

WALKING IN TRUTH

International No Menthol Sunday provides a portal of entry for congregations to organize and mobilize our faith to challenge and counter the deception and manipulation emanating from commercial tobacco manufacturers and their allies. Truth be told, tobacco, including menthol and other flavors, is still the number one killer of African Americans — killing more people than all other preventable causes combined. This is the muddy window into the epidemic before the pandemic! The disproportionate negative impact to the respiratory status of our sisters and brothers in Black, immigrant, and people of color communities has been further exacerbated by the virulence of COVID-19. Our faithfulness to walk in truth will enable us to deepen our commitment to accompaniment through support to break every chain of addiction. Accompaniment will advance the improvement of our communal health outcomes.

Walking in truth also demands a commitment to ensure equitable enforcement of commercial tobacco control laws. There has been much discussion about the possible 'unintended consequences' that restricting the sale of mentholated tobacco products might have on the Black community. Due to decades of the tobacco industry's pernicious racialized targeting of our community with these products, African American smokers overwhelmingly smoke menthol products, with some making the claim that menthol is somehow a part of our culture. But the so-called African American 'cultural affinity' or preference for menthol is the direct result of decades of predatory marketing. Furthermore, the intended consequences of proven destruction caused by smoking far outweighs the unintended consequences based on speculation. Therefore, it is imperative to adhere to best practices in the enforcement of tobacco regulations. At the heart of our faith is the undying hope for improvement of lives along with the upliftment of communities with racial and health equity as our endgame.

Please check out <https://youtu.be/eMeIZVyCkjs> for a conversation presented on the *Faith Without Borders* podcast commemorating **International No Menthol Sunday**. The focus of the podcast is on saving ALL Black lives from the tobacco industry's predatory marketing tactics. Additionally, we explore strategies to advance the health and safety of Black families and communities.

Beloved, as we march, sing and dance through this portal of **International No Menthol Sunday**, I pray that this truth will set us free with restoration of vitality to achieve good success and ultimately be in the best of health. For additional resources, visit www.nomentholsunday.org. God has no greater joy than for God's children to walk and live in truth.

Onward,

Rev. Kelvin Sauls

Director, Interfaith Communities
Community Health Councils *



3 John 1:2-4 2

Beloved, I pray that in every way you may succeed and prosper and be in good health [physically], just as [I know] your soul prospers [spiritually]. 3 For I was greatly pleased when [some of the] brothers came [from time to time] and testified to your [faithfulness to the] truth [of the gospel message], that is, how you are walking in truth. 4 I have no greater joy than this, to hear that my [spiritual] children are living [their lives] in the truth. (Amplified Bible)