BLACKWASHING 2.0
ARE CORPORATIONS, IN FACT, COMMITTED TO THE RACIAL AGENDA?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FACTS

ACT Promoção da Saúde 20 ANOS

This publication summarizes the main findings and recommendations of the report "Blackwashing 2.0 – Are corporations actually engaged in the racial agenda?", which analyzes how large companies use the anti-racism agenda as a marketing strategy while maintaining structures that perpetuate inequality and impact the health of the Black population.

THE PROBLEM:
BLACKWASHING AND COMMERCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

Definition of Blackwashing: A corporate tactic that instrumentalizes anti-racism to disguise the pursuit of profit, celebrating Black aesthetics in advertising, but denying Black participation at decision-making levels and aiming this population in marketing strategies of harmful products (ultra-processed foods, alcohol, and tobacco).

Structural racism is a social determinant of health that causes Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) to disproportionately affect Black people.



NCDs AND HEALTH INEQUITIES:

NCDs accounted for 53.9% of total deaths in Brazil in 2023 (Vigitel), 40.9% of which occurred prematurely.

Main risk factors: inadequate diet, consumption of tobacco products and alcoholic beverages, physical inactivity, and exposure to air pollution.

These risk factors are deeply linked to the living conditions of the population. Unequal access to services, information, and income, as well as limitations in adopting healthy habits, among other aspects, contribute to the unequal distribution of the NCD burden, disproportionately affecting historically vulnerable groups. Some examples of this disparity are:

- The prevalence of hypertension is 26% higher among Black people than among white people;
- The mortality rate for diabetes is 7.2% higher among Black individuals;
- Black women have a 42% higher prevalence of obesity compared to white women.

The undue influence exerted on public policies by companies that manufacture harmful products, especially ultra-processed foods, alcohol, and tobacco, is one of the main obstacles to reducing NCDs.



DISPARITIES BETWEEN DISCOURSE AND PRACTICE

There is a deep gap between marketing campaigns and reality. **Although Black and mixed-race individuals make up 55.5% of the population, for example, they occupy less than 14% of executive positions in the largest companies**. Specific examples include:

Ambev	51.2% Black workers, but 0% on the Board of Directors
Heineken	52% Black workers, but only 28% of leadership positions are occupied by Black people
Meatpackers (JBS/Marfrig)	Severe violations, such as slave-like labor and environmental racism, despite discourses on sustainability/diversity
Carrefour	New reports of racism after 2020

Corporate actions without well-established criteria, such as ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) practices and voluntary labels, are insufficient, as they often function as a way to try to improve image and avoid legal responsibilities, but without resulting in significant changes in business models that promote inequality.

PRODUCTION CHAIN AND ENVIRONMENTAL



Food apartheid: presence of "food deserts" and "food swamps" in Black peripheries, with a scarcity of fresh food and a saturation of ultra-processed foods.



Precarious work: the Black population is concentrated at the base of production chains and exposed to greater occupational risks, lower wages, and precarious conditions.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Urgent actions are necessary to tackle blackwashing and protect the health of the Black population:



Regulation of advertising: Advance with Bills (PLs) No. 1548/2025 and No. 753/2015 (Chamber of Deputies) and PL 2502/2023 (Senate) to restrict the advertising of alcoholic beverages (including beer) and prevent the abusive use of Black cultural symbols in the marketing of harmful products.



Healthy Taxation: Implement the Excise Tax on health-harming products (sweetened beverages, alcohol, and tobacco), reallocating the resources to the SUS (Unified Health System) and to strengthen the National Comprehensive Health Policy for the Black Population (PNSIPN).



Mandatory transparency: Establish norms that require disaggregated racial data across the entire production chain, including hiring, and leadership positions, to overcome the opacity of voluntary reports.



End of harmful incentives: Review subsidies and tax benefits for companies whose products worsen health inequities and/or violate human rights.



Binding Human Rights Frameworks: Support the creation of national and international norms (such as the UN Binding Global Treaty on Business and Human Rights) that hold companies legally accountable for socio-environmental and racial damages.

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