

Blum, Alan

From: Blum, Alan
Sent: Thursday, September 01, 2005 5:55 PM
To: 'lajones@mdanderson.org'
Subject: Intercultural Cancer Council, DiversityInc, and Altria

Dr. Lovell A. Jones
Cofounder, Intercultural Cancer Council
Director, Center for Research on Minority Health
Department of Health Disparities Research
UT MD Anderson Cancer Center
Houston, Texas

Dear Lovell,

In the midst of the catastrophe that has befallen New Orleans, Mississippi, and Mobile, the subject of this communication may seem more of a symbolic matter. But I feel strongly enough about it to let you know how dismayed I was to see the names of the Intercultural Cancer Council (ICC), UT MD Anderson Cancer Center, Kellogg, Dr. Armin Weinberg, and yourself as being responsible for distributing to ICC members the June 2005 issue of DiversityInc that lists the nation's largest manufacturer of cigarettes, Altria, as the best corporation in America at recruiting and retaining minority personnel and among the very best at using minority-owned suppliers and in hiring African Americans, Asian Americans, and "executive women." I cannot possibly fathom what use the distribution of this magazine has either in the prevention of cancer in minority communities or in reducing the disproportionate burden of cancer in minority communities. If anything, it shows how oblivious ICC is to the disproportionate cause of cancer in America and increasingly elsewhere around the world: cigarette smoking.

As you know, I have devoted my career to combating the tobacco pandemic and thus trying to eliminate this single most preventable cause of death and disease. In this regard, it was a tremendous privilege for me to serve as an invited plenary speaker on the devastating medical and economic impact of smoking on African American and Hispanic American communities at several of your earliest national conferences at MD Anderson going back nearly two decades. In those presentations (heavily illustrated with examples of the disproportionate blitzkrieg of cigarette advertising directed at ethnic minorities in corner stores, on billboards, in magazines and newspapers, and through sports and cultural events), I was determined to make the then-controversial and seemingly risk-taking accusation that the American Cancer Society's list of "Cancer's Seven Warning Signs" could just as well be the list of America's cigarette companies, by far the largest and most aggressive of which remains Altria (aka, Philip Morris, maker of Marlboro and Virginia Slims). I also emphasized this point in my chapter on "The Targeting of Minority Groups by the Tobacco Industry," in your 1989 textbook, *Minorities and Cancer*; in my opening address at the 1987 Surgeon General's Interagency Committee Meeting on The Impact of Smoking on Minorities, and in my invited contribution to the 1998 US Surgeon General's report on smoking and minorities. As the direct result of my participation in ICC's early efforts, I became more intensely involved in health promotion activities in minority communities, for which I was recognized by COSSMHO (the National Coalition of Hispanic Health and Human Services Organizations) with its 1992 National Public Health Award.

Seeing in print the antithetical juxtapositioning of the ICC, MD Anderson Cancer Center and Altria (this entire issue of DiversityInc is a veritable paean to Altria, without so much as a single mention of the product the company makes) truly saddens me, for it makes a mockery of much of what we claim to be doing in tobacco control and cancer prevention.

A decade ago, Philip Morris finagled a favorable connection to MD Anderson Cancer Center by listing Dr. LeMaistre's name (along with those of Dr. DeBakey, Dr. Cooley, Dr. Feigen, and other medical luminaries) as members of the Medical Advisory Committee to a Virginia Slims Legends charity fundraising dinner in Houston. And LSU's Stanley S. Scott Cancer Center is named after the former vice-president for minority affairs of Philip Morris, who died of throat cancer. But in 2005 for the ICC, MD Anderson, or yourself to associate in any way, shape, or form with a publishing entity not just unwilling to acknowledge the lethal impact on minority communities of Altria but instead to praise it to the skies, merits condemnation from all who are committed to cancer prevention. What were you thinking?

I believe that the Intercultural Cancer Council, Kellogg, UT MD Anderson Cancer Center's Center for Research on

9/1/2005

Minority Health, Dr. Weinberg, and you owe all of us in the health community and minority communities an explanation and an apology for this egregious misjudgment. I am reminded of the Alec Guinness character in "The Bridge on the River Kwai," Colonel Nicholson, a prisoner of war who becomes so immersed in building a monumental bridge in adverse circumstances that he forgets that it is for his captors. Might I suggest, too, that there needs to be a more visible and vocal commitment on the part of ICC to counteracting the pernicious and carcinogenic influence of Altria and its allies on the health of all Americans?

Sincerely,

Alan

Alan Blum, MD
Professor and Endowed Chair in Family Medicine
Director, The University of Alabama Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society
26 Pinehurst Drive
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35401

Blum, Alan

From: lajones@mdanderson.org [lajones@mdanderson.org] **Sent:** Thu 9/1/2005 9:39 PM
To: Blum, Alan
Cc: EXGYN@AOL.COM
Subject: Re: Intercultural Cancer Council, DiversityInc, and Altria
Attachments:

Alan Blum, MD
 Professor and Endowed Chair in Family Medicine
 Director, The University of Alabama Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society
 26 Pinehurst Drive
 Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35401

Dear Alan:

I will say to you as I have said to the few other individuals who have written to me about the magazine. "GET A LIFE" It that is not strong enough, I can be stronger. I am not obvious to the issue of the Tobacco Industry. But those whose have written to me I find obvious to the bigotry of this nation playing out right in front of our eyes today. Again, I knew Altria was number 1 and knew who they were. But I also looked at the other 49 other companies listed. If I want to, I can find fault with anything I do everyday I have been on this earth. I did not take what you said or anyone said personally, but I find it sad that you don't ask the question why is Altria number 1 and those of the Tobacco Industry been that way for years. When the late John Johnson of Ebony commented on the last of other companies supporting his magazine, he also talked about the lack of diverse employment by those willing to condemn him and his magazine. I am also concerned that by the rush to conclude that we are somehow in conclusion with Altria. I also don't see the listing of Turner Broadcasting System as number 2 or Citigroup as number 3 as an endorsement of those organizations. Yes, Altria is not a company anyone should highlight. But the true issue to me, given the criteria used, why was Altria number 1 overall in having and retaining minority and underserved populations? Why do other American companies fail to have diverse employee populations that reflect the nation? And again, the entire magazine was not on Altria, it did highlight those companies that have supported us, the ICC, and some who have been outspoken about the Tobacco Industry. Again, there were many other companies, good citizens, that were highlighted in this magazine. Yet, you find the time to point out Altria and condemn the ICC.

white

And let me get on my soap box, I don't hear anyone talking about the fact that the major Comprehensive Cancer Center of this nation have a population census of almost 90% white every day and have been this way for more than two decades. Of the organizations that continue to support these centers, some who you guys have a strong association with with. Again, I not defending the Tobacco Industry nor am I diminishing anything you guys have done, but lets keep all of this in prospective.

Yes, the Tobacco Industry continues to target minority and underserved populations. But on the other hand, they provide people with jobs and promote them. This is not recent event. They have doing this for years.

But again as Mr. Johnson of Ebony once said to me personally, I don't see any one else stepping to the plate in supporting my efforts. Yet, I see them continue to condemn me for wanting to make a living.

In my opinion, if we would direct as much attention, both publicly and legally, to the discrimination in our health industry, especially our cancer centers, then may be I would be more sympathetic. Again, you will not see me a spoken person for Altria. But you will see me talk about the hypocrisy in not condemning those who probably contribute to as many or more deaths by running their institutions in a discriminatory way.

Think about this in terms of avoidable deaths.

As both Margie and Armin have said, lets look at this as an opportunity as opposite to saying how sad or disappointed one is about the perception that the ICC or anyone associated with the ICC supports the Tobacco Industry. Diversity, Inc. is willing to work with us and that provide us an opportunity for education both ways.

Lovell

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| To:                                     |
| <lajones@mdanderson.org>            |
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Dr. Lovell A. Jones
Cofounder, Intercultural Cancer Council
Director, Center for Research on Minority Health
Department of Health Disparities Research
UT MD Anderson Cancer Center
Houston, Texas

Blum, Alan

From: Blum, Alan
To: lajones@mdanderson.org
Cc:
Subject: RE: Intercultural Cancer Council, DiversityInc, and Altria
Attachments:

Sent: Tue 9/6/2005 1:52 AM

Dear Lovell,

If you, Margie, and Armin do not wish to leave the perception that the Intercultural Cancer Council is oblivious to the glaring glorification by DiversityInc (in the very issue the ICC chose to bring to the attention of its members) of America's largest manufacturer of the number one carcinogenic product, then it behooves you to issue a public clarification instead of a personal harangue. And make no mistake, this magazine did disproportionately honor Altria without so much as noting the origin of most of the company's profits beyond the term "consumer products." In fact, the profit from Altria's Marlboro cigarettes alone has exceeded the profit of the 2000 KRAFT food products combined.

Forgive me for assuming that our primary goal as health professionals is disease prevention and assuming that among cancer specialists preventing tobaccogenic cancers (upwards of 40% of all cancers regardless of race or ethnicity) ought to take precedence over the hiring and retaining of minorities by corporations. Diversity in corporate hiring may well be an issue that warrants greater support, but we forfeit our credibility in cancer control when we create the impression (as I believe you did in your reply) that the highly ranked minority hiring practices of Altria in some way mitigates its identity as America's leading cancer causer. I am well aware not only of Altria's lengthy record of minority hiring but also of its corporate-leading sponsorship of the arts, its funding of food banks, its assistance to Bosnian refugees, and, for that matter, its awarding of medical research grants (which MD Anderson Cancer Center researchers, however, are no longer permitted to accept). The fact that Altria and the tobacco industry in general "provide people with jobs and promote them" can best be likened to the infamous line of Sir Despard Murgatroyd, the wicked baornet in Gilbert and Sullivan's "Ruddigore": "I get my crime over the first thing in the morning, and then, ha! ha! for the rest of the day I do good."

It struck me immediately upon reading the issue of DiversityInc that it is all about money, and not health. Your own back-cover letter states, "The in-depth articles will give you insights into the thoughts and successful strategies of the [sic] today's foremost diversity practitioners and thought leaders. This resource will be invaluable to you in expanding your network of supporters and adapting strategies to further your important work." One of the main things I gleaned from this issue is that if you're crafty, slick, clever, and generous with your checkbook, you can make people forget who you really are and what you do for a living. Haven't we just seen this with Enron and HealthSouth? At least those who suffered the adverse consequences of their association with these enterprises didn't also get cancer in the process.

So the distribution of such a magazine seems to me (and doubtless to the others you note have also written to you in protest) to have a glossy but misguided agenda (at no cost to ICC I would guess, since it would appear to have been initiated by DiversityInc or a corporate advertiser and not the ICC) to inform ICC members which corporations they can go to to get support for their "important work"... "in cancer research and prevention and the treatment of minorities and medically underserved populations." You had ample time between June and September to include a caveat regarding the glaring inconsistency between the goals of the ICC and that of both DiversityInc and its number one ranked company, Altria.

I can't help wondering about your favorable mention of the late John Johnson, founding publisher of EBONY, in the context of this subject. To the best of my knowledge, in its nearly 60-year history, EBONY has never published a single article in any depth about smoking and remains unwavering in its commitment to the acceptance of cigarette advertising, even in its health-themed issues. I am also reminded of the late Chris Edley's comment when the head of the United Negro College Fund was asked why he continued to accept cigarette company money: "It comes to us green." Please don't assume that I have been hypercritical of EBONY over other media companies. TIME-Warner, The Washington Post Company (Newsweek), and, until the very end of the 20th century, The New York Times Company are far worse culprits who have been covetous of cigarette advertising revenue. Indeed, a colleague from Boston University School of Public Health and I recently published a newspaper op-ed column on the disgusting financial collaboration between a

national anti-smoking organization and TIME-Warner.

There is still time, I believe, for you to reflect on this matter and to issue a public clarification. I hope you will take the opportunity to do so.

Sincerely,

Alan

Alan Blum, MD

Professor and Endowed Chair in Family Medicine

Director, The University of Alabama Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society



December 30, 2005

Alan Blum, MD
Professor and Endowed Chair in Family Medicine
Director, The University of Alabama Center
for the Study of Tobacco and Society
University of Alabama Health Sciences
Box 870326
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0326

Dear Dr Blum:

While we have spoken to each other earlier this Fall on the issue related to the Intercultural Cancer Council (ICC) distribution of the June 2005 edition of DiversityInc. magazine earlier this Fall, I wanted to respond to you in writing as well.

The edition of the magazine sent to ICC network members focused on recognizing the top 50 companies for diverse workforces and noted the Altria Group, which we know includes Philip Morris as one of its companies, as the top company for diversity. In your letter to me and to others affiliated with the ICC, you make a point that the tobacco industry has a history of "subverting the health and well-being of Americans by claiming to provide economic benefits." As a result, you called into question the very mission of the ICC by our "endorsement and distribution of such a publication . . ."

Let me assure you that the ICC does not, has not, and will never endorse any tobacco, tobacco-related product, or the tobacco industry. ICC and its members are very aware that tobacco is the number one cause of preventable death in our communities, and that the tobacco industry has a proven record of targeting the same communities ICC was organized to help. As a matter of public record, the ICC has published its position on tobacco in our March 2004 report, *From Awareness to Action: Eliminating the Unequal Burden of Cancer*. The Intercultural Cancer Council Caucus, chaired by the very passionate anti-tobacco advocate Jennie Cook, prepared this report, and in the "An Agenda for Action" chapter, we clearly state that tobacco control is a priority concern. The full report can be found on-line at <http://icc-caucus.org/ICC-CaucusActionPlan.pdf>.

Our distribution of this edition of DiversityInc. should not be construed in any way an implicit or explicit endorsement of Philip Morris. Rather, the value we saw in this specific edition is the recognition of U.S. companies that has embraced diversity in its workforce. Among the many known factors contributing to decreased tobacco use among minority and medically underserved populations are improved economic opportunity and growth, and the greater inclusion of minorities in America's corporate workforce is one such pathway.

Alan Blum, MD
December 30, 2005
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In our telephone conversation, you shared that you had great respect for the mission and goals of the ICC, and we appreciate your concern that we may have wavered in our stand against tobacco use. We thank you for caring as much as we do about this issue. I hope that our conversations and this written response to your letter serves to reinforce the ICC's unequivocal commitment to its mission of promoting policies, programs, partnerships, and research to eliminate the unequal burden of cancer among racial and ethnic minorities and medically underserved populations in the United States and its associated territories. The ICC and its membership can always be counted on to step up, speak out, and act against any tobacco use or companies promoting its use.

Sincerely,



Stephen P. Jiang
Chair, Intercultural Cancer Council

cc: ICC Governing Board