

# CAMPAIGN AT A GLANCE



**KNOT** our  
**pink ribbon**  
BREASTCANCERACTION.org

**On the 25th anniversary of the pink ribbon, we're not celebrating. We're angry.** Angry that a quarter of a million women are diagnosed with breast cancer each year. Angry that more than 40,000 women die each and every year. And angry that women of color and underserved communities are disproportionately burdened. There is too little to show for 25 years of pink ribbon awareness and billions of dollars spent on pink ribbon products.

The pink ribbon is one of the most widely recognized symbols, and breast cancer awareness has ballooned into a multibillion-dollar industry. This October, we're calling out The Estée Lauder Companies, a global cosmetics corporation, for their role in launching the first pink ribbon. **Twenty-five years later, we are telling Estée Lauder it's "Knot Our Pink Ribbon" — and we're putting a knot in theirs.**

## PINK RIBBON HISTORY

Twenty-five years ago, there was no pink ribbon. But there was a peach one, started by grassroots activist Charlotte Haley, that focused on prevention and political action. Estée Lauder's pink ribbon began with a stolen idea—and when they turned the peach ribbon pink, they shifted the focus to marketing, awareness, and corporate gain. Pink ribbons have hijacked the movement and erased the real work and meaningful action needed to address and end the breast cancer epidemic.

## BREAST CANCER <sup>^</sup> AWARENESS MONTH INDUSTRY

Breast cancer has become the darling of corporate America. Companies use the pink ribbon to sell their products and boost their image with consumers as they boost their bottom line. Major multimillion-dollar cancer charities that do nothing to address the root causes of cancer often join with these companies. Meanwhile, breast cancer rates continue to rise every year. It's why we call October "Breast Cancer Industry Month."

**Pinkwasher:** (pink'-wah-sheer) noun. A company or organization that claims to care about breast cancer by promoting a pink ribbon product, but at the same time produces, manufactures and/or sells products that are linked to the disease.

## TAKE ACTION: TELL ESTÉE LAUDER TO STOP THE BETRAYAL

**Send your letter to Estée Lauder and tell them that after 25 years, it's time to stop the betrayal and be honest that:**

1. Empty awareness and publicity stunts are a distraction and cannot "create a breast cancer-free world."
2. No amount of positive thinking will prevent women from being diagnosed with or dying from breast cancer.
3. The chemicals in their products may increase the risk of breast cancer and might even interfere with treatment. Tell them to clean up their products and stop pinkwashing!

Visit <http://www.bcaction.org/KnotOurPinkRibbon> to learn more and take action.

## WHY ESTÉE LAUDER?

Estée Lauder has built their brand around their self-proclaimed "commitment" to breast cancer. As part of their Breast Cancer Campaign, each October Estée Lauder distributes pink ribbons at cosmetic counters, sells a variety of pink ribbon products, spearheads large events to illuminate international landmarks, hosts star-laden galas, and more. None of these will "create a breast cancer-free world."

### Enough empty awareness

Estée Lauder has distributed more than 150 million pink ribbons at their beauty counters and illuminated more than 1,000 landmarks around the world "to raise awareness." But awareness that is not part of a larger push for systemic change is not useful, and in fact can be an impediment. The time, resources and money could be better spent on meaningful change. After all, who isn't aware of breast cancer today? It's time for meaningful action so that fewer women are diagnosed with breast cancer and fewer women die. And it's time to eliminate the gross inequities in breast cancer.

### Positive thinking is not prevention

Estée Lauder tells women facing breast cancer to "choose happy," "laugh often," and "smile." Their website and social media platforms are filled with pink flowers and soothing tips suggesting that with the right attitude and beauty products, we can all become better, more beautiful breast cancer patients. Estée Lauder says "Having gratitude and a positive attitude can always help." But we know that no amount of positive thinking will prevent women from being diagnosed with and dying from breast cancer. It's time to stop blaming women for their breast cancer, or telling them the "right" way to go through cancer, and instead honor the diversity of women's lived experiences.

### End pinkwashing

Estée Lauder tells us to buy their products because they care about breast cancer. But many of their cosmetics contain chemicals of concern such as hormone disruptors that may increase the risk of breast cancer and might even interfere with treatment. We call this pinkwashing. And it's time for companies that care about breast cancer to **stop** pinkwashing.

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**BREAST  
CANCER  
ACTION**

 **think before  
you pink**.org

## Join us in putting a knot in Estée Lauder's pink ribbon.



### ISN'T THERE ANYTHING GOOD TO SHOW FOR THE PINK RIBBON?

Estée Lauder is proud that in the past 25 years they have donated \$70 million for global breast cancer awareness, research, and education. Some might argue that's a lot of money, but last year's donation was just half of 1 percent of annual earnings! That's a tiny amount to spend to get so much positive media exposure and brand recognition. Pink ribbons are a great marketing tool. But they aren't a great way to stop women from being diagnosed with breast cancer, eliminate the unacceptable inequities, and keep women from dying.

If Estée Lauder really cares about breast cancer, they will take the steps to make sure no one who uses their products is exposed to chemicals that may increase the risk of breast cancer and might even interfere with treatment. Tell them to:

- Stop using ingredients suspected to increase the risk of breast cancer, such as parabens and octinoxate.
- Stop hiding behind the term "fragrance" and disclose all of the chemicals in their products.
- Commit to the highest standards for manufacturing and join other companies who have voluntarily taken steps to remove 1,4-dioxane.