ROOTS REUNION

## Celebrating 40 Years

August 12-13, 2016

Lutheridge Conference Center

Arden, NC

About the Reunion

Reflections from Ashley Sparks, ROOTS Reunion Producer

*Tell me what you remember – help me pull the pieces of the puzzle together into a kaleidoscoping picture of ROOTS’ radical and wild history. Even if it’s only glimmers of performances, a short song refrain, fragments of a conversation in a rocking chair ...*

40 years. There is an urgency to hear stories, to remember. Since February, I’ve had conversations with dozens of elders about the beginning. As they grew from their 20-something artist selves into their 60-somethings, ROOTS grew up with them. I’ve been asking, “What do you remember about the early years? How has ROOTS impacted and influenced your work? Your life? Your love life? What do you wish people knew about ROOTS?”

*Papa Bizzoso, tell me a story of your wildest late night adventure… maybe the one that ended with performances underscoring the sunrise. Or maybe the one that resulted in tears and the artists who never returned. Or maybe the one where the volume was too loud and all the white people plugged their ears ...*

ROOTS’ history is fraught with growing pains and break-ups. Institutional melt-downs and beautiful growth spurts. From the early days, we were trying to disrupt and dismantle oppressions and sometimes that meant we were practicing on each other. It was (and still is) hard work.

40 years, and we are still talking about similar themes – race, aesthetics, equity, justice, fighting for systemic transformation, and the necessity to create in the midst of adversity and oppression. But we’ve also grown up. We have developed vocabulary and tools that have rippled out beyond us and changed the national conversation about the impact of arts and artists in community. We have organizational infrastructure and best practices! We don’t do as much day drinking! It may not be any easier, but now we are having healthy, healing, and grown-up compassionate conversations.

Many people have come and gone through this ever-evolving experiment in participatory democracy. “Who comes is,” and as we turn 40, we need to celebrate with as many people as possible. Like reconnecting with an old teacher once you are well established in your discipline, we want folks to reconnect with their ROOTS. Because we need to remember the stories before the details become more distant. Because who we are now is dynamically different than who we were 40 years ago. Because we love to throw a birthday party. Because we need to reconnect with what makes ROOTS pulse – our relationships to each other. Because this may be the last time we sing together in this specific circle.

At 40 we are “giving folks their roses now” and singing our collective songs of gratitude for and with the people who have made this dynamic institution possible. Through honors, re-enactments, commissions, and encouraging folks to tap into their “wildness,” we are celebrating where we have been and where we are going.

The ROOTS Nashville 1978 Festival program book introduction said,“The new theatre is a theatre of vision and of individuals – a theatre of caring. The new theatre people are no longer hiding their knowledge and art from each other. There’s a feeling of wanting to share.”

And 40 years later, that spirit continues – one born of hunger, urgency, and generosity. What did you bring to share? What will you pass on into the next 40 years of ROOTS? What will *you* remember about ROOTS?

Ashley Sparks

ROOTS Reunion Producer

## Founders of Alternate ROOTS

In 1976 a small group of individuals came together at the Highlander Center, and later that year as 1976 became 1977, more theater companies gathered together in Sarasota to share their work. Somewhere in between someone wrote down the names – to be kept in perpetuity as part of the incorporation documents that became the ROOTS Bylaws. Forty years later, a few of these companies are still producing work. Many have dissolved into the the ephemeral state of memory, where theater perpetually lives, and in some cases, we do not know what happened (but you might – if you do, please tell us!). Some individuals, too, have transitioned, and others are still with us, producing work and creating joy in the world. We lift up those companies that showed up in 1976-1977 to lay the foundation for what we were and are. We stand on your shoulders.

### COMPANIES

**Academy Theatre**

Atlanta, GA

1956-present

The work is focused on a mainstage season of established and new works and houses a School of the Performing Arts.

**Birmingham Festival Theater**

Birmingham, AL

1972-present

A full-time professional repertory company that produces original work and became the “Off-Broadway” of Birmingham’s theatre scene.

**The Carpetbag Theatre**

Knoxville, TN

1969-present

A professional, multigenerational ensemble company dedicated to the production of new works. Its mission is to give artistic voice to the issues and dreams of people who have been silenced by racism, classism, sexism, ageism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression.

**Ensemble Theatre Company**

Nashville, TN

1973-?

A touring company that brought audiences in the mid-Tennessee area productions that pushed the boundaries of drama with new scripts, improvisational pieces, and ensemble-developed shows.

**Florida Studio Theatre**

Sarasota, FL

1973-present

Founded by Jon Spelman, has a dedication to making and touring contemporary theatre to audiences not usually touched by the magic of live theatre.

**Free Southern Theater**

New Orleans, LA

1963-1980

Free Southern Theater’s fundamental objective was to stimulate creative and reflective thought among African Americans in Mississippi and other Southern states through theater.

**Hippodrome Theatre**

Gainesville, FL

1963-present

A center for creative and daring theatrical experiences that includes classics and new plays.

**Little Marrowbone Repair Corp.**

Joelton, TN

Early 1970s-present

Founded by the late Don Evans and billed as “a bunch of friends who get together and do stuff.”

**New World Theatre Company**

Berkeley Springs, WV

1976-present

Explorers into the realm of theatre, adventurers in the uncharted reaches of imagination, the channels through which thoughts become reality.

**Otrabanda Company**

New Orleans, LA (1976), Later New York City, NY

1971-2001

Was an ensemble of multi-disciplinary experimental theater makers and produced the “River Raft Review”, a 10-year cycle of performances down the Mississippi River.

**The Play Group**

Knoxville, TN

1973-?

Work sprang from remembrances of child’s play. Molded by vigorous explorations of the attitudes that permit its expression, a transgression of the rituals with which it is masked. The work was best seen by the child’s eye within you.

**Pocket Theater**

Durham, NC

1975-1988

Brought professional theatre to Durham and developed the works of new playwrights. They were an integral part of their community developing new material and theatrical forms that related more directly their communities’ stories.

**The Road Company**

Johnson City, TN

1972-1998

A professional touring company that created new plays and used theater as a vital form of dialogue in mountain communities by reflecting and responding to their needs, experiences, and concerns.

**Roadside Theater**

Norton, VA and Whitesburg, KY

1974-present

Dedicated to artistic excellence in pursuit of the proposition that the world is immeasurably enriched when people and cultures tell their own stories and listen to the unique stories of others.

**Sidewalk Dance Theatre**

Knoxville, TN

1977-?

A touring modern and improvisational dance company. Artistic Director: Annie Genung

### Individuals

**Jo Carson**

Johnson City, TN

1946-2011

Playwright, poet, and founder of Alternate ROOTS.

**Liesel Flashenberg**

Washington, D.C.

1945-2010

Consultant

**Robin Foster**

Nashville, TN

Actor, filmmaker, anarchist rabble rouser.

**Marge Gregg**

Abingdon, VA

Practicing artist using a painterly approach to textile and multimedia works.

**Kelly Hill**

San Francisco, CA

Actor for several companies in Tennessee and North Carolina.

**Nancy Terry**

## HONORS

To celebrate 40 years, Alternate ROOTS is creating two inaugural honors. We want to lift up the people who have laid the foundation for ROOTS to flourish and who have significantly transformed the organization.

### Deeply ROOTed Honor

Thirty years is a long time to commit to something, and this honor is specifically for people who have been actively involved in Alternate ROOTS for 30 years or more. Many of these individuals have been involved for 40 years. Some came along in ROOTS’ first decade and found their artistic home. As staff, executive committee members, festival planners, organizers, and bad ass artists and activists, these folks have remained committed to Alternate ROOTS through the rich and poor times, the joys and the growing pains. With deep gratitude, we honor those who have been in it for the long haul.

**Linda Parris-Bailey**

Knoxville, TN

My work is rooted in identity, struggle and collaboration, drawing on the Black Arts Movement and ensemble theater practice. ROOTS has been the catalyst for my growth as an artist, my platform for justice, and my partner in creativity. It has been a collaborator, a family, and a battlefield. It has brought me joy and pain. It is the connective tissue of my work and my Southern church.

**Eleanor Brownfield**

Atlanta, GA

Performance/production as actor, dancer, stage manager, poet, writer, editor, proofreader, organic gardener, and cat sitter; knitter; political activist. Membership in Alternate ROOTS (30+ years) has meant participating in a democratic community which supports, encourages, and demands artistic and political growth, attempting to live in principle and working toward high standards. Most importantly, it has given me friendships and collaborations that never would have happened otherwise.

**Dudley Cocke**

Norton, VA and Whitesburg, KY

Artistic Director, Roadside Theater/Appalshop. We focus on new play creation, teaching, community cultural development, and advocacy for cultural equity. I've experienced ROOTS as a stomping ground for odd people with their different ideas, emotions, and spirits. It can be fun or sad, but its abiding rationale is to advance, in the words of the Rev. James Lawson, "a social order of justice permeated by love."

**Kathie deNobriga**

Pine Lake, GA

Work? (Money) = organizational consultant, specializing in planning & board development. (Heart) = writer, performer & co-host of monthly Art Salon. The people of ROOTS diagnosed me as a born racist, and then gave me the medicines to control, if not heal, this chronic condition. Also 99% of what I know about group facilitation & conflict, I learned first-hand at ROOTS. I am grateful to ROOTS as my tribe.

**Chris Doerflinger**

Louisville & Shelby County, KY

Work in writing, interdisciplinary community performance, visual art: fiber & constructions with natural materials. Work with women & students of all ages, youth & adult offenders, developmentally disabled & mentally ill populations, intergenerational groups & solo conceptual performance. I have always had an affinity to dance, performance, and visual art. I used the arts in my Physical Education/Therapeutic Recreation work in schools and with “special populations” in communities and institutions. Alternate ROOTS instilled the courage and provided the tools for use in solo work and more in-depth work in community. ROOTS is a safe community in which to develop my strengths and confront my weaknesses. I am evolving significantly as an artist and a human as a result.

**Rodger French**

Yangon, Myanmar

I define myself primarily as a musician and my work (in a ROOTS-ey context) as that of a musical collaborator/facilitator. For decades, ROOTS and its joyously unconventional family of artists have nurtured me with surpassing friendships and inspirational collaborations. I have also been afforded constructive, if sometimes discomfiting, opportunities to confront my personal conceptions regarding matters of prejudice and privilege. At heart, ROOTS has helped me become a better person.

**Beth Heidelberg**

Decatur (Atlanta), GA

I am a woodwind musician. I perform, and also teach individual lessons in piano, flute, clarinet, and saxophone. ROOTS has helped me grow in my performing skills, in my awareness of what I want to communicate, and in how to accomplish this. Through ROOTS, I have learned to question and examine what is being said, and what is being meant by how we communicate.

**Mike Hickey**

Pine Lake, GA

Theatrical Designer, Mask-Maker, Sculptor, Painter, Visual Art Instructor, Company Coordinator and Principal Performer with Gateway Performance Productions. We were already engaged in outreach programming to underserved communities and Native American communities. We saw ROOTS as an opportunity to engage with like-minded individuals. Through its touring subsidies, ROOTS has made it possible for Gateway to reach communities that would otherwise have been unable to participate in our programs.

**Sandra Hughes**

Atlanta, GA

A writer, performer, director, choreographer, musician and producer who creates original art for and with communities – locally, nationally, and internationally. Through its programs, members, and staff ROOTS has transformed me by recognizing and supporting my work – original art created for and with communities throughout the Southeast. With this support I’ve been able to consistently serve marginalized populations as they strive to overcome racial, cultural, economic, and other societal barriers.

**Sheila Kerrigan**

Chapel Hill, NC

I perform for children and adults, do school residencies, and am president of the Southeast Center for Arts Integration. A clueless young Yankee transplant with no understanding of history and no awareness of my white privilege, yet wanting to change the world for the better, I learned at the knee of ROOTS that artists are activists, and that I can take responsibility for the oppressions I see around me.

**Ann M Kilkelly**

Blacksburg, VA

Professor of Theatre, Women and Gender Studies, and Dance; collaboration with Carol Burch-Brown on new media and Junk DNA, our subversive ukulele act; singing with Elise Witt. From the first time I met Jo Carson at a writer's conference in Kentucky, saw and heard Paula Larke sing, and saw the passion and commitment to art, social justice, and community, I have been "ROOTed." From wild singing to water ballet to excruciating and long conversation on the hardest subjects, ROOTS has given me courage to be an artist.

**Normando Ismay**

Toccoa, GA

I paint and tell stories with the hope that I’m planting seeds of change and understanding for myself and anyone that stops to notice. ROOTS TRANSFORMATION - I became Papa Bizzoso!!!! The title came with many "not too serious" relatives with enormous talents who shared in the creation of unpredictable moments that nourished us into better agents of change and mitigated the pain of oppression. *(Disclaimer: There is no scientific proof or historic evidence that this is true.)*

**Bob Leonard**

Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA

I am a theatre director, an ensemble theatre maker, an arts organizer, a teacher, a community activist for social justice. I could not have done what I’ve done without ROOTS. I’ve been nurtured and taught, challenged and encouraged by ROOTS and all the people whom ROOTS has brought into my life. I’ve been entertained and inspired and subverted and informed and released and revived over and over again by ROOTS.

**Celeste Miller**

Long time resident of Atlanta, GA. Five years ago moved to Grinnell, IA for a job.

Work: Text + movement, in performance, in workshop, in education – movement as a tool for in-bodying embodied experiences. ROOTS has been the core of my continual journey to discover: why & how art matters, what makes art matter, how we can make lives of meaning with the tools of the arts as our skill base, how this is a democratic practice and pedagogy.

**John O'Neal**

New Orleans, LA

Theater Maker, Co-Founder of Free Southern Theater. Now retired and working to publish theater works.

*In 2014, Dudley Cocke asked John O’Neal what he would say to young artists coming up. This is John’s reply:*

“Keep talking. Keep talking to the people and keep engaged with the issues that they’re trying to meet and find themselves challenged by, and just keep going. Follow it even in the darkest

nights. The darker the night, the more likely you are to find that jewel.

**Toni B. Shifalo**

Orlando, FL and Stone Mountain, GA

Turned classical oboe training into a career on the washtub bass; learned to juggle, badly, so I became a clown. I struggled with how a juggling musician fit the ROOTS mission to be an artistically creative community-based activist. This gave me much conflict, also many ideas on how to merge the Politic with Antic to bring power to the people merely by sharing a few silly skills accessible to everyone.

**Priscilla Smith**

Atlanta, GA 30307

Creating beauty

performing

writing

producing

making music

caring for my dad

For 35 years I've been thinking about something Ruby Lerner said, "If you have 5 people in your audience, it's because you're not serving your community." Since the ROOTS meeting at Camp Wahsega, Jo Carson's story about the African-American woman who told her, "But we do live in the same community."

**MK Wegmann**

New Orleans, LA

Work: Organizing and cultural policy

My involvement with ROOTS has intersected with my work.

**Elise Witt**

Pine Lake, GA

Elise Witt’s concerts of Global, Local & Homemade Songs™ and her Impromptu Glorious Chorus™ workshops create and connect singing communities around the globe. Elise currently serves as Artist-in-Residence at the Global Village Project, a school for teenage refugee girls. Alternate ROOTS has shaped the nature and form of my work since 1979 –

\* the importance of deep and lasting connections with my singing communities

\* collaborations with ROOTS artists in many disciplines

\* monetary, technical, emotional, and spiritual support

ROOTS is my artistic family.

### Spirit of ROOTS Honorees

Alternate ROOTS has a history of audacious instigators, beautiful artistic agitators, playfully absurd makers, and relentless creative warriors in the journey for justice. This year we honor several individuals that embody the spirit of our ROOTS ancestors. In the spirit of Jo Carson, Brandon DuMonde, Adora Dupree, Don Evans, Liesel Flashenberg, Dennis Frederick,

Sterling Houston, Warren Johnston, LeAnn Loughran, Lloyd Martin, Kenneth Raphael, Ronnog Seaberg, Nayo Watkins, and Frank Wittow, we honor these individuals listed below. For at least 10 years, each honoree has demonstrated their on-going commitment to "doing the work" of Alternate ROOTS in the myriad forms it takes. These folks have a track record for instigating transformation inside of ROOTS and their Southern communities. They have been creating art that is provocative, embodies a spirit of beauty and justice, tells critical stories, and/or embodies Don Evan’s spirit of "doing stuff."

**Margo Miller**

Knoxville, Tennessee

My work is finding creative ways of building sustainable and resource-generating partnerships that benefit and celebrate our diversely rich culture of Appalachia. I have been blessed with the opportunity to work and collaborate with artists, arts organizations, and organizers all over the United States. I am more rounded in my day-to-day work and have developed a stronger affinity for the value of art and culture as a tool for social change.

**Camille H. Shafer**

Hot Springs, NC

My work for now 40 years has been and still is to build Azule, a rural Appalachian artists residency, a place for artists and community to meet, learn, and work together through the arts. I advocate for people with disabilities to have a full place at the table, to be heard, accepted, engaged, not just tolerated and left alone. ROOTS has helped me find a language to express what I stand for, out of my own isolation, to articulate and deepen my own feeling and thinking by being confronted by others’ bright artistic discipline and critical minds. To listen, to find other souls to work with, to build and share a better, more just world.

**Tufara Waller Muhammad**

Little Rock, AR

I am a Cultural Organizer with varied tools that assist communities in demystifying complex concepts, while helping to connect populations across differences. ROOTS has been an instrumental part of helping me to expand my knowledge base as a business person, refine my skills as an artist and cultural organizer, broaden my personal critical analysis, and expand my international movement family.

40 Key Milestones in ROOTS’ History

1. **September 1976: The Call** *Initiated by the Highlander Center, and led by Jo Carson, 15 theatres (dinner theatre, outdoor drama, summer stock and more) and 6 individuals gather for a weekend of discussion to explore mutual interests and common cause.*
2. **1976/1977: New Year’s Eve Sharing, Florida Studio Theater** *Based on mutual interests discovered at Highlander, a number of dance and theatre companies, including new vaudevillians and storytellers, meet to share work and exchange skills.*
3. **August 1977: Formal Incorporation** *Agreeing that Alternate ROOTS (Regional Organization of Theatres South) has a viable purpose, the members agree to incorporate in Tennessee, with the office housed in Knoxville at PlayGroup, a founding member.*
4. **1978: Performance Festival in Nashville, TN** *In its public debut, the Festival features performances in and around Vanderbilt University, hosted by art professor / provocateur, Don Evans. Funding is provided in part by the National Endowment for the Arts’ Expansion Arts program, an important early funder.*
5. **August 1979: Annual Meeting at Camp Blackmore, Dungannon, VA** *Beginning the tradition of meeting in rural areas and sharing work, this Annual Meeting is remembered for an evening meal served by Little Marrowbone Repair Corp., wearing only aprons and bow ties.*
6. **1980: ROOTS Festival, Eckerd College, St. Petersburg, FL** *Capitalizing on a strong Florida base of early members, this festival is held under a giant tent on the Eckerd grounds, and in site-specific locations throughout the city.*
7. **1981: Ruby Lerner begins as Executive Director** *Making a commitment to the future of ROOTS, the “Salad” (now known as the Executive Committee) hires its first full-time executive director who relocates the office to Atlanta and begins to build ROOTS’ national presence.*
8. **1983: Annual Meeting, YMCA Camp Younts, Waco, GA** *Reflecting Lerner’s leadership in the metro area, Atlanta-based membership greatly increases. Guest facilitator Nicaraguan Alan Bolt opens up new possibilities for politically-engaged theatre.*
9. ***1983: “The Three-Way Tour”*** *Josephine Ayers of Alabama produces a cross-cultural mini-tour featuring ROOTS members John O’Neal and Roadside Theater, in addition to Traveling Jewish Theater and Pregones. It inspires the development of ROOTS’ Touring Program that subsidized member performances in hundreds of Southeastern communities.*
10. **1985: Annual Meeting, Dahlonega, GA** *With the constant presence of Apache helicopters from an adjacent military base, a satirical monologue by Margaret Baker,* Little Black Sambo*, catalyzes a conversation about race that shapes future Annual Meetings.*
11. **1985: Josephine Grant begins as Executive Director** *Having secured national, state, and local funding for ROOTS, Lerner resigns (later to start Creative Capital). Grant, an Atlanta native, begins a new emphasis on securing local individual donors.*
12. **1987: 10th Anniversary Festival, Atlanta GA** *Hosted by 7 Stages, the Festival features performances by 43 members. In an effort to raise visibility for new work, a panel of national critics is invited to respond, including Linda Burnham of* High Performance *magazine.*
13. **1988: Kathie deNobriga begins as Executive Director** *A founding ROOTS member (as part of The Road Company), deNobriga leaves a history of community theatre in NC to become the new executive director.*
14. **1989: “Alternate FROOTS” Holds First Cocktail Party** *Linda Burnham encourages artists from Highways Performance Space in Santa Monica to attend, and for several years they are an active presence, influencing ROOTS’ public embrace of queer identity.*
15. **1990: Annual Meeting, Carnesville, GA** *Commonly called “Sports Camp,” this Annual Meeting is held within earshot of an interstate, and is remembered for “the Dinosaur Explosion,” a contentious disagreement around the content of this collective’s work. George King shoots a short documentary during this meeting.*
16. **1990: Performance Festival, Atlanta, GA** *Tim Miller, one of four performance artists who filed suit against the National Endowment for the Arts for rescinding their grants, performs for then-chairman of the NEA, John Frohnmayer.*
17. **1991: Annual Meeting, Camp Rockmont, Black Mountain, NC** *Liz Lerman tests her newly developed Critical Response Process at this meeting, a process that ROOTS and its member companies continue to use.*
18. **April 1992: Community Arts Convening, Table Rock State Park, SC** *With funding from Arts Presenters, ROOTS convenes 40+ practitioners of community-based arts (funders, academics, historians, journalists, artists) to consider the needs of this re-emerging field. The convening gives birth to the Community/Artists Partnership Program, commonly called C/APP.*
19. **1994: Community Arts Revival, Durham, NC** *Based on the energies arising from the Community Arts Convening, this festival includes a keynote by Jane Sapp, workshops, performances and site visits to the 12+ community arts projects funded by ROOTS and coached by Nayo Watkins.*
20. **1994: Annual Meeting, Camp Chatuga, SC (“Rain Camp”)** *Storyteller and visual artist Normando Ismay creates a space dedicated to late-night performances, impromptu collaborations, and general mayhem. Café Bizzoso becomes a fixture at Annual Meetings for several years to come.*
21. **1994: ROOTS publishes landmark collection of southern plays** *Co-edited by deNobriga and Valetta Anderson, director of the Southeastern Playwrights Project,* Plays from the Southern Theater *(Heinemann Press) features seven plays by ROOTS’ writers, six in print for the first time.*
22. **1996: 20th Anniversary** *Spearheaded by Atlanta members, ROOTS mounts a performance festival to coincide with the Olympic Games, providing a space for local artists to have a presence during the international event.*
23. **1997: Jenni Person begins as Executive Director** *Faced with debt and staff lay-offs, Person succeeds in keeping ROOTS alive during an uncertain and tight economic time.*
24. **1997: Annual Meeting, Camp Rockmont, Black Mountain, NC** *A performance by Ed Haggard,* Son of White Man*, explodes into late-night discussion and soul-searching, demonstrating that ROOTS members still have work to do around racial justice.*
25. **1998: Alice Lovelace begins as Executive Director** *Alice Lovelace, well-known performance poet and Atlanta arts leader, takes the reins. Lovelace catalyzes the emerging commitments to racial and social justice with her keen and persistent political analysis.*
26. **1999: ROOTS donor-advised fund created** *An anonymous donor gives the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta a contribution of $600,000 on ROOTS’ behalf, yielding +$30,000 in guaranteed annual income.*
27. **2002: 25th Anniversary: FOCAS Festival, Louisville, KY** *Modeled on the Community Arts Revival, the Focus on Community Arts South weaves together workshops, panels, and case studies from the 15 community arts projects supported by ROOTS in the KY area.*
28. **2003: Mission Revised: Annual Meeting, Camp Will-a-way, Winder, GA** *Members charge ROOTS to re-commit to racial justice as criteria in grant-making and other organizational decisions. The mission statement is amended to reflect that new priority.*
29. **2003: Carolyn Morris begins as Executive Director** *After several years of interim leaders, Morris becomes executive director. She brings years of experience in the community arts field with the Mississippi Arts Commission, working with ROOTS on statewide training.*
30. **2004: Annual Meeting at Lutheridge, Arden, NC** *Years of searching for a suitable site for the Annual Meetings result in a new partnership with a Lutheran summer camp south of Asheville, ROOTS’ home for the next dozen years. Center for Digital Storytelling introduces their methodology which many members embrace.*
31. **2004: Hip-Hop Artist/Activist Scholars** *Known later as “When Hip-Hop Met the Hippies,” funding from the Ford Foundation allows ROOTS to bring in a number of younger, mostly African-American hip-hop artists, shifting the composition and aesthetics of the meeting.*
32. **2006: UPROOTED: The Katrina Project** *Following the ‘federal floods,’ ROOTS offers an opportunity for artists of the Gulf Coast to come together to make work for their own healing, and for the education of others. UPROOTED is performed in eight cities over the following years.*
33. **2007: ROOTS Participates in the United States Social Forum, Atlanta, GA** *Former director Alice Lovelace serves as chief organizer, and ROOTS has a visible presence at the US’s first Social Forum in Atlanta. Members are also active in the subsequent Social Forum in Detroit (2010).*
34. **2008: ROOTS Expands its Definition of “The South”** *After years of discussion about “the south,” tempered with strong participation from Texas artists (especially Jump-Start from San Antonio), Texas and Arkansas are added to ROOTS’ region, for a total of 14 states and Washington, D.C.*
35. **2009: Carlton Turner becomes Executive Director** *After briefly serving as interim director, Turner becomes the first male to head ROOTS. With a background in community activism and performance, Turner succeeds in elevating ROOTS’ national profile like never before, including invitations to the White House.*
36. **2011: 35th Anniversary/ROOTS Fest, West Baltimore, MD** *Nurtured by several years of discussion between West Baltimore artist/activists and Resources for Social Change, ROOTS selects West Baltimore as the site for its ambitious 35th Anniversary Festival.*
37. **2012: Joan Mitchell Visual Artists Scholars program begins** *With an increasing number of visual artists and the intentional blurring of disciplinary lines, ROOTS makes a commitment to integrate visual artists into the fabric of the Annual Meeting and the organization itself.*
38. **2014: Changes to Membership Structure** *Recognizing the exclusion that results from the long-standing requirement of attending an Annual Meeting before joining, ROOTS changes its membership structure to allow greater access.*
39. **2015: ROOTS Forms National Partnership** *Building on relationships forged over years of solidarity, ROOTS partners with NALAC, First People’s Fund & the PA’I Foundation to found the Intercultural Leadership Institute, an effort to build and sustain the movements for social justice.*
40. **2016: 40th Anniversary ROOTS Week & Reunion** *Guided by the theme of “A Call to Action: Emergent Organizing” ROOTS members from near and far, recent and way back, gather together near Arden, NC to remember, reflect, and continue forward into our collective future.*

ROOTS WEEK PROGRAM BOOK

# A Call to Action: Emergent Organizing

## Welcome: Robert Martin, Executive Committee Chair

Welcome to ROOTS’ 40th Anniversary Week and Reunion! This week will no doubt be memorable in our collective history of an ongoing 40-year experiment in participatory democracy and power-building amongst people who are willing to creatively vision a more just society.

As June Jordan penned and Sweet Honey in the Rock (and ROOTers over the years) sang, this 40th celebration reminds me once again*…we are the ones we’ve been waiting for…*

If our goals are to celebrate expressions of our people, places, traditions, and spirit, while putting an end to injustice and oppression everywhere, it is necessary for us to gather at times like this – to ground ourselves, to look back and take stock of where we are and where we are headed, and to practice being together in beloved community.

We ask everyone to bring their most creative visioning as we begin to manifest the next 40 years. We also ask that you use this time to be thankful and practice radical gratitude to the founders, staff, family members, long-term, and short-term ROOTers, all of whom are our teachers and without whom we might not have reached this point – especially considering that we find ROOTS at 40 in a place of substantial organizational health and strength.

Every year it seems like we welcome a more diverse group of newcomers into the ROOTS fold. What a blessing! This is in deep alignment with the strategic plan, commitment to cultural equity, and our current theme of Emergent Organizing. I consider this organization brave and visionary for choosing to welcome diversity, usher threads of change, and continue to evolve to keep meeting our mission. We choose to build paths instead of walls. We trust that by investing in our community of artists, activists, and culture workers we are creating a space of abundance for all.

We are here to feast, to teach, to learn, to grow, to honor, and to prepare the ground for our sustainability to come. We are all welcome here, friends, and we are deeply thankful for all of the contributions that you and yours have brought to our collective table. On behalf of your Executive Committee of fellow ROOTS members, thank you for being here and give thanks to all those who are with us in spirit.

~b.

Robert ‘bobbyb’ Martin

Alternate ROOTS Board Chairperson

Clear Creek, KY

## A Note about Programming

ROOTS Week Annual Meeting & Artists’ Retreat is a fun-filled four days of performances, workshops, learning exchanges, visual arts installations, late-night cabarets, and ROOTS’ annual business meetings. This year’s program includes all of the usual elements, and we also have more unscheduled retreat space to savor and honor this 40th gathering of Southern artists. 40 years! And to really celebrate, we will have a blow-out ROOTS Reunion on Friday and Saturday.

The ROOTS Reunion is a perfect example of this year’s theme, the third of a three-year initiative, A Call to Action: Emergent Organizing. Emergent Organizing reflects our belief that the work of creating a more just world is already underway; it is happening in communities on the grassroots level and through cultural organizing across our region and planet. When we come together, we build new and cultivate old connections, for social justice work is collective work.

This year, we have created programming around three themes that are shared by our Partners in Action cohort and also show up in the work of ROOTS members, giving us the chance to deepen our collective analysis, toolkit, and wealth of wisdom around these particular issues and to practice Emergent Organizing:

* **Community Health & Safety** explores the ways communities are working to ensure that collective wellness and sustainability are at the center of community development.
* **Mass Incarceration** lifts up the work of organizers who are using arts and culture to address the prison industrial complex, from im/migrant detention centers to the School-to-Prison pipeline.
* **Youth in the Movement** highlights youth-led organizing efforts throughout the South, as well as issues that affect youth specifically.

In addition, from Friday night through Saturday night we have a segment of ROOTS Reunion programming that specifically celebrates our 40th Anniversary. You’ll find performances, visual arts exhibits, and installations inspired from previous ROOTS Weeks / Annual Meetings / ROOTS Festivals, as well as reenactments and workshops that explore ROOTS history.

***All programming descriptions are listed below in alphabetical order. For dates, times, and locations, please see your schedule/handout.***

As described in our mission statement, ROOTS has an organizational commitment to eliminating all forms of oppression. In past ROOTS Weeks, we have dedicated an all-conference session to UpROOTing Oppression. This year, UpROOTing Oppression is not a specific program but a value that we hope each attendee will continue to enact and uphold through the many ways we all will participate in this week’s events. For more information about this topic, you can check out the three-year report.

# Learning Exchanges & Self-Organized Space

A Learning Exchange is an opportunity for a community, a group of people, artists, facilitators/trainers, and any combination thereof, to come together around an agreed-upon topic. Inspired by the principles of Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal, we have adopted the term “learning exchange” to show that all the knowledge that is needed to solve any given problem is already in the room.

We also invite attendees to convene Self-Organized Space in the breaks between sessions and before or after meals. Each convener of a session takes responsibility for creating it, posting it on the Self-Organized Space bulletin board, assigning it a space and time to meet, and then later showing up at that space and time, kicking off the exchange. Self-Organized Space is a convening process that reflects our five principles of being resources for social change. It is an opportunity for shared power, partnership, open dialogue, transformation and aesthetics of transparent processes.

**2004: When Hip-hop Met the Hippies**

The Hip-hop Scholarship program was a tipping point for Alternate ROOTS and in 2004, with an influx of new energy, the organization experienced a dynamic transformation. Hip-hop Scholar Omari Fox leads a discussion featuring artists who were there, to talk about the growing pains and the impact of that growth on ROOTS.

Themes: 40th Anniversary

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**conNECKted**

the conNECKted team with JEMAGWGA (La’Sheia Oubre, Latonnya Wallace, Jean-Marie Mauclet and Gwylene Gallimard)

We will explore engagement, participation, and ideas around “conNECKted” Imagination Tables, banners, videos, and actions. The conversation will be a question/answer session in a Relay Interview Format.

The goals of “**conNECKted**”, an art in/with-community project, are to challenge Charleston, SC political institutions and developers by amplifying the voices of neighborhoods and residents who are absent from public or private plans. Together, we oppose the planned displacement of minorities in housing and entrepreneurship and the destruction of common memories. We work for attainable housing for all, the earnest desegregation of schools, and for a city where families scarred by gun violence can heal.

**Themes: Community Health & Safety**

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**CRAFT Me a World**

Mathew Schwarzman & Keith Knight

From the creators of "Beginner's Guide To Community-Based Arts" comes "CRAFT Me a World,” an interactive, interdisciplinary workshop for teens and adults that combines the immediacy of improv games and live cartooning with bold intergenerational discussions about social issues. In this version, especially designed for ROOTS Week 2016, participants will explore the cultural roots of police brutality and develop cultural strategies for dealing with it.

**Mathew Schwarzman** is a nationally recognized speaker, teacher, writer, and theater artist, and the creator of the CRAFT community-based arts framework. **Keith Knight** is one of the leading political cartoonists in the United States, winning the 2015 NAACP History Maker Award for his police brutality slideshow entitled "They Shoot Black People, Don't They?" The two co-authored the first edition of "Beginner's Guide to Community-Based Arts" in 2005, one of the leading textbooks in the field, now used in dozens of universities and community-based organizations around the world.

**Themes: Mass Incarceration**

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**Panel: Creating a World Without Prisons with the Arts**

We will discuss the current state of the prison reform and abolition movements taking place and the role that the arts play to enact change. We know that each of you have experience in your work. We are also hoping that this conversation will jump-start the ROOTS community’s interest and participation in ROOTS Weekend-Richmond coming up in Spring 2017, tentatively themed “Imagine a World Without Prisons.”

Featuring: Rend Smith, Working Narratives - Black Man Running; Kai Lumumba Barrow, Gallery of the Streets; Nick Szuberla, Nation Inside and Working Narratives; Moderator: Trey Hartt, Art 180 & Performing Statistics

**Themes: Mass Incarceration**

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**Cultural Organizing with Art and Stories**

Monique Davis

During this mini-workshop that replicates the flow of imagining, I will share processes that I used to gather diverse communities with varied interests, as a Cultural Agent in Jackson, MS. I will share a brief overview of the history of the United States Department of Arts and Culture, my role as an agent, and walk participants through the process. This workshop may be of particular interest to cultural organizers and activists.

**Monique Davis** currently serves as a Cultural Agent for the United States Department of Arts and Culture (USDAC) – a people-powered action network of artists and cultural workers mobilizing creativity in the service of social and environmental justice. The USDAC is the nation's first people-powered department, founded on the truth that art and culture are our most powerful and under-tapped resources for social change. Radically inclusive and vibrantly playful, the USDAC aims to spark a grassroots, creative change movement, engaging millions in performing and creating a world rooted in empathy, equity, and social imagination.

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**The Freedom Chamber**

Rebecca Mwase & Ron Ragin

We invite you to join us for a song-story workshop, during which we’ll sing, create, and document songs and sounds of freedom amidst confinement. Through the Freedom Chamber, an ongoing project based in New Orleans, we are collaborating with groups organizing against mass incarceration to develop community-created sound sculptures reflecting the experiences of currently and formerly incarcerated people, their families, and communities. Drawing upon freedom songs of the Black Diaspora, our workshop experientially activates people’s sense of justice and harmony, weaving storytelling and education about the current state of mass incarceration to push people to want to act – with their voices, their bodies, and their civic participation.

**Rebecca Mwase** is a Zimbabwean-American theater artist, creative consultant, producer, and cultural organizer. **Ron Ragin** writes, sings, and creates interdisciplinary performance work that integrates sound, text, and movement. Together, we are co-shapers of the Freedom Chamber and of Vessels, a ritual performance exploring the transcendental possibilities of song during the Middle Passage and within spaces of confinement. Both Ron and Rebecca have experience creating and facilitating spaces for communities to engage in storytelling, singing, and performance creation.

**Themes: Mass Incarceration**

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**The History Project Archival Lab**

Alternate ROOTS

Alternate ROOTS is taking the opportunity of this 40th anniversary to dig deep into our history and invites your participation in this collectively curated memory experience! We invite you to bring your ROOTS memorabilia and stories to ROOTS Week, and share them in our archival lab where they’ll be documented and digitized. We’ll then use these to help us build The History Project, an interactive web-based platform that identifies key milestones in ROOTS’ history and populates them with archival materials – photos, video, audio stories, and more – that flesh out these particular moments in time. \

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**Holding Space in the Watershed**

Every generation has its defining moment, when systemic violence – and the people’s response to it – reaches a boiling point. This summer, we're rising up against police brutality, transphobia, homophobia, Islamaphobia, and political platforms based on violent, divisive rhetoric. This facilitated discussion will hold space for all that is taking place in our country and world right now, in this watershed moment.

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**“In My 20s…”**

Since 1976 people have landed at ROOTS when they were 20-something artists. Rebecca Mwase and Patton White co-facilitate this intergenerational conversation and story sharing that will highlight the stories of folks that were in their 20s when they arrived. If you came to ROOTS in your 20s we invite you to share your own stories and listen to others share about the role ROOTS played in their evolution as artists and activists.

Themes: 40th Anniversary

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***It’d Take Some Tellin’*: ROOTS Week 2016 Intergenerational Conversation and Story Circle**

Jan Cohen-Cruz & Carlton Turner

This conversation/story circle invites ROOTers of all ages to share what they consider most important to communicate in our collaborative research project, *It’d Take Some Tellin’ – Multiple Perspectives on Art and Social Engagement Through 40 Years of Alternate ROOTS*. The ROOTS research project seeks to articulate the place of this organization and its artists at the intersection of art, activism, and community. The research will culminate in a digital compendium consisting of a website that is integrated with a chronological platform called The History Project, where project artifacts (text, video, audio, photos), documents, and other items, and a discourse surrounding them, will live... We look to you, ROOTS members of all ages, to help us prioritize what to include in this undertaking.

**Jan Cohen-Cruz** edits *Public*, the Journal of Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life, a national organization she previously directed. She was a professor at NYU Tisch School of the Arts for over 25 years, co-founding its Art and Public Policy initiative and Drama’s Applied Theater minor. She wrote *Local Acts*, *Engaging Performance*, and *Remapping Performance: Common Ground, Uncommon Partners*; edited *Radical Street Performance*; and co-edited *Playing Boal* and *A Boal Companion* with Mady Schutzman. In 2012, Cohen-Cruz received the Association of Theatre in Higher Education’s Leadership in Community-based Theatre and Civic Engagement Award. She is Director of Field Research for A Blade of Grass.

**Carlton Turner** is a cultural organizer from Utica, Mississippi and the executive director of Alternate ROOTS. Carlton works across the country as an artist, arts advocate, policy shaper, lecturer, consultant, and facilitator. He is on the board of Imagining America, Appalshop, First People’s Fund, and the Arts x Culture x Social Justice Network, and serves on the governance council of the Southern Movement Assembly and as an advisory member of the We Shall Overcome Fund. Carlton is also a co-founder, along with his brother Maurice Turner, of the performing group M.U.G.A.B.E.E. Carlton lives in Utica with his wife Brandi (expecting) and two children Jonathan and Xiauna Lin.

**Themes: ROOTS Reunion**

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**olive Dance Theatre: Workshop**

olive Dance Theatre

During thisdaily gathering, we will offer a physical technique workshop in breaking that is open to all levels and age groups.

**olive Dance Theatre** is a Philadelphia-based organization and ensemble, founded in 2002 by Artistic Director, Jamie Merwin. Current ensemble members include: Jaamal Benjamin, Brooks Jones, Kelly Snell, and Lao Song. oDT’s mission is to validate indigenous American hip-hop dance forms, specifically breakin' more commonly known as breakdance, through the creation and performance of new dance theatre works domestically and abroad. The company aims to educate audiences and communities about the form’s histories and various techniques. We provide an outlet and appreciation for pioneers, current generation, and future practitioners of these folk styles.

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**Journeys and Connections**

Jess Solomon leads an interactive story and mapping session to share personal experiences of how people came to ROOTS – both metaphorically and literally. Through a series of exercises we will explore how you got to ROOTS (delayed flights, jalopies, and long road trips with strangers), the relationships that brought you to ROOTS, and who you took away with you.

Themes: 40th Anniversary

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**Pragmatic Visionary Self-Love**

Nicole Garneau

This ceremonial workshop will take place after dark around a fire on the Lutheridge campus. “Pragmatic Visionary Self-Love” is an explicit invitation to banish the shame that prevents us from truly caring for ourselves, and to commit to showering ourselves with the love and care that all people deserve. This ceremony acknowledges the deep wounds that are inflicted on us by systems of oppression. We will generate our own sacred vows of self-love, and tenderly hold each other as witnesses. The elements of this ceremony will be unpacked and named so that participants are also having a meta-experience of learning how to create their own sacred ceremonies to serve the specific healing needs of their communities. This is the 3rd Pragmatic Visionaries ceremonial workshop to be held at Alternate ROOTS.

**Nicole Garneau** is an interdisciplinary artist making site-specific performance and project art that is directly political, critically conscious, and community building. She served on the board of directors of the National Performance Network from 2006-2012, and is currently on the Executive Committee of Alternate ROOTS. Nicole teaches in Women’s and Gender Studies at DePaul University. She holds a B.A. in Theater from the University of Illinois at Chicago and an M.A. in Interdisciplinary Art from Columbia College Chicago. She also facilitates a variety of creative workshops, makes ceremonies, and practices healing. Her work is documented at nicolegarneau.com.

**Themes: Community Health & Safety**

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**Racial Equity in Practice: What It Means to Be a Person of Color in ROOTS**

Stephen Clapp leads a conversation for People of Color to talk about what it meant and currently means to be a part of the ROOTS community. While white allies are welcome in this session, it will focused on POC stories and perspectives.

Themes: 40th Anniversary

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**ROOTS 40th Anniversary Vocal Orchestra**

Elise Witt

Throughout ROOTS Week, we will create Vocal Orchestras with the entire gathering, laying a musical foundation by using the names of ROOTS companies/members as the lyrics, over which we will sing, rap, and tell stories about ROOTS’ history, present, and future.

**Elise Witt**’s concerts of Global, Local & Homemade Songs™, and her Impromptu Glorious Chorus ™ workshops create and connect singing communities around the globe. Recipient of the William L. Womack Creative Arts Award, Elise currently serves as Director of Music Programs at the Global Village Project, a school for teenage refugee girls in Decatur, GA, and a Partner in Action, where she uses singing to help students learn English and everything else needed to get along in this life!

**Themes: 40th Anniversary**

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**ROOTS Playlist**

Bring your favorite ROOTS songs to share or re-learn! Marquez Rhyne hosts this freestyle and loosely guided sing-along session. It’s your chance to engage with songs from the ROOTS canon and offer new additions.

Themes: 40th Anniversary

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**We Are Going, but Where?**

Facilitated by Nia Wilson and Carrie Brunk, this conversation explores our dreams and strategies for building the future of art and activism. How are we as ROOTers preparing for the next 40 years of creating a world of beauty and justice? What are the songs we will sing to bring us into the future? Join us to dream the future.

Themes: 40th Anniversary

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**We make the road by walking, but it helps if you have lots of string, playdough, and popsicle sticks!**

Jeff Becker and Kathie deNobriga

Imagine what happens when Alternate ROOTS founding member and art facilitator extraordinaire, Kathie deNobriga, combines creative forces with innovative New Orleans theater alchemist and sculptor, Jeff Becker, in a space with 5 ½ pounds of playdough (assorted colors) 280 paper plates, 1000 popsicle sticks, unlimited pipe cleaners, colored tape, and 3.2 miles of red string, along with 20 eager ROOTers! In this inventive 1-day workshop, Kathie and Jeff will lead participants on a journey to visualize their personal and artistic paths, focusing on how ROOTS has been an integral part of their life’s journey. Using story circle, sociometrics, 3D mapping, and lots of cool artmaking materials, this workshop will create an installation that draws from our past to give visual form to our future.

**Kathie deNobriga** is a founding member of Alternate ROOTS and facilitator and planning consultant, engaging the creative imagination in the solution of practical problems. **Jeff Becker** is a director and designer based in New Orleans. Hespecializes in outdoor site responsive work that features innovative transforming environments. He has collaborated with many long-time ROOTers including ArtSpot Productions, Mondo Bizzaro, Rebecca Mwase, Ashley Sparks, and Linda Parris-Bailey.

**Themes: ROOTS Reunion**

# Performances & Exhibitions

**#25 [The Crossing]**

Gallery of the Streets, kai lumumba barrow

In 1974, women imprisoned at New York’s maximum-security prison at Bedford Hills staged what is known as the August Rebellion. In the aftermath, 25 women were injured and 24 were transferred to Matteawan Complex for the Criminally Insane. #25 [The Crossing], is a multimedia excerpt from my new work-in-progress, *[b]REACH: Adventures in Heterotopia*. Set in a mental asylum following the August Rebellion, this surrealist visual opera explores confinement and resistance from a Queer Black Feminist lens. The work merges radical feminist history and theory through interviews, narratives, and archival footage, with speculative painting, poetry, movement, sound, music, and installation.

**Gallery of the Streets** aims to “engage everyday spaces as sites of resistance.” An evolving national network of artists, activists, organizers, scholars, cultural workers, and community supporters, Gallery of the Streets exists at the intersections of art, education, geography, history, direct action, and movement building. Our signature program, visual opera, a term coined by Gallery of the Streets Founder and Artistic Director, kai lumumba barrow, fuses public art and community engagement to confront power, provoke dialogue, and cultivate sustainable spaces among Black women and Black gender non-conforming communities and our allies. Our point of departure is rooted in our desire for self-determination and our willingness to disrupt and/or highlight our experiences within locations of confinement and resistance.

**Themes: Mass Incarceration**

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**BTV - otherwise known as Bizzoso Television**

Charles Dennis a.k.a. Chuckie Bizzoso

Chuckie Bizzoso dusted off Bizzoso Television (BTV) archives and throughout ROOTS Week and the Reunion will be screening these short videos made during the Annual Meetings in the mid-1990s. Originally screened during Cafe Bizzoso, this archival footage highlights some of the truly absurdly ROOTS-ey moments of artists making movies in the woods. Each night at Late Night, we’ll have screenings of the BTV archives, as well as screenings of a new collection of BTV videos created daily during ROOTS Week.

**Charles Dennis** is an interdisciplinary artist, choreographer, video artist, and proprietor of Charles Dennis Productions, a Brooklyn, New York-based company that produces digital media content for artists, not-for-profit organizations, and corporate clients. Charles co-founded Performance Space 122 in New York City in 1979 and helped nurture its development as one of the most active performance spaces in this country. Charles created numerous inter-generational, community-oriented dance/performances from 1980-2000 and was awarded many fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York Foundation for the Arts.

**Themes: ROOTS Reunion**

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**Early ROOTS: A Play for Voices**

Will MacAdams and Ashley Sparks

This 15-minute play retells stories from early ROOTS history.

**Will MacAdams** is a playwright and director who has worked in South Africa, Indonesia, Brazil, Mexico and across the United States. Recent projects include four community-based plays created with farming communities in New York and California and a multi-year theater project about economic class and its many intersections, created with students at Hampshire College.

**Themes: ROOTS Reunion**

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**Eleven Reflections on September**

Written & directed by Andrea Assaf

“Eleven Reflections on September" is a poetry/spoken word & multimedia performance on Arab American experience, Wars on/of Terror, and the constant, quiet rain of death amidst beauty that each autumn brings in a post-9/11 world. This production is based on the series of poems Andrea Assaf has written since 2001, spanning the fall of the towers, the on-going wars, and the current revolutions and conflicts sweeping through the Arab world.

**Andrea Assaf**, founding Artistic Director of Art2Action Inc., is an acclaimed performer, writer, director, and cultural organizer. In addition to curating community-based programs in Tampa, Florida, Andrea tours nationally and internationally. 2015 performances of her original work, "Eleven Reflections on September", include La MaMa ETC, The Apollo Theatre, and the Kennedy Center Millennium Stage. She currently serves on the Board of the Consortium of Asian American Theatres & Artists (CAATA), and is a voting board member of Alternate ROOTS. Andrea is also a member of RAWI, the Radius of Arab American Writers.

**Themes: Community Health & Safety**

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**Guardians of Gaia**

The Pacha Mamas

This theatrical performance deals with our relationship to Mother Earth/the natural world and how critical it is that we look at our disconnections, which are creating severe environmental and health issues all over the world.

**The Pacha Mamas** comprises three unique individuals, who work in harmony with each other and spirit to create, express, and inspire. Their performances are primarily driven by their eclectic original songs, but also include movement, humor, improvisation, and storytelling. The Pacha Mamas seek to inspire the viewer to reflect upon such subjects as unity, inclusion, diversity, and respect for self and all living beings. Joy is their ultimate intention in co-creating with audiences as they seek to engage them in the experience. The Pacha Mamas are: Angela Bennett, Marquetta Dupree, and Vivian Slade.

**Themes: Community Health & Safety**

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**The Hollerin Space**

This Hollerin Space is meant to activate a collective dream culture. We harness the 40th annual meeting as a functional & ecological space for composition and conduction in which things converge to spark dreaming for the now, the next 40, & beyond, using performance, painting, and film. We will engage in one-on-one and/group conversations, talking or “live dreaming” with ROOTS Week participants. These will be audio recorded sessions. In tandem, we will be with the mountain environment, the nature, and history of ROOTers’ work around the 4 curated themes for this year’s gathering, observing how patterns move & have moved will inform us.

**Muthi** is a multi media artist from Philadelphia. Their work is a genealogy of migrations. Of place to place border crossings navigating notions of origins, ancestry, body as home, and blood memory. Muthi conducts public remixes of found & open source documentations of everyday life with workers, queers, and freedom fighters. **Angela Davis Johnson** is a multidisciplinary visual artist whose practice includes painting, performance, and public art. Her narrative paintings reflect the textured life and spirit of black culture, and with these paintings she incorporates body movements and song to uplift the forgotten and to amplify untold stories.

**Themes: Mass Incarceration, Community Health & Safety, Youth in the Movement, and ROOTS 40th Anniversary**

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**Migrant Farm Worker Youth Empowerment**

Rodrigo Dorfman

Through an Alternate ROOTS grant, Rodrigo collaborated with NC Field, an organization dedicated to farm-worker empowerment, to offer a six-week workshop in Kinston, Lenoir County, North Carolina, to a small group of migrant worker youth. The goals were to develop their skills in the art of multimedia storytelling, empower them to become active participants in their communities, and create the multimedia elements of a media advocacy campaign centered on raising awareness around the timely issue of child labor in the tobacco industry. Rodrigo will present insights into this creative process and show some of the youth’s work, as well as a short video portrait of one of the participants: Neftali Cuello – a 19 year-old farmworker who uses poetry to educate and organize.

**Mother to Mother, Collective Sun**

Rodrigo Dorfman and Spirithouse NC

"Mother to Mother, Collective Sun" is an offering from black mothers in Durham NC, for the Black Lives Matter National Week of Action, held on October 20-26 2014. We stand, in solidarity, with black mothers, from around the globe, against racial profiling, police brutality and the state sanctioned violence that has claimed the lives of so many of our children. [#Black](https://www.youtube.com/results?q=%2523Black) Lives Matter

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| **Rodrigo Dorfman** is North Carolina-based award-winning filmmaker and multimedia producer who has worked with POV, HBO, Salma Hayek's Ventanazul, and the BBC among others. His films have been screened at some of the top international film festivals in the world (Toronto, Full Frame, Edinburgh, Telluride, Human Rights Watch). His short "One Night in Kernersville" won Jury Award for best short at Full Frame (2011). His latest work can be seen at the Levine Museum of the New South, NUEVOlution! Latinos and the New South, a national touring museum exhibit based on his documentary work. He is currently the editor and cinematographer of the documentary "Always in Season" about the impact of lynching on four different communities.  ----------- |

**Orisirisi African Folklore**

**Orisirisi African Folklore** is a performing arts company, co-founded by husband and wife team Don and Tutu Harrell. Rooted in history, culture, and traditions of Africa, Orisirisi uses storytelling, drumming, dance and song, children’s games, lectures, documentary film and video, plus educational initiatives and workshops to illuminate the beauty and importance of African and African-American life and culture. Since its inception, the company has reached countless people, the world over.

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**Performing Statistics: Visual Art Installation**

The Performing Statistics installation was created by a group of young men incarcerated at the Richmond Juvenile Detention Center. Their photo portraits are in response to the prompt, “If you knew me, you would know that…” The center of the installation includes a to-scale replica of a youth prison cell (6’x8’x8’) with a collective poem about their experiences being locked up. Audiences are also asked to respond to the question, “How can you create a world where no youth are locked up?”

**Performing Statistics** is an art advocacy and cultural organizing project that connects incarcerated youth to the leading juvenile justice reform efforts in Virginia. [www.performingstatistics.org](http://www.performingstatistics.org/) #prisonsdontwork

**Themes: Mass Incarceration**

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**ROOTS Reunion: Who We Are and Where We’ve Been**

Co-hosts Marquetta Dupree and Nick Slie guide us through a Friday evening of ROOTS history featuring new work, staged readings from past performances, and a very special shout out to all our founding members. Includes: *Early ROOTS: A Play for Voices* by Will MacAdams, excerpts from *Warren* by Rebecca Ranson, *Daytrips* by Jo Carson, some singing, some dancing, and if you are lucky some mate.

Themes: 40th Anniversary

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**She Speaks**

Edyka Chilomé

Inspired by her book *She Speaks | Poetry*, an exploration of queer *Latinx mestizaje* in the diaspora, Edyka Chilomé offers a decolonizing testimony through poetry and storytelling. Pulling from modern and pre-columbian American language and culture, Edyka explores “herstory” through personal and global politics, spirituality, and the origins of poetry itself. In the tradition of queer women of color writers, Edyka Chilomé invites us to consider the complexity of our human condition and the need to tell our stories for healing self and community.

Edyka Chilomé is a queer indigenous Xicana / Centro Americana. She is an artist, social justice educator, and spiritual activist. Edyka holds a B.A. in social and political philosophy and an M.A. in Multicultural Women's Studies. She currently lives in Texas and serves as a faculty member for Free Minds Dallas.

**Themes: Community Health and Safety**

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**Spoken Word Performance**  
Chris James

This performance will speak on themes of Chris’ work with his organization, The Roots Art Connection. The Roots Art Connection’s programs and projects are designed to support social justice, alleviate poverty and hunger, uproot oppression, and engage youth in creative arts while simultaneously increasing academic success.

**Chris James** is a native of Little Rock, AR, and by age of 24, he has already become one of the primary leaders of the arts movement in the city. He is a member of 2014 Championship Poetry Slam Team, Foreign Tongues. He is an artist on the Arkansas Arts Council Roster and Fellow for Arkansas A+ Schools. He is the founder and Executive Director of The Roots Art Connection. Chris is a national spoken word poet who combines theatre with his performance to shed a different light on the art form. He is a playwright, director, actor, author, photographer, and teaching artist. He has written and produced three original stage plays.

**Themes: Community Health & Safety**

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**Super ROOTSy Honoring and Reunion Spectacular!**

It’s our inaugural year for two honors – Deeply ROOTed and the Spirit of ROOTS honors. Co-hosted by Ron Ragin and Karen Stevens, Saturday night will feature dozens of individuals honored through music, poetry, dance, video, songs, and surprises. Cameo performances by Paula Larke, Alternate FROOTS, and others. Guest DJ Dave Soul helps us celebrate turning 40 with a dance party into the wee hours…

Themes: 40th Anniversary

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**Taken**

Kesha McKey

*Taken* (an excerpt), is a dance theater production inspired by the historical epidemic of the absentee father in African-American families and communities. Using dance, theatre, spoken word, and song, *Taken* exhibits a historical journey depicting significant events that have affected the African-American family such as slavery, war, street violence, and mass incarceration. It is an exploration of the resistance, perseverance, and survival of the African-American family whose patriarchs have been snatched and sold as slaves, unwillingly drafted to fight "white men's” wars, caged in the era of mass incarceration, and lost to violent crimes and police brutality.

**Kesha McKey** is a choreographer, educator, and performing artist in New Orleans. She received her BS from Xavier University and her MFA in dance from UW-Milwaukee. She is the Artistic Director of KM Dance Project, a dance educator at New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts, and Program Coordinator of the Kuumba Institute at Ashé Cultural Arts Center.

**Themes: Mass Incarceration**

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**Visual Artist Presentation**

Rasha Abdulhadi

Palestinian women have threaded the embroidery art of tatreez through the historical, political, social, and economic fabrics of their experiences for generations. By embroidering traditional motifs on photographs – historical and contemporary, on the Palestinian symbol of the kufiya, and on contemporary clothing that crosses lines of gender, this work invites a queer re-engagement with embroidery as storytelling in diaspora and in the context of the U.S. South.

Rasha Abdulhadi grew up between Damascus and rural south Georgia and cut her organizing teeth on the southsides of Chicago and Atlanta. She is a cultural organizer, educator, and community technologist. These days, she is managing a bookstore in Washington DC, writing science fiction, and making traditional Palestinian embroidery.

**Themes: Community Health and Safety**

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**What I Didn't Learn in Girl Scouts**

Kathie deNobriga

"What I Didn't Learn in Girl Scouts" is both an homage to an early, though brief, formative experience growing up in east Tennessee, and a mature reflection on life lessons that unfolded in subsequent years. Structured as a series of contemporary "badges," the piece is a growing collection of short stories told with light-hearted gravity.

**Kathie deNobriga** is a founding member of Alternate ROOTS and facilitator and planning consultant, engaging the creative imagination in the solution of practical problems. With early training in improvisation, community-built plays and ensemble practice, Kathie mostly withdrew from the world of performing while building a career as a nonprofit consultant. There was always one time and place where she nurtured her performing self: at the Annual Meetings of ROOTS, with appearances as Kitty Campbell, Camp Counselor and other characters. Those early ad hoc performances generated an idea for an extended series of stories and reflections. Now, after completing 12 years as an elected official, she finally has the time and focus to return to her own roots as a writer and performer.

**Themes: ROOTS Reunion**

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