Black youth who agreed that JUUL is exploiting youth in black communities.** With sparked anger and increased motivation, our audience reported that they would be less likely to use tobacco products.

Result 3:

Read Between the Lies met or surpassed our long-term general population standard of effectiveness of truth's most impactful work. Read Between the Lies showed the Black community that Big Tobacco is an immediate threat - lifting their perception that Big Tobacco was exploitative and racist. The ultimate result: Black youth and young people said they are less likely to ever want to smoke or vape, helping halt the cycle of addiction that Big Tobacco started decades earlier and ultimately reduce the appalling numbers of African Americans who succumb to tobacco-related cancer every year.



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