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CORE Spokesman's Statement on FDA Menthol Cigarette Hearing

SILVER SPRING, Md., Oct. 8 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Congress of Racial Equality's National Spokesperson Niger Innis today questioned whether a Food and Drug Administration committee is headed toward a "government-knows-best moment" as they examine menthol cigarettes.

A FDA scientific panel is meeting today and tomorrow as part of a review of menthol cigarettes. Innis believes that this panel is the beginning of a process that could lead to the prohibition of menthol cigarettes, which are popular with African-Americans who smoke.

"This is the wrong way to attack the legitimate problem of health disparities in the Black community," Innis said. "Government's efforts to demonize menthol flavored cigarettes will simply add yet another government imposed prohibition on a legal activity, hence another government restriction on people's ability to exercise their liberty."

Niger pointed to clearly immoral past government initiatives like the Tuskegee Experiment and similar trials performed on several hundred Guatemalans in the 1940s, both launched with the best intentions of improving Americans' public health. He said "before government promotes actions like these that usurp individual choice and liberty, they should remember the horrific 'unintended consequences' that can result."

He added: "CORE is urging the FDA, in the strongest terms, not to jump to conclusions about menthol cigarettes – simply because they are popular among blacks. It would be a serious mistake to single out a flavor popular with blacks without solid scientific evidence regarding any harmful effects of menthol."

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