

Councilwoman Eleanor Tinsley

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You have commanded wide respect for refusing to become involved in organizations that utilize billboard advertising. Ironically, Philip Morris is perhaps the leading billboard advertiser in Houston, with current campaigns for Marlboro cigarettes, Virginia Slims cigarettes, Benson and Hedges cigarettes, Merit cigarettes, and Miller Beer disgracing our roadsides and neighborhoods. I needn't remind you of the death toll taken by these Philip Morris products each year.

I visited the Virginia Slims Cigarettes tennis tournament last year, (which I would like to rename the Emphysema Slims), and I asked the woman at the literacy volunteers table if they were teaching kids how to read warning labels at the bottom of the ads. A teacher in HISD, she felt ashamed to be sitting there once it was pointed out to her that Philip Morris' main money maker is cigarettes.

I understand that the cocaine drug lords in Colombia and Bolivia are becoming beloved by the villagers because they build gymnasiums and basketball courts. Is it any different in the U.S. when civic leaders are willing to be tantalized by drug lords out of fear of offending the villagers?

A few weeks ago, the head of Children's Hospital at Hermann was forced to admit that he had made a mistake in permitting the hospital to be the beneficiary of a Camel cigarette motorcycle race. This came about only after the Hospital received a great deal of negative publicity.

People really ought to do the right thing before it hits the papers. In my opinion, and with all due respect, you really ought to tell Philip Morris to go to hell.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Alan Blum, M.D.
Assistant Professor

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