



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.²
- Despite smoking fewer cigarettes, African American tobacco users are more likely to die from smoking-related illness than white tobacco users, ³
- In California, 20.7% of African American adults smoke cigarettes compared to 12.4% of California adults overall.⁶
- Over 85% of African American cigarette smokers smoke menthol cigarettes, which are more addictive and more difficult to quit than non- menthol cigarettes.^{4,5,6}
- 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. ⁷
- 72.8% of African Americans who smoke reported an interest in quitting, higher than any other population.^{7,8}
- Research shows that African American young adults ages 18 - 24 are vulnerable to tobacco use and addiction¹⁶
- Lung cancer is the second most common cancer in both African American men and women, but it kills more African Americans than any other type of cancer.¹⁶
- In 2019, it is estimated that 25,390 African Americans will be diagnosed with lung cancer and 16,550 African Americans will die from it. ¹⁷
- The relative five year survival rate for lung cancer is lower among African Americans than among whites (16% compared to 19%).¹⁸



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.
Reframe ideas: what does predatory targeting mean, why is menthol more addictive and harmful compared to regular tobacco, give examples of how they're more addictive, menthol covers up the harsh taste of tobacco, it brings a minty, fresh taste. Predatory marketing is striking at the weakness that arises from your competitors greatest strength. It sounds like you are striking at your competitor's weakness, but it's not. It creates a clear purchase decision in your prospects mind.
- The tobacco industry has a long history of predatory targeting of African Americans with menthol and other flavored tobacco products.
- Communities with a greater proportion of African Americans have a greater density of tobacco retailers and see more tobacco advertising than other neighborhoods.¹
- 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.¹⁰

COVID-19 and tobacco are a deadly combination:

- Research shows that smoking is most likely associated with people getting sicker from COVID- 19. ^{11, 14}
- Smoking weakens the immune system and the body's ability to fight infections such as COVID-19. ¹²
- People who smoke or vape and contract the COVID-19 virus are at increased risk of developing more severe symptoms. ^{12,14}
- 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. ¹³

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.

Among young adults, use of hookah tobacco is an emerging health-risk behavior:

- Among diverse races/ethnicities, the rates of hookah tobacco use increased most for Non-Hispanic Blacks/African Americans.¹⁵
- 21% of former cigarette smokers use hookah tobacco.¹⁵



SOURCES

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- ⁹ Nguyen, Kimberly et. al. *Tobacco Use, Secondhand Smoke, and Smoke-Free Home Rules in Multiunit Housing*. American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 2016.
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- ¹¹ Preliminary Estimates of the Prevalence of Selected Underlying Health Conditions Among Patients with Coronavirus Disease 2019 — United States, February 12–March 28, 2020. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2020;69:382–386. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6913e2>
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