



**CALIFORNIA TOBACCO  
ENDGAME CENTER FOR  
ORGANIZING AND ENGAGEMENT**  
A project of the American Heart Association®

# Raising our Voices Against Tobacco for Our African American Communities

*California has come a long way in the fight against tobacco, yet tobacco use remains the leading cause of premature death and disease in California where an estimated 40,000 adults die each year due to smoking. The tobacco industry continues to halt our efforts and to addict new users each and every day. Our most critical work lies ahead of us.*

## **African Americans are disproportionately affected by tobacco:**

- African Americans are more likely to be exposed to secondhand smoke than any other racial group.<sup>2</sup>
- Despite smoking fewer cigarettes, African American tobacco users are more likely to die from smoking-related illness than white tobacco users.<sup>3</sup>
- In California, 20.7% of African American adults smoke cigarettes compared to 12.4% of California adults overall.<sup>6</sup>
- Over 85% of African American cigarette smokers smoke menthol cigarettes, which are more addictive and more difficult to quit than non-menthol cigarettes.<sup>4,5,6</sup>
- A study by the CDC showed that African Americans who live in multi-unit housing are significantly more likely to experience unwanted secondhand smoke than non-African American multi-unit housing residents.<sup>7</sup>
- 72.8% of African Americans who smoke reported an interest in quitting, higher than any other population.<sup>7,8</sup>

## **The tobacco industry has targeted African Americans for over half a century:**

- The tobacco industry has a long history of predatory targeting of African Americans with menthol and other flavored tobacco products, which are deadlier and more addictive than non-flavored products.
- Communities with a greater proportion of African Americans have a greater density of tobacco retailers and see more tobacco advertising than other neighborhoods.<sup>1</sup>
- For each 10% increase in the proportion of African American students in California, the odds of a Newport promotion were 50% higher, and the cost of Newport was 12 cents lower.<sup>10</sup>

## **COVID-19 and tobacco are a deadly combination:**

- Research shows that smoking is most likely associated with people getting sicker from COVID-19.<sup>11,14</sup>
- Smoking weakens the immune system and the body's ability to fight infections such as COVID-19.<sup>12</sup>

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The California Tobacco Endgame Center for Organizing and Engagement  
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- People who smoke or vape and contract the COVID-19 virus are at increased risk of developing more severe symptoms.<sup>12,14</sup>
- Smoking, vaping or using a hookah can spread COVID-19 as users are repeatedly putting their hands to their mouths and faces, often in a social setting.<sup>13</sup>

### While we're fighting a deadly pandemic, there is a teen vaping epidemic in this state:

- Vaping devices are the most commonly used tobacco product in California.
- More than 80% of high-school students who consume tobacco use a vaping device.
- Of the California teens who consume tobacco products, including vape products, 86.4% report using a flavored tobacco product.

### SOURCES

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- <sup>5</sup> Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, *Tobacco Use Among African Americans*. <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0006.pdf>
- <sup>6</sup> California Department of Public Health, California Tobacco Control Program. *California Tobacco Facts and Figures 2018*.
- <sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Tobacco Use Among U.S. Racial/Ethnic Minority Groups—African Americans, American Indians and Alaska Natives, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics: A Report of the Surgeon General*. 1998.
- <sup>8</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, *Quitting Smoking Among Adults—United States, 2000–2015*. 2017.
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- <sup>10</sup> Henriksen, Lisa et al. *Targeted Advertising, Promotion, and Price For Menthol Cigarettes in California High School Neighborhoods*. Nicotine & Tobacco Research, June 2011
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- <sup>12</sup> Vardavas CI, Nikitara K. COVID-19 and smoking: A systematic review of the evidence. *Tob Induc Dis*. 2020;18:20. Published 2020 Mar 20. doi:10.18332/tid/119324
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- <sup>14</sup> Tong, Elisa. "Protect Yourself from COVID-19: Stop Smoking and Vaping Now." TobaccoFreeCA, 2020, [tobaccofreeca.com/health/covid-19-stop-smoking-and-vaping/](https://tobaccofreeca.com/health/covid-19-stop-smoking-and-vaping/).



## Social Media



Tobacco industry targeting of communities of color increases disparities in health, disease and death. African American tobacco users are more likely to die from smoking- related illness than white tobacco users, despite smoking fewer cigarettes. Take a stand, join us:

[organizingtoendtobacco.org](http://organizingtoendtobacco.org)

**#VoicesAgainstTobacco**

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