Jenna Burton is the co-founder and executive director of Red, Bike and Green based out of Oakland, California. She was born in Connecticut, went to Howard University in Washington, D.C., and has a background in community organizing and public health research. Jenna is now a resident of Oakland for more than eight years.

MS: What one thing did you learn from the California by Bike summit last November that you could directly apply to Red, Bike and Green?

JB: I learned that there is an entire network of advocates dedicating their efforts to engaging and educating underrepresented groups in the world of cycling. We are driven by very similar interests of wanting to see disadvantaged communities reap the benefits of cycling.

MS: Can you describe the goals that you’ve set for yourself this past year and what you’ve been able to accomplish so far?

JB: I think the major goal that we set for ourselves was to think more about leadership. We’ve grown as an organization in terms of our reach and we’ve opened up new chapters all over the country over the past few years, but at the same time, the number of folks leading these rides and being at the table making decisions has still been relatively small. So this year, the goal is expand that leadership; leadership development and leadership training. It’s a great thing to incorporate into your programming.

Another goal is to tap potential leaders and volunteers to really take ownership of the work that happens with Red, Bike and Green since we are a community-oriented group. Our biggest accomplishment this year was to bring in some leaders to really take up the reigns and watch the organization fly on its own. That’s definitely been a rewarding experience.

MS: It’s been so exciting see you come out in the forefront and take the lead on a lot of these conversations on equity and getting people to talk about it.

JB: Our main priority is just wanting to see a healthy and empowered African American community. Not only does bike riding improve health outcomes by increasing the level of physical activity, but over the years, we’ve also learned it’s been a great tool for advocating for environmental justice and for economic empowerment, and just creating a space to engage your communities on all of these intersections among race and equity and mobility.

Learn more about Jenna and her organization at www.redbikeandgreen.org.
Leah Shahum (pictured above) has been the executive director of the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition since 2002, expanding an already flourishing organization to one of the most successful bike advocacy organizations in the country.

MB: What made the biggest impression on you at last November’s California by Bike Summit?

LS: I found the summit to be super valuable. There was a good mix of programs, it was well coordinated, and there was much more diversity not only in the presenters and attendees but in the mix of people coming from across the state than there’s been in the past.

I really appreciated that the summit focused on funding. There has been a tendency in bike advocacy to be less bold about the money like it’s scary to talk about. These things aren’t going to get done without funding and I appreciated the topics that were included. For example, I hadn’t realized that San Diego will be paying it forward on improving biking and walking infrastructure with their county sales tax. This really helps us up here with our own goals in this direction. Overall it was heartening to see the movement maturing across the state in its tone and messaging, getting away from an “underdog” status and becoming so positive and powerful and not just looking for crumbs.

MB: Wow! San Francisco has a 96% increase in the number of people bicycling 2006-2013! What do you feel were the three key influences that helped make this happen?

LS: I’d say first and foremost growing the membership for the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition. The reason we have been able to have a strong, effective voice with city officials and the media, etc., is our large and growing membership. We are able to get out the vote and turn out dozens for crucial meetings.

Second, you’ve got to have a plan. You can have as many good ideas as you have members and it can be hard to narrow it down, but you have to have a five-year plan and it needs to be focused.

Third, make partnerships with key city people such as policymakers, decision makers and influencers. We really think of the needs and priorities of the others that we need to collaborate with. When we want and need something it can’t be a cold ask. We work to educate our partners and help them reach their own goals. For example, we’re working with city officials to reframe their message [about traffic] to understand the benefits when there are more people walking, biking and taking transit it makes it better for those who must drive. Having more people ride their bikes eases not only traffic congestion from cars but then opens up more opportunities for transit for those who really need it.

For more information about the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition, visit www.sfbike.org.

By Melissa Balmer | Photo by Lisa Beth Anderson

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For more information about the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition, visit www.sfbike.org.

Connect with CalBike

Engage with us on social media. Send photos and messages via Facebook [/CaliforniaBicycleCoalition] and Twitter (@CalBike).

What do you love most about biking? What does biking mean to you?

Follow @CalBike on Twitter, and include the hashtag #BikeCA with your tweet. Submit a response by June 30th to be entered to win The Rummy Messenger Bag from Mission Workshop.
My Findings from the California by Bike Summit

1. **Women are the future of bicycling advocacy and bicycle lifestyle.** Women played a critical role in the success of the summit, especially with the unveiling of the new Women on Bikes California initiative.

2. **Those passionate about bicycling want it to be fun.** I heard the mention of safety far less than I expected. People were focused more on how to make riding a bike an easy—not just appealing—but fun choice, too. We need more bike parties; more social functions by bike; and more festivals, concerts, and rallies that welcome those who arrive by bicycle with perks and free valet parking. Yes, having good infrastructure should come along with that.

3. **Media outreach from all fronts is crucial to growing the bicycle movement.** No longer is our movement just about hitting the pavement and trails. Bicycling is now a strong trend on social media and is the next darling activity in pop culture media—think People, Vogue, and O, The Oprah Magazine. Using media to spread images and lifestyles in biking far and wide inspires collaboration, buzz, and a lasting impact on the way the country gets from Point A to Point B.

4. **Corporate involvement will make a big difference in increasing ridership by leading a true movement for all employers to follow.** The state’s corporate leaders such as Google and Facebook both reward their employees for riding their bikes because they know that a healthy and happy workforce is a productive one. Now, they and other bike-friendly companies just need to work with other businesses that could use a helping hand.

5. **Bike advocacy is about community development and grassroots organizing.** One person can make a huge change. I heard that a lot during the summit. For example, Jenna Burton of Red, Bike and Green started a fledgling social riding group for African Americans in Oakland that now has chapters across the nation. Jenna remains humble.

I stayed with an Airbnb hostess, an African American woman who rides her bike to run errands and for fun. When I showed her the video from Red, Bike and Green she recognized a man in the video as her neighbor. When she ran into him the next day she found out he is Jenna’s boyfriend—and he’s now going to knock on her door before every social ride to get her involved. That’s bike advocacy to me—connecting people and sharing stories.

6. **It’s important for young people like me to be at summits like this because of the way we see a bike functioning in our life.** To me, a bike is a tool. I feel somewhat of an outsider when it comes to bike advocacy. I guess I prefer not to label myself. This summit made me think that I should call myself an advocate (maybe) until I don’t have to anymore. Until we can all just be people riding bikes.

Learn more about how to get involved in growing the California bicycle movement at www.cabike.org and its “Women on Bikes California” initiative at www.pedallove.org.
By Dave Snyder | Photo by Luke Thomas

Riding a bike is fun. Riding a bike makes you feel good and healthy. It helps you save money to support your family and local businesses. We work to enable millions more Californians to ride bikes every day. The more people who bike, the safer it is for everyone.

And it’s working, thanks to people like you who support CalBike and their local bicycle advocacy organization. A Caltrans report recently showed that biking is up 50% since 2000. Californians make more than two million bike trips every day. We’re having great success. In just one year, California moved up ten places—from #19 to #9—in the annual ranking of bike-friendly states by the League of American Bicyclists. Here are some of the reasons why:

- California’s biking and walking safety budget increased by 30% in just one year.
- We won the Three Feet for Safety Act requiring motorists to give bike riders a three feet safety buffer when passing.
- We got Caltrans to endorse new bike-friendly designs for streets throughout California.

Join the movement to make California more bike-friendly. Investing in bicycle advocacy is like investing in your own happiness and betting on your community’s success.

We’re “relentless, professional, and polite” according to Congressman Alan Lowenthal, the 2012 author of the Three Feet for Safety Act.

Your support will enable more people to bike. Last year, every $1 invested in advocacy by our supporters resulted in $200 of investment in bike and pedestrian improvements in our neighborhoods. This year, your support will:

- result in networks of bikeways that take you wherever you need to go and that are safe and comfortable for everyone, from the eight-year-old child to the 80-year-old senior;
- educate drivers about safety, including the Three Feet for Safety Act; and
- encourage everyone to try bicycling for health, wealth, and happiness.

Want to help make a difference? Learn more at: www.calbike.org.

About CalBike:
The California Bicycle Coalition is your statewide bicycle advocacy organization. We enable more people to bike for safer, healthier and more prosperous communities for all. Our goal is to triple the amount of biking in the Golden State by 2020. CalBike’s 17 affiliate members reach over 100,000 people. Learn more about how CalBike is working to rebuild our streets and make the laws for better bicycling at www.calbike.org.

CalBike’s Local Affiliates:

- Bike Bakersfield
- Bike East Bay
- Chico Velo Cycling
- Inland Empire Biking Alliance
- Marin County Bicycle Coalition
- Napa County Bicycle Coalition
- Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition
- People Power of Santa Cruz County
- Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates
- San Diego Bicycle Coalition
- San Francisco Bicycle Coalition
- San Luis Obispo County Bicycle Coalition
- Santa Barbara Bicycle Coalition
- Shasta Living Streets
- Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition
- Sonoma Valley Bicycle Coalition
- Walk & Bike Mendocino

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Our November 2013 summit and this report was brought to you by: