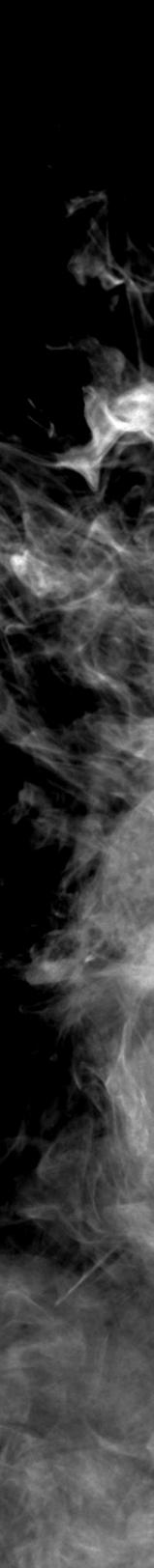


HOW THE
TOBACCO INDUSTRY
EXPLOITS
The LGBT Community



An Awareness Guide for Lesbian, Gay,
Bisexual, and Transgender People



Smoking and the LGBTCommunity

The lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community smokes more than the population at large.¹ As a result, LGBT individuals face an increased risk of smoking-related illnesses including cancer, lung disease and heart disease. The high smoking rate is due in part to the stresses of being marginalized, but is also a result of targeting and promotion by the tobacco industry.

The LGBT community has been actively courted by the tobacco industry through sponsorship and advertising. Tobacco companies were among the first advertisers to recognize LGBT people as a specific market. Unfortunately, this recognition led to increased marketing of their deadly and addictive products.

This pamphlet provides information on how the tobacco industry exploits the LGBT community and suggests ways to fight this exploitation.

Does the tobacco industry target gays?

Yes. In 1992, Philip Morris's ad agency told the company that the gay community was "an area of opportunity . . . its members deserve to be spoken to personally, in their own environment (similar to the way we are using Black, Hispanic and female publications . . .)" ²

The first tobacco ad in a gay publication was placed that year in *Genre*. The ad agency told Philip Morris that it would be "one of the first (if not the first) tobacco advertiser [sic] in the category and would thus 'own the market' and achieve exclusivity." ² Philip Morris was skittish at first about reaching out to the gay community, even denying that *Genre* was a gay magazine. But within a few years, tobacco ads began to multiply in the queer press. ³

R.J. Reynolds specifically developed a marketing plan to target gay men in San Francisco's Castro district. The plan was called **Sub Culture Urban Market** or Project **SCUM**, revealing, at minimum, what some folks in the tobacco industry thought of gay people. ⁴



Cover page from an RJ Reynolds report

Are cigarette ads specifically “gay”?

Some tobacco ads in the LGBT press are the same as those that appear in mainstream periodicals. However, the industry also produces ads for queer eyes only, designed to slip under mainstream radar. The Parliament ad on the left appeared in mainstream publications, while the one on the right appeared in the gay press.



The industry also produces ads for queer eyes only, designed to slip under mainstream radar.

How else does the industry target gays?

In addition to advertising, the tobacco industry has:

- ◆ Conducted marketing focus groups to learn about the smoking habits of gay men.⁵
- ◆ Recruited agents from the LGBT community to represent the tobacco industry's interests.^{6,7}
- ◆ Made campaign contributions to LGBT elected officials.^{8,9}
- ◆ Funded AIDS and LGBT organizations either directly or through subsidiaries such as Miller beer.¹⁰
- ◆ Sponsored LGBT community events, such as pride marches, street fairs and film festivals.¹⁰
- ◆ Hosted smoking lounges at community banquets.¹¹

How do tobacco companies mislead the LGBT community?

Tobacco companies mislead our community by pretending to care about our interests, while endangering our lives and exploiting us.

What they claim:

- ◆ They acknowledge the value of our community by advertising in our press.
- ◆ They treat us the same as they treat other communities.
- ◆ They care about political issues like "choice" and "lifestyle freedom."

What they actually do:

- ◆ Use ads to sell us a product that kills thousands of us every year.
- ◆ Exploit our need for corporate support that other industries seldom provide.
- ◆ Promote an addictive product that leaves users with the choice between a difficult withdrawal and a greatly increased risk of an early death.

What does the tobacco industry gain from exploiting the LGBT community?

- ◆ **Customers:** Gay men and women smoke more than almost any other demographic group.¹
- ◆ **Voters:** By framing tobacco as an issue of choice rather than a health issue, the industry persuades some of us to support its positions on policy issues such as tobacco taxes or clean indoor air regulations.
- ◆ **Reputation:** When our organizations accept tobacco philanthropy, they help the industry maintain its façade of “good corporate citizen.”
- ◆ **Silence:** The tobacco industry’s money and presence as a so-called “friend” discourages discussion of its role in promoting addiction and death in our community.

What can you do to fight back?

- ◆ **Educate** yourself about the harm tobacco does to our community.
- ◆ **Pressure** organizations, publications, and politicians that take tobacco industry sponsorship or advertising to adopt a no-tobacco money policy.
- ◆ **Support** organizations and publications that refuse tobacco money.
- ◆ **Remember** that the issue is not the “right to smoke” but the health of our community—individually and collectively.
- ◆ **Point the finger** where it belongs: not at smokers, but at the tobacco industry for continuing to promote a product that it admits is addictive and deadly.

Fighting back loosens the tobacco industry’s stranglehold. By exposing the industry’s tactics and putting the tobacco issue on our community’s agenda, LGBT people can improve the health of our community and move society at large in the direction of a smoke-free world.

Citations

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Note: The terms *LGBT*, *queer* and *gay* are used interchangeably in this brochure to acknowledge the diversity of the community and to respect the variety of ways in which LGBT people identify themselves.

Support and Resources

California Smokers' Helpline

English 1-800-662-8887 Chinese 1-800-838-8917
Spanish 1-800-456-6386 Vietnamese 1-800-778-8440
Korean 1-800-556-5564 Chewers' Helpline 1-800-844-2439

Or visit www.nobutts.org

National Quitline

1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669)

Nicotine Anonymous

Visit <https://nicotine-anonymous.org> to find a meeting in your area.

The Last Drag

1-415-339-STOP www.lastdrag.org

For more information on this topic and free smoking cessation classes in San Francisco.

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