La Tanisha C. Wright

La Tanisha C. Wright, nationally acclaimed speaker and anti-tobacco activist, is a native of Fort Worth, Texas, and currently resides in Atlanta, Georgia.

In three years, she earned a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics from Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia. She obtained an outstanding academic record that included participation in programs offered by NASA and the NAACP, and was a consistent member of the honor roll and Dean's list. Upon graduation of college in 2000, she worked as a high school mathematics teacher in Charleston. South Carolina.

In 2001, she pursued career opportunities in Detroit, Michigan with Brown & Williamson (B&W) Tobacco Company. There she took on multiple roles as a Trade Marketing Manager and a Controlling Manager. She quickly developed expertise in tobacco industry marketing, advertising, and merchandising. She obtained exceptional knowledge of the tobacco industry's strategy of demographic targeting to minorities, tobacco industry retail contracts, the overall tobacco retail landscape/culture, the strategic placement of tobacco products, and the general characteristics (including sales volume and targeted age groups) of tobacco trade channels. In 2003, she received a promotion and was transferred to Atlanta, Georgia to restore and increase market share in an undeveloped urban territory.

In 2003, B&W introduced the KOOL MIXX campaign to their employees. The campaign clearly targeted African American youth. Unbeknownst to Ms. Wright, it was a violation of the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement which prohibits the tobacco industry from targeting youth. Ms. Wright realized that she could no longer tolerate the tobacco industry's marketing tactics aimed at youth and minorities.

In May of 2004, Ms. Wright clandestinely briefed Attorneys Generals and the National African American Tobacco Prevention Network (NAATPN) on B&W's KOOL MIXX campaign and tobacco industry practices in African American communities, which resulted in a settlement where RJ Reynolds (RJR) agreed to pay \$1.46 million to four non-profit organizations, including NAATPN.

When the B&W and RJR merger was completed in September 2004, Ms. Wright was offered a position with RJR. She rejected the offer and soon joined NAATPN to take on tobacco challenges that impact communities of color. She envisioned and created *Follow the Signs (FTS)* workshops. She is the author of two training manuals: *Follow the Signs I: Tobacco Control Leaders* and *Follow the Signs II: Youth & Community Leaders*. *FTS* raises awareness about the impact of tobacco industry retail contracts on the sale of tobacco products, as well as predatory tobacco industry marketing tactics aimed at increasing menthol use, youth access, and addiction in underserved, low socioeconomic, and predominately African American communities.

In March 2011, Ms. Wright joined DB Consulting, Inc. and serves as the tobacco subject matter expert for the Centers for Disease Control Communities Putting Prevention to Work Initiative. She has trained thousands of tobacco control advocates representing federal, state, and local agencies with diverse tobacco control objectives that serve various communities.