The Tobacco Industry Makes INEQUITY WORSE

Tobacco use hurts everyone. For those who face discrimination, these harms are even more burdensome.

Inequity is a global problem.

Racism and other forms of systemic bias leave millions with less access to health care, education and economic opportunity.

Black Americans, the global LGBTQ community, indigenous populations and people in poverty are just a few of the groups that experience discrimination that damages long-term health and well-being. These groups are being targeted by the tobacco industry.
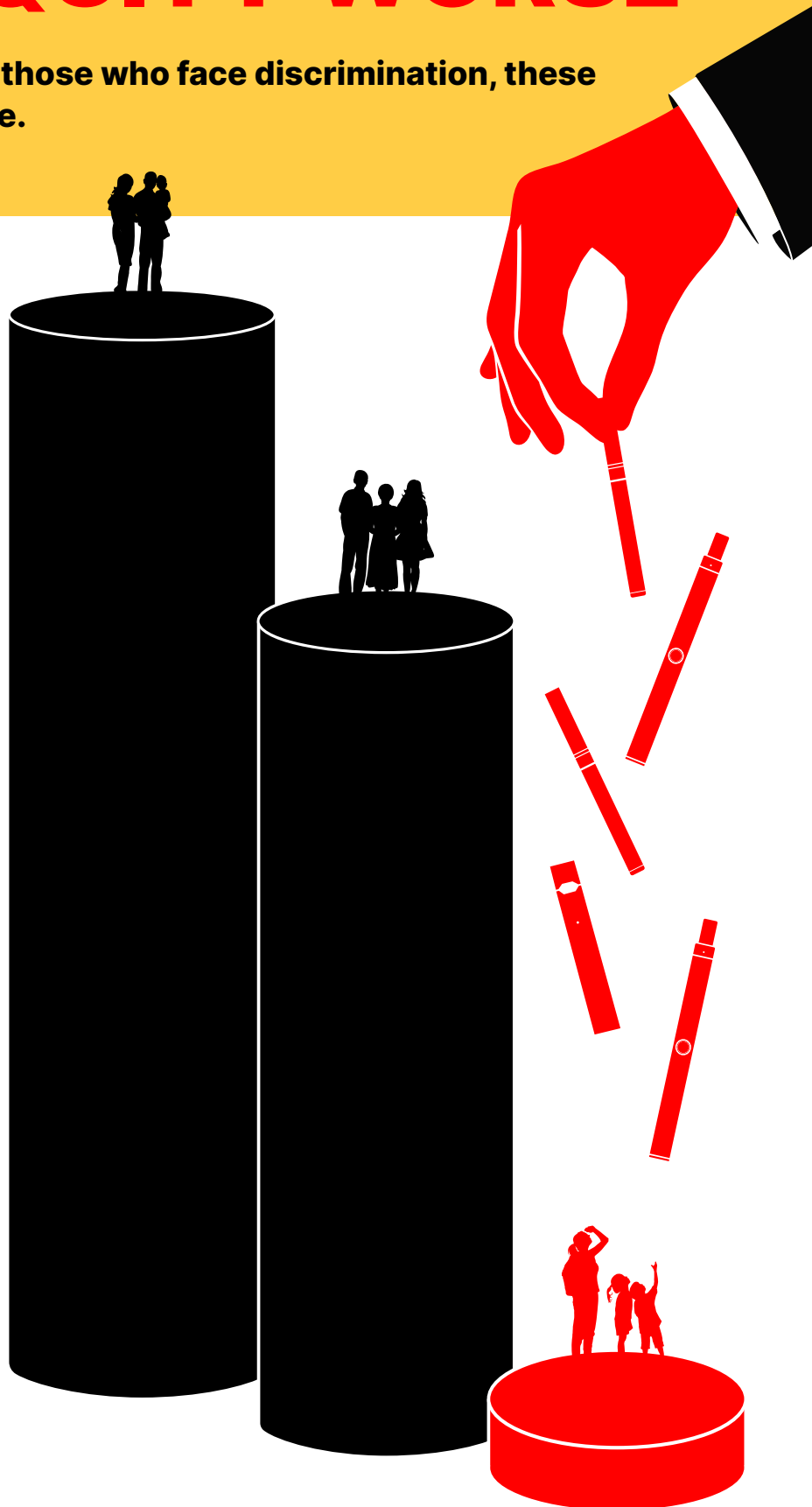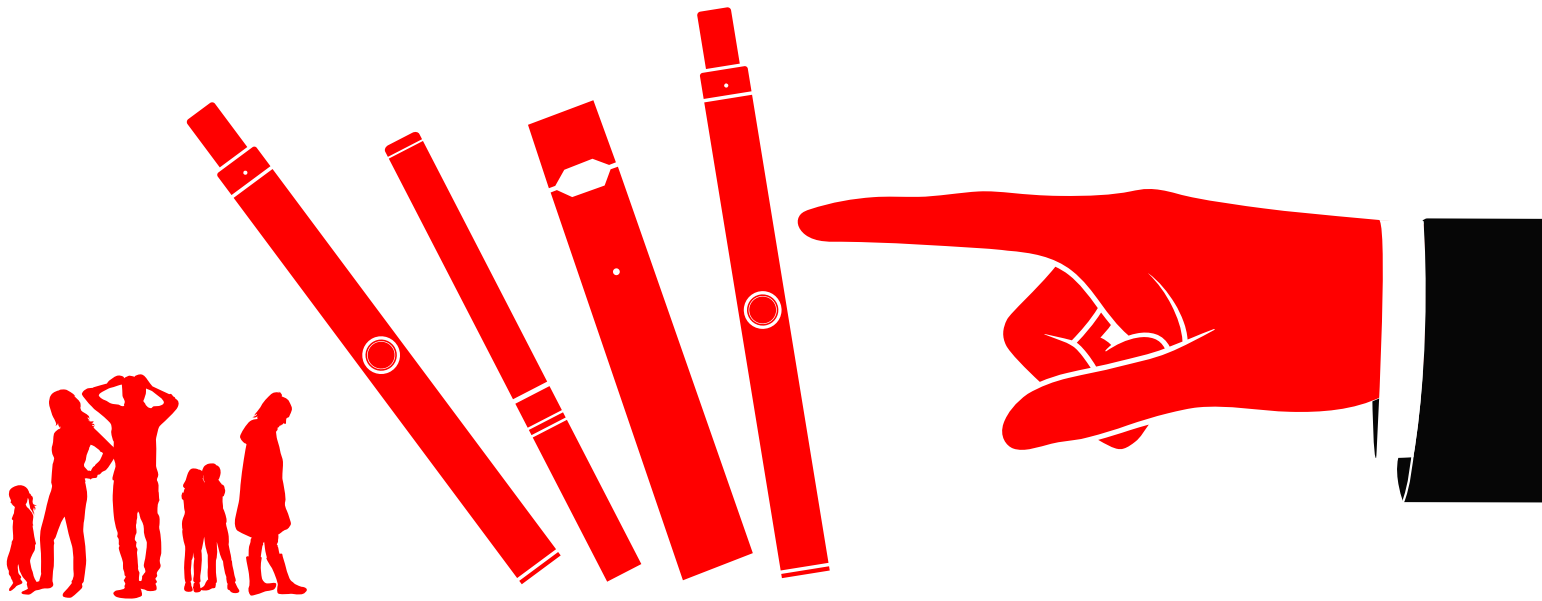
STOP.

The tobacco industry targets people who already face INEQUITY.

The tobacco industry's predatory behavior creates addiction, disease and financial hardship that disproportionately harms people already burdened by the effects of systemic discrimination.

Due to racism, Black Americans have worse health outcomes than white Americans. While smoking rates are similar between Black and white Americans, Black people have higher associated death rates.[1]

Yet the industry has relentlessly targeted Black people with menthol cigarettes, known to appeal to young people and to be harder to quit. Because of the industry's predatory marketing, 88.5% of Black smokers aged 12 or older smoke menthol cigarettes, compared to 29% of white smokers.[2]

Indigenous people in Australia, New Zealand and Canada use tobacco at much higher rates than non-indigenous people in those countries.[4] For example, the smoking rate among Māori people in New Zealand is 31%, compared to 13% of the country's general population.[5]

Recently, the industry has targeted Māori people with new addictive heated tobacco products (HTPs). In 2019, Philip Morris New Zealand advertised its electronic tobacco product, IQOS, in areas with high Māori populations and reportedly sold it to Māori groups for half-price.

People living in poverty face financial strain and may have a harder time getting medical care. Despite this, their smoking rates are higher than people who earn more money in many countries, including Bangladesh, China, India, the Philippines and Vietnam.[3] Quitting tobacco or never starting can help them save money for food or school instead, increase their working and earning years and reduce costly medical expenses.

But the industry fights measures proven to reduce tobacco use among people with low incomes. It fights tax increases and uses pricing strategies to keep cigarettes affordable so low-income consumers don't cut back or quit. The industry also benefits from the sale of single sticks, which are targeted at those who have the least money, including youth.

1   https://tobaccoatlas.org/features/race-ethnicity-and-equity/
2   https://tobaccoatlas.org/features/race-ethnicity-and-equity/
3   https://tobacconomics.org/uploads/misc/2018/03/UIC_Tobacco-and-Poverty_Policy-Brief.pdf
4   https://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/28/5/574
5   https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/in-depth/394073/big-tobacco-targeting-maori-with-e-cigarettes

It's time to expose the tobacco industry's role in INEQUITY.

1

Policymakers must recognize race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and socioeconomic status as traits that have been exploited by the tobacco industry, and acknowledge that this exploitation has made existing inequities worse.

2

Researchers should continue exploring the links between tobacco industry conduct and tobacco-related harm in people experiencing inequity.

3

Governments can fully implement the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, the global treaty that prevents the industry from targeting groups via advertising and calls for the raising of tobacco taxes, among other measures.

STOP.
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