

NEWS ANALYSIS

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Senegal: now you see it, now you don't—PM's April Fool's joke on Clinton

When President Clinton arrived in Dakar, Senegal on 31 March 1998, on an exuberant tour to promote trade and goodwill in West Africa, he probably didn't realise that another American icon had already beaten him to the sale.

The "Marlboro Man" had long since established himself as the number one American businessman in town (see *Tobacco Control* 1997;6:243-5). Months before Clinton's arrival, Philip Morris had no qualms about cashing in on Senegalese youth's fascination with the United States. "Come to Marlboro Country", invited large billboards at every turn. "America, here I come!", exclaimed a poster for L & M, Marlboro's sister brand, sporting a trendy, young, white couple sharing a smoke beside a pay 'phone before they zip off to New York City on their shiny new motorcycle. "Win a trip to the US with L & M", it enticingly announced to passers by.

Philip Morris even employed Senegal's best loved wrestler, Mohamed "Tyson" Ndao (namesake of the American boxer Mike), often seen wearing an American flag during his trademark victory dance, to plug their addictive sticks. Last autumn, a television advertisement showed a close up of Tyson giving the "thumbs up" sign as the camera panned "M-A-R-L-B-O-R-O".

Clinton and his entourage, including 250 journalists, saw none of the starred and striped tobacco hype. Perhaps fearful that the president, on a rare step outside Air Force One, would catch a glimpse of his cowboy kinsman and cry "Foul play!", Philip Morris had taken acute pains to cover the "evidence", strategically banishing all their advertising: radio, posters, and billboards.

Philip Morris had good reason to be afraid. Proposed tobacco legislation in the United States at the time was calling for strict international tobacco control measures which would bar government funds from being used to promote American tobacco overseas; further, it called for increased funding for overseas tobacco control via international agencies such as the World Health Organisation, UNICEF and through an American-sponsored technical assistance body, and a code of conduct for American tobacco companies abroad comparable to domestic anti-tobacco laws; and a crack down on tobacco smuggling.

Furthermore, the US State Department had issued a new directive on international tobacco policy less than two months earlier, encouraging American embassies to "assist and promote tobacco-control efforts in host countries".

According to one local radio station technician with a friend working for Marlboro, Philip Morris pulled all their radio advertisements during the week coinciding with the president's and first lady's visit. Local store owners in the Grand Dakar neighbourhood confirmed that Philip Morris representatives had paid a visit to remove posters before the Clintons' arrival. The explanation given to one store owner was that the "mayor of Dakar has put a tax on posters". Funny timing, and since when has Marlboro been so "poor"?

With Clinton gone, Philip Morris began repainting whole storefronts in red and white, a strategy often used by other products to dominate and eliminate competing advertising. And the Western cowboy's omnipresence



A young Senegalese mother holding her Marlboro-bedecked son (not quite two years old).



A young boy getting the feel of a Marlboro pack.

was again as strong as ever. Sexily clad Marlboro women hand out free cigarettes in popular nightclubs. Toddlers in rural villages sport "Marlboro" outfits. And Dakar schoolchildren were spotted carrying their books in red and white "Marlboro" backpacks. Philip Morris' great April Fool's Joke in Senegal was over.

"If Americans know cigarettes kill people, how come they let 'Marlboro' promote them in Africa?" a young Senegalese man, sharing a smoke with his buddies, asked in genuine wonder. Good question. It is at the very heart of the international tobacco hypocrisy that Philip Morris wishes to cover up.

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How to make the US State Department's tobacco directive work for you: Senegal's case

It is laudable that the State Department issued a directive on American international policy on tobacco in February 1998. At the same time it represents no real change in policy.

Old fair trade rhetoric and a new pro-health agenda aren't easily squared, as the directive clearly indicates. Wrought with the old misguided logic of the "legal" product, its policy objective of ensuring American companies "equal access to a shrinking global market for tobacco" echoes the old USTR (United States trade representative) mentality: "We know cigarettes are bad, but hey, we've got to help 'poor' American companies get their 'fair' share of the pie!" This ignores the fact that these companies' marketing techniques are often more aggressive. The result? American companies end up, not only hogging the pie, but also increasing its size.

Furthermore the policy suffers from a lack of "teeth". Although the first guideline of the directive explicitly states: "Posts [embassy officials] are encouraged to assist and promote tobacco-control efforts in host countries," there is no mention of how exactly posts might do so. American embassies are not in the business of providing financial assistance to local non-governmental organisations. That's the job of the United States Agency for International

Development (USAID), but USAID's five-year plan focuses on family planning, child and maternal health, and AIDS prevention—and not tobacco control.

There is little evidence so far that local anti-tobacco movements have benefited from the measure—except in Senegal. Perhaps the Senegalese example can give tobacco control groups elsewhere ideas on how best to approach their local American embassy and make the directive work for them.

The key for tobacco control groups is to think of ways American embassies can lend support without using American funds or compromising their integrity as a front for official United States policy. Perhaps the folks in Senegal have a good deal: Ambassador Dane F Smith is a member of Action on Smoking and Health (USA) and confesses to "biting his tongue" when forced to deal with American tobacco companies. In a brief meeting with the ambassador, he acknowledged having read a *New York Times* article on American corporations selling cigarettes in Senegal through liberal use of American imagery. Familiar with the State Department's directive, he was openly receptive to the idea of lending support to Senegal's anti-tobacco movement.

Although the ambassador could not endorse any specific organisation, he agreed to issue a public statement on the occasion of World No-Tobacco Day: "Growing up Tobacco Free" (31 May 1998). This statement ran in at least one local paper and served as important foreign political support for the local anti-tobacco activists' cause.

After World No-Tobacco Day, the new anti-tobacco federation wrote a letter of introduction to Ambassador Smith, also thanking him for issuing the public statement, and inquiring as to whether the embassy had any old computers available for donation. The response was favourable and two months later a shiny new-looking computer found a new home at the federation. This generous donation will allow the federation to establish itself much more rapidly, by making everything from letter writing to electronic communication much more efficient.

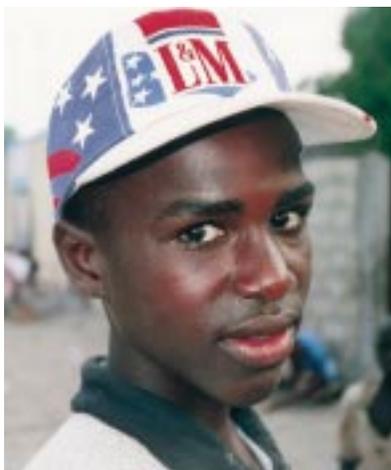
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EU/UK: ad ban busting plan

Tobacco control advocates in the United Kingdom and other western European countries which have not yet banned tobacco promotion are busy trying to ensure the effectiveness of legislation being drafted under the European Union's ad ban directive. Of greatest concern is some governments' apparent weakness of resolve. The cause of this is unclear, but may be presumed to be exacerbated by budgetary restrictions and the near certainty of the industry's now routine twin procedures of (a) legal challenges and (b) deliberate "breach-and-see" tactics to test out the government's commitment to its new law.

The big loophole in the EU ad ban is on branding of non-tobacco products. However, the wording does not give an unqualified exemption as a right. The relevant article in the directive (98/43/EC, 3, para 2) says that the ad ban "shall not prevent the member states from allowing a brand name already used in good faith for both tobacco products and for other goods and services traded or offered . . . prior to July 1998 to be used for the advertising of those other goods and services." This wording does not require member states to exempt brand stretching, but merely allows them the



L&M hats, Lucky Strike shorts, Marlboro baby clothes: ways in which American companies increase the size of the market pie in Senegal.



Alaska's Ramy Brooks an accomplished "dog musher", is the spokesperson for the Iditarod tobacco free project.

to raise public awareness about modern health plagues including alcohol abuse, AIDS, and now tobacco use.

Smoking and smokeless tobacco use rates in Alaska are among the highest in the United States. The problem is particularly severe among Alaska Natives (indigenous peoples), as detailed in the 1998 report of the United States Surgeon General (see *Tobacco Control* 1998;7:198–209). Nearly half of Alaska Native adults use tobacco. It is not uncommon for pre-school age children to become addicted to smokeless tobacco, which is sometimes given to teething babies.

The educational component of Trampling Tobacco was the Iditarod Tobacco Free Project. The target population was young people, particularly in rural Alaska, including Eskimos, Indians, and Aleuts.

Ramy Brooks, a promising young dog musher (as the driver of a dog team is known in Alaska), was chosen to act as a spokesperson and role model for the project. Brooks is the son, grandson, and great-grandson of famous Athabascan and Eskimo dog mushers, who continues a family legacy each time he races. His motto is, "The 1100 mile race to Nome takes everything the dogs and I have got. I'm glad to be tobacco free!" Brooks has finished the Iditarod in the top 20 positions during each year of the Iditarod Tobacco Free Project.

During the 1994–1998 races, Brooks spoke with reporters about the project and recorded radio and television advertisements for statewide broadcast. His image has also appeared on anti-tobacco posters and trading cards. Brooks is Alaska's healthy counter-image to the Marlboro Man.

While the Marlboro Man's goal is to lure young people into smoking, Ramy is the real-life hero who models good health by being tobacco-free and finishing among the top mushers in the Iditarod Race.

Ramy and his lead dog, Bruce, have visited many schools statewide and talked with young people about the dangers of tobacco. In his presentations, he emphasised that to be a top athlete you must be tobacco-free. After all, as Ramy points out, his dogs don't use tobacco! As a result of the publicity, Ramy has received posters, cards, and letters from youngsters across the country showing their appreciation and excitement.

The primary component of the Iditarod Tobacco-Free Project is a tobacco prevention curriculum for fifth and sixth graders (10–12 years old) that has been continually modified and expanded. In 1997, a board game was developed to use in conjunction with the curriculum. Nearly 700 schools statewide were notified by mail of the Iditarod Tobacco-Free Curriculum. Teachers who requested it were sent the packet to implement during the Iditarod.

Based on feedback from teachers who implemented the curriculum and community members who participated in the Iditarod project, the impact was positive. This was especially true for the young people who live in the villages and towns that serve as checkpoints along the Iditarod trail. In each of the checkpoint locations, youngsters became involved in direct tobacco prevention activities and supported Ramy as he competed tobacco-free in the Iditarod Race.

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Seizing the microphone on Capitol Hill

In September, I attended a "March on Cancer" in Washington, DC, together with a conference sponsored by the Alliance for Lung Cancer Advocacy, Support and Education (ALCASE).

Before leaving my home in Michigan for the nation's capital, I was informed that, although the march was well-intentioned on the part of the grassroots organisers, it would focus entirely on generating funding for research into the treatment and cure of cancer. It had also become a promotional vehicle for a number of major pharmaceutical and medical products companies. There would be no focus at all on prevention, since there is no money in that, even though prevention is an essential component of the fight against cancer. This is especially true of cigarette smoking, since it is responsible for more cancer than any other cause.

Following the conference, I went with a group of ALCASE staff and volunteers to the Friday night "candlelight vigil" that served as the big kick-off to the next day's march. One of the volunteers, my friend Susan Soloway Levine, lost her daughter at the age of 28 to cigarette-caused lung cancer earlier in the year. There were several thousand people attending the event by the Lincoln Memorial and the Reflecting Pool, and an enormous stage was set up, along with large screens, spotlights, and a large, elevated platform in front of the stage for dozens of reporters and cameras. A number of prominent people spoke—the Reverend Jesse Jackson, Olympic skater Scott Hamilton, former "junk bond king" and prostate cancer survivor Michael Milken, and professional tennis player Andrea Jaeger, among others—some quite movingly.

The Reverend Jackson preached well, as always, but like the others, he never once mentioned cigarette smoking, tobacco, or lung cancer (which, in the anti-cancer community, is known as the "invisible cancer," getting relatively little attention because of the low survival rate and the general disinterest of the pharmaceutical and corporate medical community), al-

though he chose to mention diet as a particularly serious problem for the African American community. These speeches went on for a full hour. With only half an hour remaining, literally not one word had been said about tobacco.

Like others in our group, Susan and I became increasingly incensed. Finally, without saying a word to one another, we split from our group and gradually made our way together from the very back of the crowd, up through the throngs of people cramming the area around the stage. The speeches continued, the lights were blinding, and the scene struck me as having an air of Orwellian unreality about it.

Susan Soloway Levine is a fighter. She is neither tall nor physically imposing, but when something matters to her, she never backs down and she never gives up. Susan and her family watched her daughter, Deanna Soloway, suffer an agonising death, and she and her husband, who was also at the vigil, wanted something said about what killed her, an addiction to cigarettes that started when she was 15 years old.

We finally made our way around to the side of the stage, which was crowded with people, and managed to sneak through the first barrier. When we reached the second barrier, Susan worked her persuasive magic on the woman guarding the entrance, and we found ourselves on the stage with a group of the next speakers—individuals, each of whom was holding a candle, who had been invited by the sponsors to step up to the microphone and say a few words of remembrance for a relative who had died of cancer. This was to be the emotional climax of the vigil. Susan and I, suddenly part of this group, were handed candles.

Barely a minute later, Susan said “Come on,” and together we walked into the bright lights at the front edge of the stage. We stood there alone. No one seemed to be aware that we were gatecrashers. Maybe some of the organisers knew it, but what could they do? At the microphone, Susan’s voice rang out over the Mall and in the direction of the Capitol. She said, “I am Susan Soloway Levine,” then bravely told the audience that she was lighting her candle for her daughter Deanna, whom cigarette smoking had killed with lung cancer.

It was the first time such words had been uttered all night. With my arm still around Susan, I moved up to the microphone and said:

“I am here with my friend Susan to say that it is shocking that not a single speaker has had the presence of mind or the courage to talk about cigarette smoking, until now. Cigarette smoking is the leading cause of cancer in America. Lung cancer, most of which is caused by cigarette smoking, is the leading cause of cancer deaths in America, and lung cancer has surpassed breast cancer as the leading cancer killer of women in the past few years. Reverend Jackson mentioned diet. He should have mentioned cigarette smoking too.”

It was then that a cheer went up, possibly one of relief on the part of those who, like the two of us, had been frustrated by what had been happening. Standing in that place, near the spot where Martin Luther King, Jr once changed history, was one of the most extraordinary moments of my life.

Then Susan and I stepped back, lit our candles, and stood beside the others. Retired General Norman Schwarzkopf, the honorary chairman of the March on Cancer, took his turn at the microphone, said a few prepared words, then pointedly added, “And I also light this candle for my mother who died of lung cancer caused by cigarette smoking”. He looked over at us, and Susan went over and hugged the man. He told her that he had followed our example. (Michael Milken, standing behind me, looked a little abashed. He has formed an organisation which funds research on

prostate cancer, and which accepts a portion of the proceeds from “Big Smoke” parties sponsored by the magazine *Cigar Aficionado*.)

The next day, at the march itself, Jesse Jackson gave a modified speech. This time, he railed against the tobacco industry. I saw him backstage afterwards (Susan, former Winston cigarette model and lung cancer victim Alan Landers, and I had sneaked through some barricades again), and he gave me a warm handshake. Some time later, Alan and I talked to singers David Crosby and Graham Nash, whom we spied waiting under a tent, about the importance of focusing on tobacco. When they finished their second set near the end of the day, Graham Nash’s final words, made at our request, were about the need to fight tobacco and keep kids from smoking.

Finally, I ran into General Schwarzkopf and introduced myself. He grinned, looked at me knowingly and said, “How’d you like what I said last night!” Much as I wasn’t a supporter of the Persian Gulf war (that involved another protest, and another story), I thanked him sincerely for what he had done on Friday night.

So, in the end, perhaps we made some small progress. As Jesse Jackson often says: keep hope alive.

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Smoke-free on the roof of Africa. Raul Uranga, United Nations Focal Point on Tobacco, and colleagues pictured at the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro, east Africa, after another climb to highlight the benefits of non-smoking (see “Tobacco Control” 1992,6:172). Thirty-three participants, 17 from Latin America and 16 from Europe, climbing in three groups, reached the summit during the six-day climb last September. Among the Tanzanian officials who lent their support and encouragement to the participants was Ambassador Gertrude Mongella, herself a veteran of the climb, who proposed the organisation of another, even bigger ascent in the year 2000.