

# TOBACCO = SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUE

## How Big Tobacco targets vulnerable populations

### **FACT: The tobacco industry uses menthol-flavored products to prey on African Americans. (1)**

Black communities are exposed to aggressive tobacco advertising and marketing, particularly for menthol tobacco products, in retail outlets, on billboards and at public events. (2)

Overall, 85% of African-American smokers (ages 12+) smoke menthol cigarettes. (3) A higher percentage of black adults who smoke started by using menthol cigarettes (93%) than white adults who smoke (44%). (4) Additionally, African American children and adults are more likely to be exposed to secondhand smoke than any other racial or ethnic group. (5) Tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable death among Black Americans, claiming 45,000 black lives every year. (6) Menthol cigarettes are a major reason why Black Americans suffer unfairly and disproportionately from tobacco use. (6)



### **FACT: Tobacco companies exploit the cultural significance of tobacco in indigenous communities. (7)**

The tobacco industry's product promotions to American Indians feature symbols and names with special meanings to this group. (8) Tobacco companies have sponsored Pow Wows and awarded grants to Native people to influence sales. (9)

In Montana, more than one third (35%) of American Indian adults smoke. (10) Smoking remains a major risk factor for two leading causes of death among MT American Indians: cancer and heart disease. (11) American Indians have a higher risk of experiencing tobacco-related disease and death due to high prevalence of cigarette smoking and other commercial tobacco use. (12) (13)



### **FACT: Tobacco advertisements often depict tobacco use as a “normal” part of LGBTQ+ life. (14)**

High rates of tobacco use within the LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, and others) community are due in part to the aggressive marketing by tobacco companies that sponsor pride events, organizations, bar promotions, giveaways and advertisements. (15)

LGBT young adults, ages 18-24, are nearly twice as likely to smoke as their straight peers. (16) Furthermore, about 1 in 5 LGB adults smoke cigarettes compared with about 1 in 6 heterosexual/straight adults. (15)



### **FACT: More tobacco retailers can be found in low-income neighborhoods. (17)**

Researchers have found a higher density of tobacco retailers near schools and neighborhoods in low-income areas than in other areas. (17) In addition, tobacco companies have targeted people of low socioeconomic status through distribution of discount coupons, point of sale discounts and direct-mail coupons. (18)

Consequently, people of lower income that use cigarettes suffer more from diseases caused by smoking than do smokers of higher incomes. (19) Adults who live below the poverty level have less success in quitting (34.5%) than those who live at or above the poverty level (57.5%) and are more likely to not have access to affordable cessation support. (20)

