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The **Boston Globe**

September 23, 1992, Wednesday, City Edition

SECTION: OP-ED; Pg. 17

LENGTH: 986 words

HEADLINE: Cash from the hand that kills them;
DERRICK Z. JACKSON

BYLINE: By Derrick Z. **Jackson**, Globe Staff

BODY:

I do not want to hear another word about drugs in the black community until African-American institutions stop accepting money from cigarette and liquor companies.

According to federal estimates, 7,300 African-Americans die annually of drug overdoses or drug-related homicides. This makes some African-Americans scream, "Genocide!"

Tobacco and alcohol kill 10 times more African-Americans than illegal drugs. The Centers for Disease Control and the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism estimate that 48,000 African-Americans a year die smoking-related deaths. Another 24,500 die alcohol-related deaths.

The 7,300 drug deaths might fill a small-college gym. The 72,500 booze-butt deaths would nearly fill the Superdome.

This information is a lost scroll for most of African America. The reason is simple. Companies such as Philip Morris have bought off African-American leadership. Cigarettes give Philip Morris two-thirds of its profits. Philip Morris also owns the Miller beer company. Based on Philip Morris documents obtained by the antismoking group Doctors Ought to Care, PM is listed in 1991 as giving \$ 86,108 to the Congressional Black Caucus.

It gave \$ 300,000 to the Urban League, which annually prints "The State of Black America." It gave \$ 100,000 to the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. PM split \$ 600,000 between the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater, the Studio Museum in Harlem and the Dance Theater of Harlem.

Over the past four years PM gave to the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Club, the National Black Police Association, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the National Conference of Black Lawyers, the National Association of Black Social Workers, the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, 100 Black Men and Operation PUSH.

The National Association of Black Journalists just voted to take money from tobacco subsidiaries, like PM's Kraft and Jell-O.

Having stuffed the black bourgeois into the ashcan, PM invades the inner city. It funded the Harlem YMCA, Harlem Junior Tennis and the Harlem Christmas tree lighting. PM funded the National Minority AIDS Council and Sickle Cell Disease Research, then gave free cigarettes to Central Harlem's Meals on Wheels and its Senior Citizens Coalition.

To see how deeply African-Americans are compromised, the top African-American congressional recipients of tobacco money since 1987 were Charles Rangel and William Gray. Rangel's voice booms against illegal drugs on Capitol Hill. Gray was the most powerful African-American on the Hill.

Gray retired to run the United Negro College Fund. PM gives to UNCF. Some UNCF students use the Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund, supported by Miller.

Besides Marshall, PM is associated with scholarships, schools and events bearing the names of Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Booker T. Washington, Shirley Chisholm and Jackie Robinson.

PM gives us Africa. Last month, Detroit had an African festival, full of kente cloth and black pride T-shirts. Kids learned crafts. Adults talked crime, AIDS and human rights.

There were no talks on charcoal lungs or rotted livers. Five of the festival's eight sponsors were Miller, Philip Morris, Beefeater Gin, the Hiram Walker Foundation - Hiram Walker owns Beefeater and other liquors - and Newport cigarettes.

Miller sold a T-shirt for the Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund that proclaimed, "Black Authors: A Voice for the People." Included were images of Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, James Baldwin, August Wilson and Amiri Baraka.

Amiri Baraka? In the 1970s, Baraka said art that was not for black nationalism was PimpArt, using "the same sick value system of the degenerate slavemaster, the same dope, the same liquor." Baraka's poem "Afrikan Revolution" said: "Death to disease and carriers of disease. All disease must be cured! . . . Dope pushers must be killed. . . . We cannot crawl through life drunk and unconscious."

Today, African-Americans crawl under the table, drunk from boozebutt cash. Baraka's face helps Philip Morris kill more African-Americans than crime, AIDS and gangs combined. For sure, drugs hurt through mugging, stealing, driving solid families out to the sticks and African-American men to jail. Some people speculate that up to 80 percent of African-American homicides are drug-related.

But even if every homicide were drug-related, tobacco and alcohol would still kill four times more people through lung and esophageal cancers, heart disease, liver disease, stroke and accidents. Crack babies get lots of ink, while butts and booze drive up African-American infant mortality and sink life expectancy.

This is why African-American institutions must cease taking boozebutt money. Philip Morris did not give \$ 35,000 to a Martin Luther King Jr. concert last year because it has a dream of healthy African-Americans. In its documents, PM says it gives "where there is political benefit."

The benefit to PM is a belly laugh, watching African-Americans condemn 7,300 drugs deaths, then tiptoe around 72,500 corpses provided in part by PM. The benefit is watching African-Americans get on their knees to justify PM cash, either calling it fair trade for consumer dollars given to PM or saying that their cause would die without PM cash.

These same folks would not sit still if coke dealers funded the United Negro College Fund. Nor would they have been caught dead holding a South African gold Krugerrand when Nelson Mandela was in jail.

People who condemn the unhealthy "State of Black America" and then take cash from its biggest killers are the worst PimpArtists. You cannot serve the health of the people, your institution and Philip Morris at the same time. The people always lose.

Amiri Baraka ought to know that an African festival is not the Afrikan Revolution if the people must first choke on the smoke and drown in the beer of Philip Morris.

GRAPHIC: DRAWING, CATHERINE KANNER ILLUSTRATION (c) OP ART

LOAD-DATE: September 25, 1992

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