

[One in a Series]

“WHO’S GOT MY GODDAMN CIGARETTE? GUYS? WHAT’S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?”



—SIGOURNEY WEAVER in *AVATAR*, PG-13

Smoking in kid-rated movies. Now in 3D. For every \$100 million it earns at the box office, *Avatar* (News Corp, Dune, Ingenious) will deliver an estimated forty million tobacco impressions to theater audiences. By the time it reaches Blu-Ray, VOD and broadband, *Avatar*'s smoking scenes could be worth the equivalent of \$50 million in broadcast cigarette ads. Of course, the United States outlawed cigarette commercials forty years ago.

Did Big Tobacco pay for this? Tax-payers did. James Cameron's 1990s blockbuster *Titanic* gave Marlboro a spot on screen and showed a young woman declaring independence by taking up cigarettes—an anachronism in 1912. *Avatar*'s smoker in 2154, equally implausibly, is a mature scientist. Yet *Avatar*'s tobacco imagery scored \$30 million in public subsidies, according to the *LA Times*. Today, the public is not only charged for 3D glasses to watch tobacco promotion, it pays for it again at tax time.

The film industry defends smoking as realistic. It's not. *Avatar* is an extraterrestrial out-of-body experience, most of it animated. In real life, lung cancer kills more US women than breast cancer, thanks in part to decades of deals between the tobacco and film industries. In the US, New Zealand and other countries, more girls than boys aged 13-15 now smoke cigarettes. And study after study worldwide finds that US movies are the main recruiter of new young smokers.

What's wrong with this picture? It's entertaining to dream about saving an alien society from ruthless corporate forces. But protecting our own kids from commercial exploitation is the real thing. Studios claim they try to “discourage” smoking on a film-by-film basis. *Avatar* and other films released this winter are more proof that this just doesn't work. The answer? An industry-wide standard.

R-rate future smoking. It will set G, PG and PG-13 films smokefree.



ALSO UNREAL: Smoking in *Did You Hear About the Morgans?* (PG-13; Sony), *The Blind Side* (PG-13; Time Warner), *Sherlock Holmes* (PG-13; TW), *Nine* (PG-13; Weinstein), and *Fantastic Mr. Fox* (animated, PG; News Corp.)



SmokeFreeMovies.ucsf.edu

SMOKING IN MOVIES KILLS IN REAL LIFE. Smoke Free Movie policies—the R-rating, certification of no payoffs, anti-tobacco spots, and an end to brand display—are endorsed by the World Health Organization, American Medical Association, AMA Alliance, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Heart Association, American Legacy Foundation, American Lung Association, Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights, American Public Health Association, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, Los Angeles County Department of Health Services, New York State Department of Health, New York State PTA, and many others. Visit our web site or write: Smoke Free Movies, UCSF School of Medicine, San Francisco, CA 94143-1390.