



AlternateROOTS

The intersection of arts and activism.

Alternate ROOTS seeks to be an exemplary leader among arts-based social change practitioners in the United States.

Alternate ROOTS

THE CASE FOR SUPPORT

A regional arts service organization with over 30 years of history, Alternate ROOTS is an invaluable national resource to artists, organizers and cultural workers. As a visible champion of activist artists, ROOTS is looked to for leadership particularly in the Southeastern United States, where it provides its most direct services to its members. Alternate ROOTS provides the connective tissue for a distinct segment of the arts and culture field - artists who have a commitment to making work in, with, by, for and about their communities, and those whose cultural work strives for social justice. While this is a large sector in US arts and culture as many artists work in this way and share these aims, it is, for the most part, informally organized and collaborations are often the result of chance as much as choice. Alternate ROOTS contributes to the sustained artistic development, increased visibility and stability of activist artists.

Alternate ROOTS is one of the few organizing tools available to activist artists anywhere in the US. By providing programs for this under-resourced demographic ROOTS serves as a bridge for artists and cultural workers to build new partnerships and connections with, by, and for their respective communities and among each other; thereby, increasing the impact and effectiveness of artists whose work is rooted in a particular community of place, tradition or spirit.

Through foundation funding, ROOTS is able to serve as an intermediary organization, getting critical funds into the hands of artists whose work is having deep impact within their communities, the region and the nation. Many times ROOTS funding supports artists who work at a truly grassroots level, with little or no access to funding from other sources. While the organization provides its most comprehensive services to artists and cultural workers in the Southeastern US, artists from all over the country and, sometimes, the world use ROOTS' resources. ROOTS is a regional organization with national impact.

Our ROOTS

Alternate ROOTS sprang into being in order to meet the distinct needs of artists who work in and with communities, artists who work for social justice, and artists who create work by, for, about and within communities of place, tradition, affiliation, and spirit. Founded in 1976 at the Highlander Center in New Market, Tennessee. Originally an acronym for Regional Organization of Theaters South, ROOTS quickly established itself as a thought leader in the field of community-based arts and the only regional collective of artists committed to social and economic justice. In response to the needs of the growing field of community-based arts, ROOTS evolved to a multidisciplinary member-based and artist-driven organization. Member artists develop programs and ROOTS provides resources for the needs of these socially conscious artists working in the Southeast.

As a progressive arts organization, ROOTS is at the forefront of establishing model programs for regional cultural organizing in the US. ROOTS is an exemplary incubator for participatory democracy and through the practice of our guiding principles - Equitable Partnership, Shared Power, Open Dialogue, Individual and Community Transformation, and an Aesthetic that embraces both beauty and justice - we continue to be a model program for regional organizing that is responsive and reflective to the needs of this unique artistic community.

WHY ALTERNATE ROOTS MATTERS

The supports and systems ROOTS provides address every one of the “domains” of artists’ needs identified in the Investing in Creativity study by the Urban Institute:

Validation:

Many artists work in obscure rural communities or complex urban settings, and their work is rarely acknowledged by the media, major funders, or even mainstream arts organizations. ROOTS helps these artists see the value in what they do by connecting them with other artists whose work strives for the same kind of change, and by recognizing their efforts in the aggregate at a national level.

Markets:

Presenters and curators have come to ROOTS gatherings for several decades seeking to connect with experienced artists who can engage communities in meaningful ways. ROOTS links artists with those who support their work through fees and funding, showcases and festivals.

Material Supports – Awards and Grants:

ROOTS is proof of the value of “small money” to accomplish big things. Many times ROOTS funding supports artists who work at a grassroots level, with little or no access to funding from other sources. Artistic Assistance grants of \$1000 have provided life-changing opportunities to artists – to train with a mentor, to bring a specialist into rehearsal to help complete a work, or to purchase much-needed equipment. ROOTS’ Community/Artist Partnership Program grants, of up to \$5,000, have often been the first cash a project receives, enabling artists to leverage other funding and support closer to home. Because ROOTS is artist-run, the guidelines for these grants are tailored to meet the distinct needs and capabilities of working artists.

Training and Professional Development:

ROOTS takes its charge to improve the quality of its members’ work very seriously provides outstanding workshops at the Annual Meeting and through the Resources for Social Change training group and other skilled practitioners. Comprehensive learning by members from members about the aesthetics and the ethics of working in communities takes place both formally and informally.

Communities and Networks:

ROOTS connects artists and cultural workers with one another, and provides links to the larger arts and culture and social justice fields. The stories of hundreds of works of art begin with “I met them at ROOTS”. ROOTS showcases and festivals have connected countless artists to commissioning and presenting partners.

Information:

ROOTS provides artists with crucial information about changes in the national and regional arts field, through the Up from the ROOTS Journal, regular member bulletins, a list serve and, as of February 2008, interactive capability on the web site. For many ROOTS members, this is their first point of interaction with major thought trends and discussions around art, civic engagement, and social justice. For others, ROOTS is a touchstone to remind them of the values of community-based art-making, which are often not represented anywhere else in the field.

IMPACT OF ROOTS PROGRAMS

There are several different programs and services offered to Alternate ROOTS members. These programs have been developed by the membership in response to the needs of the field of community-based artists. Through these programs ROOTS has impacted over 1,500,000 people in the Southeast over the past 30 years.

Annual Meeting (AM)

The Annual Meeting is the cornerstone program for Alternate ROOTS. It is a 3-5 day gathering of artists, activists, educators, youth, organizers, and cultural workers – many of whom are ROOTS Board Members – that provides professional development, networking, peer review of artistic projects, and opportunities for making art. This is the annual business meeting of the Board of ROOTS and is open to the public.

- Over 5,000 artists, organizers, activists, cultural workers, and cultural supporters have attended the Annual Meeting since 1976.
- Countless numbers of artistic collaborations have been birthed at the Annual Meeting. These projects have had a ripple effect in numerous communities throughout the Southeast, nationally, and internationally.
- The Critical Response Process was originated by Liz Lerman through Annual Meetings. This process has become an invaluable tool for shared artistic critique in the national arts field. Practitioners of the process, trained through ROOTS gatherings, have shared the technique throughout the country establishing a national model for a thoughtful, rigorous, and artist-centered reflective process.
- This gathering has been critical for building a movement of organized cultural workers in the Southeast by providing opportunities for resource sharing, regional networking, and coalition building.

Community/Artists Partnership Program (C/APP)

C/APP is an annual grant that supports and promotes community-based residencies by providing resources of information, funds, and training to foster and support collaborations between artists and community-based organizations. ROOTS artists' grassroots-organizing methods are integral to C/APP projects and establish collaborations designed to give voice to community members, to empower individuals and communities who previously felt disenfranchised, to celebrate local and regional histories and culture, and/or to build progressive change.

- Alternate ROOTS has funded 85 projects through the Community Artist Partnership Program (C/APP) since 1992.
- C/APP has provided over \$500,000 to artists who matched these funds from local and state resources, therefore contributing over \$1,000,000 into the field of community-based arts in the Southeast United States.
- More than 20,000 people have participated in C/APP projects as audience members, organizers, performers, community collaborators, co-sponsors, and/or workshop participants since its inception.
- On average, ROOTS members collectively collaborate with over 40 community partners a year in the Southeast. These organizations include schools, social justice agencies, environmental groups, and other non-profits working to end oppression.
- ROOTS members work with thousands of youth on an annual basis as arts educators in rural and urban centers throughout the south.

Resources for Social Change (RSC)

RSC is the training program of Alternate ROOTS devoted to teaching, sharing and exchanging ideas, methods and techniques for creating social change through the arts. The work that ROOTS member-artists do requires a commitment to forging equal partnerships with community members. Forging these equal partnerships demands a wide set of skills not usually taught in arts academies: deep listening; acceptance of differences; the ability to communicate across culture, race, gender, age, ability, and class; creativity and flexibility when faced with challenges; negotiation and conflict resolution skills; and the ability to share power equitably.

RSC is a response to the need to institutionalize and pass on the best practices, growing knowledge and diverse skills gained as ROOTS members work in communities. Its core method of teaching is the development of partnerships between artists and communities leading to the empowerment of individuals and communities involved. RSC uses artistic practices as tools in collaborative projects that aim to provoke lasting change and turn community goals into long-term community solutions.

- In the past 10 years over 800 artists, activists, and organizers throughout the country have participated in RSC led learning exchanges.

Artistic Assistance

Alternate ROOTS' commitment to supporting the growth of individual artists extends to facilitating their evolution by providing funding for collaborations, workshops, travel and additional skill building endeavors. The Artistic Assistance Program bridges the fissure between grant sources and individual artists. Artistic Assistance provides small grants, which range from \$250 - \$1000, designed to provide both veteran and emerging artists with a source of critical funding to deepen and explore their creativity.

- 125 artists have received over \$75,000 for professional development.

Tour Program

The Residency and Tour Program is one of Alternate ROOTS' longest running programs. For more than twenty years, it has provided fee subsidy support to enable qualified new or emerging presenters in the Southeastern United States to bring artists on the Tour Roster into their communities for residencies and performances.

- 200 artists have participated on the tour roster over the past 20 years.
- ROOTS has subsidized over \$1,000,000 in touring costs for Southeastern artists.
- Over 1,000,000 people in Southern rural and under-resourced urban areas have experienced the work of ROOTS touring artists.

Alternate ROOTS Tour and Residency Artist Roster



Mondo Bizarro



Looking for Lilith



The Carpetbag Theatre

Up from the ROOTS Journal

A quarterly online publication filled with resources for and about artists, presenters, teachers, arts councils and organizations. The journal is distributed nationally to nearly 6,500 people.

Showcases and Festivals

Every three to five years Alternate ROOTS produces a performance festival within the Southeast United States. Festivals are designed to showcase the work of Alternate ROOTS members to a larger population of southeast citizenry, as well as foster a deeper relationship among, artists, presenters, educators, community activists and youth. Through festivals, Alternate ROOTS provides a forum for artists to expand their connection within Southeast communities. Festivals also provide nontraditional and emerging presenters, who would otherwise make more “commercial” choices, an opportunity to bring professional community-based artists to their venues. Additionally, non-traditional organizations are enabled to become presenters for the first time.

- ROOTS has sponsored 7 major festivals in the Southeast reaching over 100,000 audience members.
- ROOTS mini-festivals and showcases happen throughout the southeast region bi-annually reaching thousands of audience members.

Alternate ROOTS has also been invited by national and regional arts organizations to showcase ROOTS touring artists. In 2007, at the invitation of the Association of Performing Arts Presenters, Alternate ROOTS developed a Gulf Coast Region Showcase at Arts Presenters’ 50th Annual Members Conference, Beyond Survival Showcase: Gulf Coast Artists Take the Town by Storm. The showcase was multidisciplinary in scope and featured a dynamic mix of performing artists who were impacted by the 2005 hurricanes. In addition, ROOTS has created showcase opportunities for Southeast artists at the Southern Federation’s Performing Arts Exchange, both in 2003, in Atlanta, Georgia and 2007 in Louisville, Kentucky.

Atlanta Area Programming

Since relocating the ROOTS office to Atlanta in 1991, Alternate ROOTS has been actively engaged in the Atlanta arts community. As a regional organization with national impact, Alternate ROOTS contributes to the growing arts community within Atlanta. Through local and state support Alternate ROOTS is able to sustain the Atlanta-based operation, creating models that contribute to build a stronger regional infrastructure. The following are just a few of the programs and services Alternate ROOTS has been able to develop through its Atlanta, Georgia funders.

Atlanta Arts Resources and Creative Assets Day

Atlanta Arts Resources and Creative Assets Day is an annual event produced by Alternate ROOTS in collaboration with local arts organizations (Bureau of Cultural Affairs, Fulton County Arts Council, Southern Arts Federation and Atlanta Coalition of Performing Arts) that connect artists with a myriad of resources through art organizations to advance their careers.

Gathering at the Crossroads of Art and Activism

Gathering at the Crossroads of Art and Activism is a two-day gathering that highlights community projects, shares case studies of diverse practices for building community art projects, and provides resources to community participants for developing their own art projects.



The Music of Social Change

Alternate ROOTS works with schools, social service, and community organizations to expand the reach of art for positive social change. In 2005 Alternate ROOTS designed a special project, "The Music of Social Change: Keeping the Torch Lit" in collaboration with Emory University. Veteran ROOTS members who participated on the front lines of the Civil Rights Movement as song leaders and organizers led community participants in singing songs from the movement.

Special Projects

In order to respond to the evolving needs of the field of community-based artists and the membership ROOTS has created several specific special projects.

Plays from the Southern Theater

In 1994 Alternate ROOTS published *Plays from the Southern Theater* (Heinemann Press). This was the first anthology of contemporary southern plays published in the US and the first print documentation of writers such as Linda Paris-Bailey from Carpetbag Theater in Knoxville, Tennessee and John Grimsley of Dog and Pony Theater in New Orleans, Louisiana. This anthology also brought a wider audience to the work of Roadside Theater in Kentucky, Junebug Productions in Louisiana, and Tennessee playwright Jo Carson.

UPROOTED: The Katrina Project

In fall of 2005, immediately following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, ROOTS organized a direct response to support gulf coast artists. Through the development of a multidisciplinary performance and residency project, entitled UPROOTED: The Katrina Project, artists from throughout the gulf coast region were provided both needed fiscal and creative support. UPROOTED has toured and done residency work in 8 cities throughout the country.



United States Social Forum

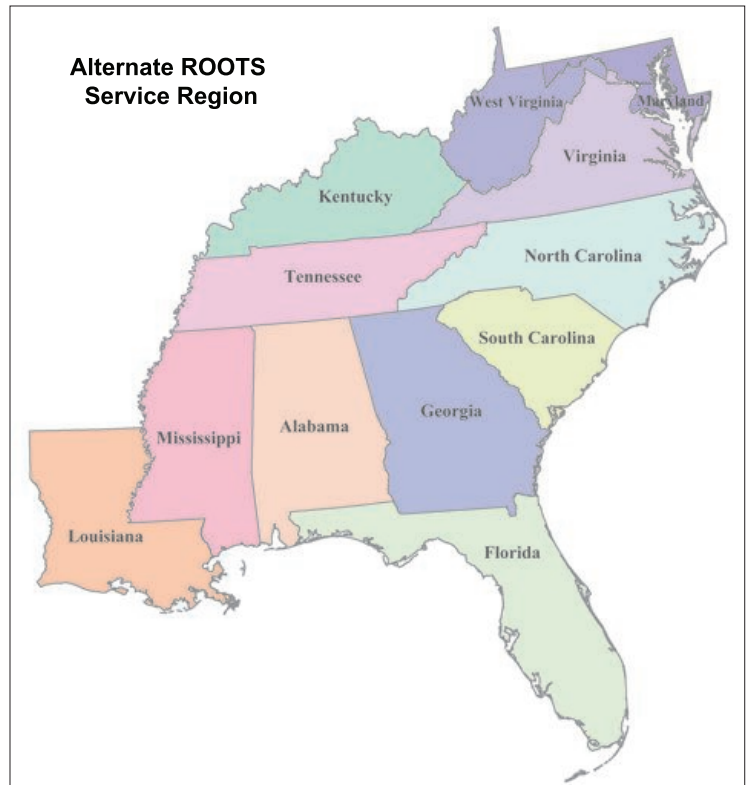
In 2007, Atlanta, Georgia played hosts to the very first United States Social Forum with more than 15,000 participants. Alternate ROOTS hosted a pre-United States Social Forum community wide workshop, *Gathering at the Crossroads of Arts and Activism* which provided participants two days of multidisciplinary workshops on how to use the arts as tools for social justice. In addition, ROOTS was primary organizer in programming the cultural events of the social forum.

ROOTS MEMBERS

ROOTS General Membership is open to anyone in the US or abroad. In our 30 year history we have had members from over 30 states in the US, as well as Australia, Japan, Canada, Mexico, Bolivia, Argentina, France and England. Board membership is limited to residents of Maryland, the District of Columbia, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Individuals, not organizations, are eligible for Board membership.

As of August 2008 ROOTS has 76 voting Board members and an additional 45 general members from the US and abroad. ROOTS network of current and past members, many of whom stay active informally with the organization, encompasses more than 200 individuals. 180 people attended the 2007 Annual Meeting.

ROOTS membership is a diverse body of artists, educators, and cultural organizers. Throughout the past 10 years ROOTS has actively diversified its membership. Currently, 45% of the membership is comprised of people of color. The majority of ROOTS members qualify as low income or middle class and member range from 16-84 years old. ROOTS members represent a variety of freelance independent artists, arts administrators, and artists affiliated with small non-profit organizations.



ROOTS members foster a deeper understanding of diversity and inclusion that is unique in the United States. At ROOTS, diversity includes culture, ethnicity, age, gender, class and sexual orientation. It also involves discipline, style and aesthetics. ROOTS has been instrumental in providing space for incredibly diverse artists to dialogue and share work.

Where else can one find an Appalachian singer, a modern company, an urban hip hop artist, an installation artist, a performance artist and a community-based theater company sitting as equals at a table exchanging experiences and methodology?

In 2004, in a partnership with the National Performance Network and with funding from the Ford Foundation, Alternate ROOTS developed the Hip Hop Activist Artists Scholarship to encourage participation of young Hip Hop artists in the ROOTS network. Since the launching of this initiative ROOTS has tripled its minority involvement in the membership, administration, and leadership of the organization. 25% of Hip Hop Scholarship recipients have gone on to serve in leadership positions in the organization and more than half continue to stay engaged.

GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP

Alternate ROOTS operates under a governing structure based upon its values and mission. In the interest of shared leadership and anti-oppression, Board Membership is available to any General Members living in the 12 Southeastern states and the District of Columbia who have demonstrated a multi-year commitment to the organization and are willing and able to take on basic fiduciary responsibilities. This engaged governing structure places the power of decision-making directly into the hands of active constituents concerned with programmatic accuracy. An Executive Committee of officers and regionally elected representatives actively governs the organization over the course of the year, through monthly conference calls and quarterly meetings. Transparency and a regular flow of information are how this model continues to be productive.

ROOTS' governing structure serves as a model for its member-artists and allows them to practice skills which they often use in their own organizations and communities. The grassroots leadership structure has influenced many arts organizations across the country. ROOTS members are proud of the quality of the decision-making and follow-through that a fully-democratic, equitable process allows.

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL PARTNERS

Alternate ROOTS has a national reputation among funders, colleges, artist activists, organizers, community activists, scholars, community leaders, and others who specialize in community-based art making. ROOTS membership is comprised of many of these individuals and entities. Alternate ROOTS has established diverse partnerships with multiple institutions and organizations that are active supporters of ROOTS. Many of ROOTS' organizational partners have been strengthened through their involvement with Alternate ROOTS, and vice versa. These partners have included but are not limited to, Project South, Southern Rural Development Initiative, Southern Arts Federation, Association of Performing Arts Presenters and the National Performance Network.

FUNDING PICTURE

Working with Funding Partners and National Organizations

National, regional, and local funding partners have been active supporters of ROOTS for many years. Currently, the organization's strongest financial supporters for programs and services include:

- *Ford Foundation*
- *Nathan Cummings Foundation*
- *National Endowment for the Arts*
- *Shubert Foundation*

Other long term and significant funding partnerships include:

- *Fulton County Arts Council, Georgia*
- *Atlanta Bureau of Cultural Affairs, Georgia*
- *Georgia Council for the Arts*
- *We Shall Overcome Fund, Tennessee*

Financial support from the following foundations has been instrumental to the growth of Alternate ROOTS:

- *Lila Wallace/Reader's Digest Fund*
- *Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation*
- *Fund for Southern Communities*

Alternate ROOTS' Endowment

In 1999, a generous anonymous donor made a gift of \$600,000 to the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta, to be held as an endowment for Alternate ROOTS. Endowment earnings are approximately \$25,000 each year, and offset basic operating costs such as rent, utilities and supplies.

ROOTS BUDGET

Alternate ROOTS' average annual budget is approximately \$325,000. Ninety percent of revenues come from restricted grants and contract income and ten percent of revenues come from: Membership dues, Annual Meeting registration fees, individual gifts, and contracted trainings. Expenditures for

ROOTS related to program and administrative/operating expenses and those allocated to program are approximately 75% programmatic and 25% administrative.

Funding Objectives

Alternate ROOTS is entering an exciting bridge period for the organization during which we are evaluating our programs as well as simultaneously developing a new strategic plan with our membership. Our financial development strategy is designed to carry us through this bridge period. We will maintain our programmatic grant obligations and develop support for new programs and practices that respond to the changing needs of cultural workers and organizers. To this end, financial support for ROOTS will realize the following:

- Strengthen and expand the professional development opportunities offered during the Annual Meeting.
- Improve the relationships between cultural workers/organizers and social and economic justice activists/organizers.
- Strengthen regional collaboration among individuals engaged in cultural work.
- Enable the development of coalitions and interdependent gatherings with partner organizations.
- Provide multidisciplinary training with partner organizations to underserved communities and the practitioners who serve them, across the country.
- Improve the infrastructure of the administrative office to better support our members.
- Increase the corpus of ROOTS' endowment to ensure the future leaders of Alternate ROOTS inherit a legacy of sustained growth and financial security.

Expanding ROOTS Fundraising Potential

In order to accomplish the above stated objectives, Alternate ROOTS Executive Committee has created a development plan to identify new sources of both contributed and earned revenue for the next two fiscal years with a financial goal of no less than \$300,000. The initial plan involves the following components:

Foundations

Alternate ROOTS will take advantage of its position at the intersection of arts and activism and diversify its funding. ROOTS will cultivate relationships with programs that are interested in the social impact of the work of community-based artists in the areas of education, health, prison reform, housing, etc.

Corporations

Alternate ROOTS will identify corporations that align with the ROOTS mission and adhere to the organizations core values and approach these corporations for support of key programs.

Individual and Member Generated Income

ROOTS members give generously to the organization, considering their limited means. We are investigating new strategies for members to drive support to ROOTS as well, including:

- *Box Office Percentage Donations* – ROOTS will solicit its membership to donate a percentage of their box office proceeds for specific shows to the organization as general operating support.
- *Regional House Parties* - ROOTS will challenge the organization's six regions to make quarterly contributions, utilizing private donations within the regions, and

rhizome events that generate funds, strengthen awareness of the organization, and increase membership.

Earned Income

The potential of earned income for Alternate ROOTS is great and untapped. Member Based Initiatives are being implemented to bolster the strength of financial support generated by the membership; they include:

- *Resources for Social Change* - RSC (ROOTS Training Program) will focus on strengthening the impact and marketability of this program as a tool for both arts and non-arts organizations to use in their ongoing continued professional development.
- *Online ROOTS Store* – ROOTS website will make organizational and members' merchandise available to purchase, in order to generate both revenue and name recognition. ROOTS Technology Workgroup will also make it possible for both members and non-members to donate to ROOTS online.

As the landscape of the funding world shifts, ROOTS strives to be responsive yet diligent in expressing the uniqueness of the organizational model and mission. This is a model that is focused on engaging communities in processes that encourage civic discourse and affect positive change by deliberately using art and culture as fundamental tools. Alternate ROOTS believes that it has proven its positive impact on the lives of its members and the communities they live. It is, therefore, important to develop a more diversified financial portfolio is needed in order to remain relevant to the times, to deepen the impact of our collective work, to respond more quickly to key issues and challenges facing cultural workers.

THE FUTURE OF ALTERNATE ROOTS

Alternate ROOTS is currently administering and continuing to improve the programs that have engaged its membership for more than the last decade. The staff and members are simultaneously engaged in a strategic planning process that encompasses the whole organization and its various partners. We expect the result of the strategic planning process to be a roadmap leading the organization to:

- A scalable organizational model, able to shift to match changes in the size of membership, breadth of programming and evolving funding priorities
- New ways to connect artists to one another for increased learning and collaboration
- New ways to improve the practice and aesthetics of activist art-making
- New ways to assist artists in their work in, with, by, for and about communities

Alternate ROOTS has a powerful past which yields a compelling future. At each Annual Meeting we raise the question “should the organization continue to exist?” and the answer is always “If we didn't have ROOTS, we'd have to invent an organization to meet our needs.” This moment is a critical juncture for ROOTS' core funding. The members of the organization are actively seeking resources to continue ROOTS' work: supporting the artists and cultural workers who make a profound difference in their communities every day. We invite you to join us on this journey.



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The intersection of arts and activism.

Alternate ROOTS
1083 Austin Avenue
Atlanta, Georgia 30307
404-577-1079 ofc
404-577-7991 fax
info@alternateroots.org
www.alternateroots.org