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## The Echo Chamber

Stockton, CA 95206

(209) 405-7532

# The WE CAN Project

## OVERVIEW

The WE CAN Project entails employing Unsheltered Ambassadors who will be fully trained, supported, and paid to do Environmental Justice support and advocacy around Recycling Entrepreneurship and Leadership Development in Stockton California...

## GOALS

1. To center the unsheltered experience as the expertise that will inform future policy.
2. To build capacity amongst the unsheltered to develop economic cooperatives to sustain network building that allows entrance into broader resources...
3. To raise public awareness and advocacy around the importance of unsheltered folks' role as allies in Environmental Justice and to view economic injustice as the root cause of environmental injustice.

## Project Information

*The WE CAN Project is collaborative by design and engages multiple stakeholders; and expresses, in both design and intent, a commitment to building a more inclusive, equitable, and impactful environmental movement.*

- *California leads the Nation in the number of homeless residents with 115,738 people experiencing homelessness at some point (21% of nations total).*
- *California also leads the Nation in the number and ratio of chronically homeless residents with 29,178 chronically homeless residents at any point in time (31% of nations total).*
- *California has 10,416 homeless youth (28% of nations total).*
- *Homelessness affects multiple systems in California*

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**The lack of recycling in U.S. cities creates devastating impacts for poor people of color locally and globally, with possibly the worst impacts coming from homeless camps themselves. The daily practice of surviving unsheltered creates pollution, poor hygiene, and vulnerability to COVID 19.**

### **Holistic Service Model**

The WE CAN Project creates a cooperative business/economic collective model owned by unsheltered and vulnerable populations at risk of being unsheltered. The WE CAN Project removes the barrier to entry in starting a business by starting out all Ambassadors with a stipend and wrap around support throughout the program.

### **Big Picture Story/Freedom Vision**

We intend to address the marginalization and lack of inclusion of some of the groups most impacted environmental injustice, unsheltered and undocumented populations; by creating a holistic environmental advocacy program which centers these populations.

WE CAN ambassadors will establish supportive relationships with business owners, agencies, and infrastructure throughout Stockton and will contract with those partners to place recycling bins in their establishments for the public to donate recyclables.

WE CAN ambassadors will schedule pickups and recycle the collectibles at local recycling centers.

WE CAN ambassadors will hold training and clean ups at camp sites throughout Stockton California supported by training and development in those neighborhoods.

We offer a model which transforms the organizing culture around Environmental Justice, including raised Consciousness of COVID safety and Environmental sustainability in the camps, reduction of blight and littering in camps, improved safety due to fire and water pollution, and raised sense of pride and possibility.

The WE CAN model will empower unsheltered encampments to transform their lives and environment.

### **Origin Story**

The idea for WE CAN came from a dialogue between an unsheltered homeless woman and Executive Director of The Echo Chamber Anthony Robinson Jr. The woman taught

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Anthony that some unsheltered folks were using recycling entrepreneurship to sustain a living. She told him, if she couldn't do anything else, she could "can" meaning recycle. Anthony reflected, spoke to more unsheltered individuals about the way they use recycling to survive, and crafted the framework for WE CAN. The Echo Chamber then brought in project partners Evan Haynes and Sothea of APSARA into a collaborative conversation around the mutual struggles of unsheltered people of color and undocumented homeless immigrants and refugees, and the program was expanded, refined, and made ready for implementation with the support of funding.

The project is intentionally designed to start the WE CAN Ambassadors (WCA's) with guidance and support about their basic responsibilities, while training will be designed to empower them with the practical, advocacy, and organizing skills to become the primary decision makers and Leaders of the projects direction, with ongoing support from staff. Ongoing multi-year funding will provide support for WCA's as they start, launch, and become the worker owners and managers of their worker cooperative business.

### **The ASK**

This is a "Seat at the table" solutions approach to the unsheltered and homelessness challenges faced by the state of California. WE are seeking your support in the capacity in which you are able to give it:

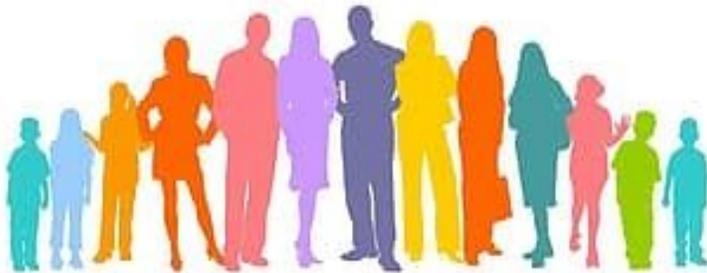
- **Donations to stipend unsheltered volunteers and interviewees**
- **Public advocacy and Listening to the unsheltered**
- **Canvassing/Outreach within COVID guidelines**
- **Interviews/Surveys/Feedback**
- **Willingness to build a relationship with the issue of homelessness**

**The WE CAN Project will build the positive data and relationships to expose the management of unsheltered populations as the issue and not the solution. The WE CAN Project is a start in the right direction to grasp the full breadth of the problem and demonstrates a focus on developing engaging strategies to the crisis...**

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# The WE CAN Project

(Work Economic Collective Advancement Network)



Written in Collaboration by: Anthony Robinson Jr & Evan Haynes

