

# OPINION

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## 2010 Census - It's In Our Hands

### Accurate count is crucial

BY MARC H. MORIAL

On April 1st, a critical tool of empowerment was put in the hands of our communities--the official 2010 Census form. Along with voting, filling out your Census questionnaire may be the most important act of empowerment any citizen can do.



It will also determine how many seats your state gets in the U.S. House of Representatives. And as Congressional Black Caucus Chairwoman, Barbara Lee recently said, "In Congress we utilize Census data to identify those communities disproportionately affected by issues such as poverty, unemployment and health care disparities. The more complete the Census count, the more accurate and targeted our policy solutions will be as we work to create jobs."

An accurate census count will determine how much federal money your community receives for schools, hospitals, senior centers and a host of other crucial community services.

If you haven't done so already, I urge you to fill out and mail back your Census questionnaire today. It only takes a few minutes. And the confidentiality of your answers is protected

by federal law.

As chair of the 2010 Advisory Committee, I can tell you that an unprecedented effort has been made to ensure that we don't have a repeat of the 2000 Census when more than 4 million people, largely in minority, poor and immigrant communities were missed.

In addition to a \$133 million advertising campaign, the National Urban League and other civil rights and civic organizations have led a coordinated outreach effort designed to increase Census participation in communities of color.

Another benefit of the Census is jobs. April 1, Census Day, also coincided with the release of the Labor Department's monthly employment report. The report shows that of the 162,000 jobs created during March, 48,000 were Census jobs.

While the overall unemployment rate has leveled off at 9.7 percent, African American unemployment remains much higher, at 16.5 percent and Hispanic joblessness also exceeds the national average at 12.6 percent. That is

why it is so important that our communities get to the front of the recruitment line for the hundreds of thousands of Census jobs that are being created between now and July.

These jobs are primarily part-time, but the pay is good and the work experience could lead to something better down the road. Anyone who is out of work and interested, should contact your local Census Bureau office today.

To learn more about Census jobs in your area, click on the Jobs@Census link at [census.gov](http://census.gov) or call the 2010 Census Jobs Line at 1-866-861-2010.

The National Urban League has designated this our centennial year as a year of empowerment. Participation in the Census is critical tool of empowerment that will help ensure that communities of color are not left behind when it comes to government resources.

But as the Census Bureau slogan says, "We can't move forward until you mail it back." If you haven't already done so, do it today.

Marc H. Morial is president and chief executive officer of the National Urban League.



#### Do I need a counselor?

*We all have life stressors, especially in today's complex world. Balancing your home, work, and spiritual life can be overwhelming.*

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~by Appointment Only~

## Cheerfully Producing Poison Maybe tobacco execs should go to prison

BY WILLIAM A. COLLINS

Did you ever notice how it works? Sell your cousin a joint for some harmless fun and you both end up in jail. But manufacture cigarettes that kill tens of thousands of people and not only do you earn billions of dollars--you avoid all risk of hard time. Lawsuits may cost you something but your personal freedom is never at stake.

Cigarette companies generously assist tobacco addicts by coming up with more new products to circumvent laws designed to impede self-destruction. And this is no paltry market--there are still 46 million smokers, or 20 percent of America's adult population.

Of course it doesn't look as though that many are puffing anymore because they've been driven underground. Smoking is out of vogue just now and few addicts want to be spotted doing it. That's not only because they're perceived to be stupidly ruining their own health, but also because they're perceived as stupidly wasting large amounts of their own money.

Addiction doesn't respect social values, and neither do tobacco companies. They'll cheerfully produce whatever the market will accept. Just now that huckstering suicidal be-

havior has turned to chewing and sucking tobacco, yet another rather untidy habit aimed at producing shorter lives and bigger profits. The marketing is intense and the availability of product is growing.

Another looming battlefield is cigars. While they're not exactly a hot ticket at the moment, they're also not covered under many of the cigarette laws, especially tax rates. Just suppose that all at once they were to begin looking very much like cigarettes. Which laws would apply? Well, you get the drift. It shapes up to be another lawyer-deploying battle coming along.

Not that the bar doesn't still have plenty to do on existing cases. There remain lots of state governments that remain particularly conflicted over smoking. They're torn between wanting to alleviate the social cost and simultaneously protecting tax revenues. The bigger the tax, the less people smoke. Thus even with a higher rate, total revenue may go down. What a choice.

Still another unpleasantness is that many states fudge on the percentage of their juicy tobacco class action awards that they invest back into cessation programs. They cheat by plowing almost all of that money into the general budget.

Massachusetts has come up with a startling related discovery. By paying the costs of cessation for poor people, they have dramatically lowered the poverty smoking rate. That's saving the state a bundle on Medicaid. This news may be the next big smoking breakthrough, but of course senators from tobacco states hope to keep such a program from ever going national.

The best system, though, would be a law to put the tobacco-making 'poisoners' in jail, just like drug pushers.

Minuteman Media columnist William A. Collins is a former state representative and mayor from Norwalk, Conn.

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