Remembrance, Healing, Celebration, and Resilience:

Art and Organizing in West Baltimore

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Abstract

Over 50 years ago, urban renewal in West Baltimore permanently divided part of the black community; displaced 19,000 residents from their homes, churches, and businesses; annihilated community infrastructure; and alienated community members from their culture. While scores of dilapidated and vacant row houses speak to the impact of this urban planning disaster, it is perhaps best marked by a 1.4-mile dead-end expressway (Route 40, East/West) that cuts through the Harlem Park section of Baltimore City – a concrete stretch that residents named *The Highway to Nowhere*.

June 25-26, 2011, 11,000 people came together beside the abandoned highway for an arts, culture, and social justice festival, dubbed ROOTSFest by its joint planners, Alternate ROOTS and CultureWorks. The Festival, however significant, was the result of a much richer story: a long-term recovery effort led by community members, artists, local community organizers, and researchers to remember, heal, celebrate, and strengthen resilience in West Baltimore.

Stirred by ROOTSFest 2011 and its previous three-day National Learning Exchange, Jon Catherwood-Ginn, Dudley Cocke, and Bob Leonard began an email correspondence about the importance of reflection and critical discourse in the practice that joins community organizing with the beauty of artistic and cultural expression for the purpose of achieving justice. Subsequently, Cocke and Leonard joined Randolph H. Rowel of Morgan State University and Ashley Milburn of West Baltimore's CultureWorks in a panel discussion about organizing and ROOTSFest at Imagining America's 2011 national conference. Excerpts from that dialogue are included here. When the discussion among Milburn, Rowel, Leonard, Cocke, and Catherwood-Ginn picked up after the conference, it became clear that the perspective of Denise Johnson, a West Baltimore community organizer and CultureWorks leader, was missing and necessary if the analysis was to deepen. This article also includes Festival perspectives from Roadside Theater's Young Activist Leadership Cohort and excerpts from a Festival Q&A session with John O'Neal, co-founder of the Free Southern Theatre and Luis Valdez, founder of El Teatro Campesino.

CHAPTER 1

The Highway to Nowhere and West Baltimore Today

Ashley Milburn (AM): The national highway effort to connect America carried the unspoken subtitle, "we're gonna do it through minority communities that are building power bases and stability."

In the 1960s and 1970s, the United States designated Harlem Park in West Baltimore as one of its first Urban Renewal areas. To relieve crowding and provide open spaces, the City demolished substandard houses to create 22 "inner block" parks and concurrently implemented a federal highway program to demolish dozens of additional blocks. This urban renewal project hit the residents of West Baltimore with back-to-back disasters: displacement and the discovery of the project's ultimate meaninglessness. First, the City told residents that the highway was going to be built, which required residents to move before demolition. Following sustained opposition from environmental groups in 1981, however, the City told West Baltimoreans that the highway would *not* be completed. The Highway's ultimate abandoned acreage cut through Harlem Park, midtown Edmondson, Rosemont, and Upton: the latter of which was a cultural hub famous for such locales and luminaries as the Royal Theatre, Billie Holiday, and Cab Calloway.

> *"For too long, the history of Urban Renewal and Highway Clearance has been marked by repeated removal of black citizens [. . . .] We have been asked to make sacrifice after sacrifice in the name of progress, and when that progress has been achieved we find it marked 'White Only.'"*
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> From The **Relocation Action Movement**: a "coalition of middle-class black activists from Rosemont and militant working-class blacks in the Franklin-Mulberry corridor" who fought against the construction of the Highway, by Mohl, Raymond A. "A Research Report by the Poverty and Race Research Action Council." Urban Expressways and the Central Cities in Postwar America. University of Alabama at Birmingham: 2002.

Randy Rowel (RR): In place of that rich history, the Highway would now stand as a grim symbol of a failed government project where the cost was more than the misuse of tax revenue. It snatched people from their extended families and communities.

AM: By the late 1980s, a drug epidemic began eroding West Baltimore. The inner block parks created in the 1960s and 70s became hubs for drug trade, leaving residents with no public places for community gathering or play for children. Decay and dumping followed a further loss of population in the area.

Bob Leonard (BL): Today, West Baltimore is structured around neighborhood associations that are rife with all the predictable fissures of power, differing perspectives, and personalities that occur in any community under the kind of oppression that exists in West Baltimore. Nevertheless, organizations like the West Baltimore Coalition (WBC) find a way to work together for economic and social justice.

Thinking about community trauma: Katrina blows in and blows out and there's a huge residue and consequence, but the event of that disaster happened "ka-bam!" Conversely, the

consequences of an inner-city catastrophe that comes along with urban renewal, for instance, look like the effects of a hurricane that *stays*. Decades long in its motion, and the turmoil is continuous. Organizations and institutions grow up inside of that turmoil and become dependent on its existence. Although they appear to have justice at the center of their efforts, such institutions would not exist if it were not an unjust situation. So there is a perverse need for the injustice to persist. These are hospitals, for instance, with multi-million dollar budgets that are trying to deal with the traumas of the community, or foundations that get created to address similar needs. Do you affiliate yourself with an institution and then start carrying its baggage when you want to make, rather, a more fluid, expressive artistic investigation into such questions as, "How do we find health here?

RR: Mindy Fullilove states that, "When a neighborhood is destroyed, its inhabitants suffer *root shock*: a traumatic stress reaction related to the destruction of one's emotional ecosystem. The ripple effects of root shock have an impact on entire communities that can last for decades." Whether the event is caused by a natural or manmade disaster like the Highway, the results are the same.

The first action after any disaster is *search and rescue*, with aid to people who are in distress. What aid was available to those who were forced from their homes and whose cultural roots were severed when the Highway was constructed? Who came to the rescue of displaced residents when the highway project was halted after only 1.39 miles had been built?

Years after the disaster, I'd argue that art makers emerged and took on the challenge of being the first responders until the help arrives.

Trust-Building, Engagement, and the Birth of CultureWorks

AM: The Highway displaced 19,000 folk so I found 14 very easily. They're in their 90s and they're dying. In 2007, I brought them together in the community meeting space at The Bon Secours Foundation—a non-profit affiliate of the Baltimore Health System—to tell their stories in Story Circles, to remember.

I was working primarily southwest of the highway in a particular community of 14 groups. I got funds through an Open Society Institute Fellowship to expand the group to the North side because the South and North don't talk, even among themselves. A committee was formed to envision what it was we were going to do together. They came up with a preamble of art and culture that we eventually recited at meetings, the way you do "I Pledge Allegiance to the Flag." It was the first time I ever heard a community say and write down, "this is what we believe. This is how we will use art and culture." It was a contract. "This is how we will work with you and this is what you should do."

> *"We value culture as indigenous creative forms of expression [that] build and strengthen the foundation of our traditions. This expression encompasses the past and defines the future that benefits our youth, who are the living assets of our community."*
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> *- **Community Committee for Arts and Culture** in 2008*

Out of that listening and learning, we developed a framework for all the work that we did.

Denise Johnson (DJ): I had just gotten employed at The Bon and in 2008 I went to one of Ashley's workshops. It was an evening meeting and a lot of people showed up. Ashley started talking about a "highway to no way" project, and folks were teary-eyed and sharing the past. I thought it was quite interesting that, after all of these years, someone was actually talking about that project. I started thinking about my own memories and realizing, "I remember that! That's part of my story, also."

> *"I remember—at the time of the highway project—my father was living on Franklin Street and had to move because of the Highway. He and my mother were arguing because he had a German shepherd and he wanted my mother to keep the dog until he found a new place. My mother was unwilling to keep the dog. Since the new place he got said, "No pets," he couldn't keep his dog."*
>
> **- Denise Johnson**

AM: After Denise started showing up, I hounded her for at least a month. She broke down in an elevator. "Wait a minute," she cried, "I'll do it, but don't you leave me. Don't you drop this project."

DJ: What Ashley was proposing was a huge project and it wasn't short-term. It required conceptualization, putting lots of pieces in place, and bringing in a lot of people who could take on different roles.

AM: I told Denise that we wouldn't do anything that she didn't agree to. Me being an outsider, not knowing, I relied—and still do—on her ability to guide the path. Denise's role, among other things, was to keep me from doing harm.

CultureWorks' Principles

- *We do no harm*
- *We check in*
- *We check out*
- *We respect*
- *We make room*
- *We credit our spirituality*

We decided that we would define CultureWorks through what we saw and experienced. It wouldn't pre-judge. So, today, we're an evolving liquid presence. Sometimes, I call CultureWorks "the thing between a rock and a hard place." Some people are opposed to correcting the wrongs laid upon a community: they are the Rock. Likewise, there are those who are "trying to move the mountain," but whose work often seems frozen in time: the Hard Place. CultureWorks' positions itself between the opposition and the inertia to create a third space that brings the two together in a new way. But it hurts. We must constantly adjust to the needs of both of those bodies. In that new space, the pressure between the two points lessens and we get stronger.

CultureWorks is as close to what I call a "community-driven process" as possible. We are committed socially, culturally, and spiritually to the voice of community.

DJ: I had organized before around crime, sanitation, infant mortality, you name it. Deficit ideology. So to organize around something that they could produce—not simply "do something about"—was fresh and new for me.

AM: Talking about need restricted us. We couldn't talk about negative, we had to talk about positive—that was a statement to the group when we formed it.

DJ: Participating artists were throwing out a bunch of great ideas, so we had to ask ourselves, "Which of these ideas can we move on and produce an outcome from?" As an organizer, it is about having an outcome. People gathering or producing a project—a statue, garden, or whatever it is—and, throughout, of course, you are enhancing leadership.

We did several projects right inside the Bon. We had youth come in and create dance pieces about seeing art and culture in your community. We took the conference room and turned it into a gallery with a lot of Ashley's artwork. There were community artists like Kenneth Clemons, A.J. Neal, Caleb Belcher… They loved the space and took care of it. The Bon gallery became a space that people enjoyed.

AM: And community members started buying my work…

DJ: … and feeling so great that they actually had a piece of art. It's something that they always wanted but thought they couldn't afford. I asked Ashley, "How can you not have money when you can produce things? Most people can't produce anything. They need to scrub steps, sell papers… but you can actually produce something that somebody would want. Community members may not be able to afford a piece of work that costs $2,000, but they can afford something." So, Ashley produced some beautiful pieces, priced them affordably, and people bought them. You could actually feel change in people's energy. These were really wonderful things that the project did right within the building. Then, we guided this energy outside of the building by executing community drum circles with the advisory group.

Ashley and I were trying to build the group's capacity and leadership so participants could assume particular roles and be more functional as a group.

Part of the initial vision was to help people see the highway as a beautiful piece of art, as opposed to a public works project that was unsuccessful. It was challenging, getting people to buy-in to this project that required them to do something. It wasn't a project that was associated with government doing anything or trying to solve a problem. Getting people to re-conceptualize how *they* operate in their community was a part of the challenge.

AM: The art-making was around the stories that I heard from community**.** And it started to frame, for me, what community art is all about.

BL: The art that you were making was coming out of the community in which you were working?

AM: I was visualizing their stories.

BL: Dudley made the observation that using art as a community organizing effort sometimes gets a bad rap, because if you put art first, people shut down because they have come to know that so much of art that is made in this country is for an elite audience. But what you were

doing was offering people access to the process. Community members told their stories, and you responded to them with art that came right out of their stories.

DJ: Right. They directly connected with art that looked like them.

AM: Not something abstract. Art that looked like their community, their stories, their history, and memory.

Denise also did a video. Towson University's graduate film school contacted us and created a video about the Highway to Nowhere

DJ: The response that we got from using art and culture was so huge. The number of people who showed up at different times during this engagement was unbelievable. Not only people in the community, but also people outside of the community were excited. We discovered that our biggest challenge with the project was that we didn't have the capacity to engage everybody that was showing up.

AM: We also got a Kresge Foundation grant to work with Kenny Clemons, a young Baltimore artist, on outdoor sculptures. Kenny learned about what it is to be a community artist, how to work story out of folks, and engage them. We worked with The Family Support Center—the young ladies who got engaged with Kenny—and they developed the concepts for the story, meaning, and themes. They posed for Kenny for the 12-foot sculptures, too. It was just marvelous.

Being young mothers, the ladies decided to do sculptures around family. I would do scale models of what they had talked about. At one point, there was a young man in there. He stopped coming for a month or two while we were developing this process. And the final model that I brought to the class didn't have the guy in it. And the guy showed up that day. He said, "Where am I?" And I said, "Well, you know, you're not here because you're not here." And the young ladies ripped me a whole new rear end, boy. "Put him back. Even though he comes and goes, we need a vision of a father in this family unit."

DJ: That piece was created out of storytelling. And we also did storytelling at the Lockerman Bundy Elementary School. Students enjoyed it, the teachers enjoyed it. The community came in and produced something along with the children. We were out doing the work where people could see it. And there was an outcome, a production of something.

AM: But the reality was we couldn't do permanent work. The art pieces were wood and wood destroys itself in the environment. The wood eventually fell apart. It's frustrating and painful to get a community to the place where they can envision, but then not having the resources.

DJ: Some of the obstacles that Ashley and I had to face were the result of that kind of thing: people coming in, having community meet, spill their guts, and then never delivering on promises.

BL: Part of the success that you had was that Ashley, as an artist, was modeling process and the function of the artist, rather than just presenting the pieces. So that Kenny could learn and

build. Kenny did wonderful, big cartoon work and he got a fire under him when he realized that he could go right to other folks in the community, hear their stories, and respond to their stories. And the excitement that the young ladies had with the artwork that was responding to their original story--that was quite an amazing sequence.

DJ: I'd say that an outcome of the project as current as now is that Kenny stepped up and wanted to have monthly meetings around art discussions and art projects at The Bon.

AM: He never told us about it.

DJ: He became a leader!

Last House Standing

AM: *Last House Standing* started out as an abstract thought about digitalizing the stories I heard in West Baltimore. I started drafting a play in 2008 or '9. I heard an urban myth in West Baltimore about the last house that was on the highway before it was torn down. The story went that the house belonged to a black pharmacist. The construction people surrounded the house, ready to tear it down, knocked on the door, and told the pharmacist, "You own the house but we own the land. Move the house."

This story stuck in my head as the whole meaning of what happened on that highway where people's homes were taken arbitrarily. Some of those homes were torn down. Others were taken and never used; they're still empty today. And it just resonated. So I started drafting a play about what it would be like to be the last house standing and have this thing happen. I focused on the niece of the pharmacist. After the pharmacist died she was occupying the home, and cleaning out her stuff, wondering what was going on. The story evolved with the ghost of her grandmother coming to her on the stoop as she is bemoaning what happened to her community and her failure to stop it. Her grandmother, the ghost, counsels her that the fight has just begun. "Your job is to try to heal this community." While she's going through this experience, a young Jewish guy shows up to watch the last house be destroyed, because what was his house, his father's house, and his grandfather's house was destroyed when they moved the African American residents. One Jewish guy from a resettlement neighborhood told me that it was like a black wave descending on his community and wiping out his culture, too.

DJ: At that time, many cities—Baltimore in particular—took part in the Moving to Opportunity [for Fair Housing] program, a federal housing subsidy program. Many people who were eligible for the subsidy moved into Park Heights. This was another piece of federal legislation that changed another community. I think that's significant in terms of how the landscape changed. This is another community that was completely changed as a result of the highway being put up.

The inclusion of Jewish people in Ashley's storytelling who show up to share how their landscape changed because of the highway project makes the story bigger, I think.

AM: Yeah. It was the other side of the coin. The Jewish community member is there to watch this destruction. The Jewish story was sort of an untold story, for me. I didn't know about it until he came to one of the storytelling sessions, crying and remembering. It was an attempt to introduce the other side of the coin, with this marriage between the niece and young Jewish guy. And this heated discussion about, "You did this, they did that…" the kinds of things that separate us.

In the play, they started mimicking each other, echoing the same thing, the same sense of loss, the same sense of displacement. And they realize that they are connected through that. That's the real issue. They are still agents of change. So, their relationship develops around that. There are some young people introduced into the story that are just throwing rocks and breaking things, and they realize that what they have to do is work with the people to start knitting these stories together.

I did lighting, set design, all that stuff, and then put it away.

DJ: We shopped the play around. I connected to Sheila Gaskins to bring her into the project. We started to solicit youth within the community and we got some to show up, but, because of our limited capacity, the project fell off in terms of getting the young people in the community to participate through writing.

Sheila ended up doing the production, finding some other people to work with her.

Another interesting part of the partnership-building piece was Linda—I can't remember her name. Her daughter went to Douglass High School and was a part of the cultural academy at Douglass. Linda was talking to the person in charge of the cultural academy, and he was willing to take the play on and do it as a production for the students. We were looking at staging the play during the festival. The cultural academy advisor was looking at his budget and definitely considering it. Things kind of fell apart with this when we started to focus on the festival, but the school was eventually going to produce it.

AM: Sheila has moved the play on her own initiative and staged a couple of performances.

DJ: And she continues to talk about finding somebody to redo that play.

AM: What Sheila realized when she gathered up her community folks—especially young people—is that they had no idea about the history of the highway. They had no idea about the history of West Baltimore. And it turned her on. The young people started reading about the communities' history, writing papers about it. This became an integral part of Sheila's interest in continuing the project.

DJ: And those young people owned it. Some of them did show up at the focus group session with Randy.

BL: Was the group that worked on the production from West Baltimore?

AM: They were from all over. I think it was a cross-Baltimore kind of thing. There were some kids definitely from West Baltimore—some adults that lived who knows where. But everybody's history is connected to West Baltimore and the highway, wherever you live. So, I still feel it's a very worthwhile and engaging thing. But CultureWorks lacks the resources to bring it to fruition.

CultureWorks needs partners, but on the other hand, community members won't take resources from outside if it looks, touches, feels like "the hurt that I had the last time I did this." Bob will testify to the difficulty and the pressure, shaking yourself to find the word that will allow you to communicate and bring the resource in. At first, we always had our hand in our pocket, ready to defend ourselves. People with resources from the outside may rip community members off, and those from the community know that. How do we with skills and resources build trust in a community? You gotta get your hand out of your pocket. You've got to develop a space where there's time for dialogue and common interest to emerge. It takes so much time to build trust so that everyone can relax. It's a commitment for a long time investment because there are rituals and procedures for descending into community that must be honored.

AM: For me, it was a matter of waiting until someone from the community said, "Come here, Ash. Let me take you somewhere so you can meet someone..." You gotta believe in your heart and soul in what you do because it manifests itself in what you do. The community, believe it or not—even with the hands in the pockets—still desires to be whole like a family.

> *"We have got, at this point, so many different Americas that are disconnected and out of sight of one another. I live in southeast Kentucky, where the War on Poverty was launched. It's still one of the poorest regions in the United States, and it's white. Where I live is rated one of the most stressful places in the US to live. Unless you are in that intense stress that oppression, poverty, and dysfunction cause, you can't imagine what it's like. It doesn't exist in a lot of communities, but it exists in a lot of communities we're not seeing."*
>
> - **Dudley Cocke**, Roadside Theater/Appalshop

I knew that with the trappings of privilege and skill sets, I was going to face a language problem working in this community. There was a time in which I, as a culture worker, would hide my skills in a community that lacked those things. I was sort of hesitant to use those skills. Until one day somebody said, "We need you to share what you have." I discovered that community members count on me using all the skill sets that I can possibly draw on and the resources I can bring in, to begin dialogue within community to envision the possibilities.

There is a fear of first steps. If I take that first step, I'm thinking that I'm going to be revealed and this is not going work. But, in actuality, communities are waiting for you to take the first step. Somebody has to make the first move, but that first step is that faith about flying. You have to believe in what you're doing and saying and in the community that you are doing this work with.

RR: But no matter your personal passion for something, others have to find a way to bind to it. There needs to be the buy-in of the community. Sometimes it's just a matter of something

drastic happening that makes people go, “Okay, I was afraid, but I can’t be afraid anymore.” One thing we find in disaster research: groups that traditionally don’t work together—when something bad happens—they work together. And we have to be ready for those synergistic opportunities because they are there. And you can be moving along at turtle-pace, and then—BOOM!—something happens. You’ve got all these people ready to help. And that’s when you decide, “Is this worth my time and energy to keep doing this?” ‘Cause if I see some people working with me and they want it, then I’m in.

CHAPTER 2

Remembrance, Healing, Celebration, and Resilience: CultureWorks plans with ROOTS

AM: “Remembrance” came out of the storytelling we heard around the Highway to Nowhere. From anywhere in Baltimore, if you mention the Highway to Nowhere, there’s reference to it. When displaced residents heard each other’s stories about sitting on marble steps and not being able to go because grandma says you can’t get off the step – the smiles, and the realization that *your* memory and *your* memory is a quilt and that we are together in this.

RR: Organizers understood the power of ***Remembering*** and of recognizing that the Highway to Nowhere was a disastrous event that the community is still recovering from nearly 50 years later. In disasters, Remembrance is the first step toward ***Healing,*** a communal desire to be released from those things that keep one from moving forward toward "wholeness." Remembrance also creates a shared identity and sense of self-worth (Value). The community seeks a venue (Culture-Based Place) in which to express its new-found "wholeness" and forms a strong cultural identity expressed in art making and celebration that can lead to a communal transformation.

Celebration, which was visualized through ROOTSFest 2011 as a logical step to follow healing, is a natural release of joy. As a creative expression of transformation, celebration fulfills a need to gather and create, which can potentially lead to civic engagement and action.

AM: The Celebration comes out of, “Oh! I’m connected to you. Let’s enjoy what we’ve done.”

RR: Organizers later embraced the framing of the Highway to Nowhere as a disastrous event that impacted communities very similar to natural disasters. Organizers ultimately saw ***Resilience—***the ability of individuals and groups to bounce back from adversity—as a means to bring synergy to the overall effort.

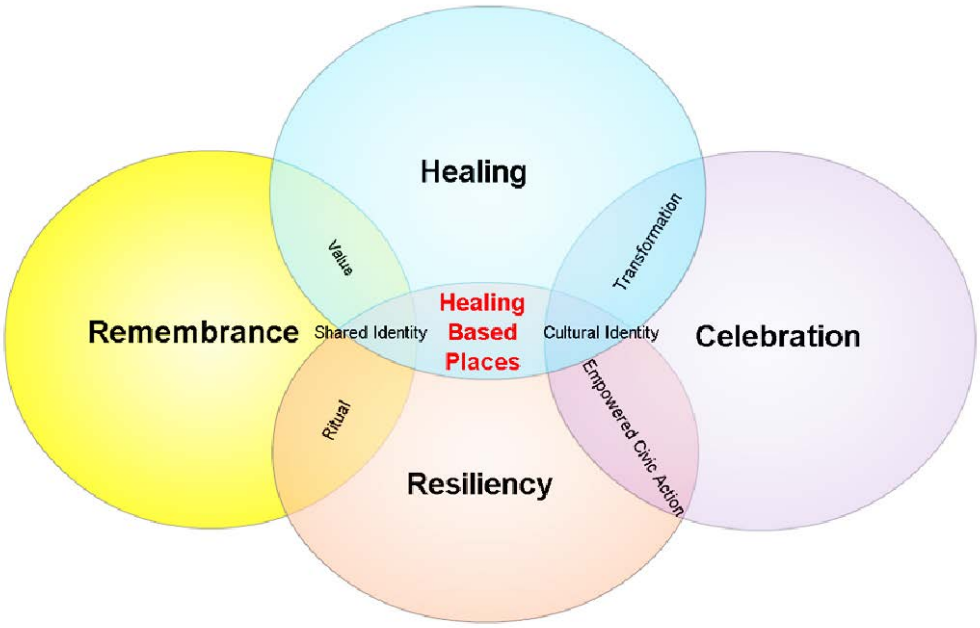
AM: The Resilience is something that Randy brought because he calls us the “first responders.” Art and culture: the “first responders” to some kind of community issue. If the community is remembering itself and that remembrance creates a sense of body, healing, and wholeness, and there are opportunities for celebration, it builds resilience. That community can no longer

be kicked at. When art and culture builds resilience, you've created free space in a place that was restricted. Now you've got something that's very dangerous: you've got empowerment. You have a community that's owning its stories, practicing its rituals and beliefs, and engaging in dialogue with itself.

RR: This four-part approach placed more emphasis on identifying the assets rather than deficits in the neighborhoods impacted by the Highway to Nowhere. One survivor of this disaster termed this process as building "*A Highway to Somewhere."*

AM: When you circle Remembrance, Healing, Celebration, and Resiliency and intersect them, they create place. This model illustrates that *"place matters when people matter."*

It's a map. Now, I had a map for interacting in community around the topic of art and culture. Now resources and institutions have a way of entering into the conversation and doing work. As we moved forward with ROOTS, things gradually began to consolidate around that concept.



RR: At the time of ROOTSFest 2011 planning, I was studying the role of public, private, and community sectors in creating what they call *resilient communities*: communities that had the strength to bounce back from adversity after disaster. And, of course, they're talking about natural disasters: hurricanes, and floods, oh my! The more I got into this research, I was like, "Dang, what about the state of emergency in some of our communities in this country?" You're talking about communities that are resource-depleted but culturally asset-rich. Where it's unimaginable what people are dealing with on the day-to-day, trying to survive, but yet they survive.

Resilience is not just about bringing people together and dealing with the issues of the community. It's about looking at economic development and social capital, and building civic participation on those things.

The problem is art-makers—people like Ashley, Bob, and others—aren't usually at the table of preparedness. They're often there after. "Oh, we need a singer. We need some entertainment or something..."

BL: And Alternate ROOTS understood the importance of this. Later on, when ROOTS and CultureWorks partnered on the planning and execution of ROOTSFest 2011, this understanding lay at the center of that partnership.

RR: Working with Ashley and Denise, I realized that artists need to be at the table from the very beginning. "Art-makers, coming to the rescue!" Artists are a kind of first responders, too. A number of theories explain ways in which art can impact community and civic engagement.[1] But engaging the "full fabric" of the community meant engaging the people that are usually not at the table, and this includes art-makers.

I teach a class on *Community Needs, Solutions, Assets, and Engagement*, and I made the class a part of this project. Working with CultureWorks, we first organized a focus group among art-makers to find out how residents perceive themselves and their role in changing communities.

My students conducted interviews and a story circle. Two focus group sessions—one with small children and another with adults—were conducted with the cast of the *Last House Standing,* an original play CultureWorks developed during their work in West Baltimore. Students also interviewed the director, playwright, and a parent of a child involved with the play. The topics of the conversation were: 1) Art and art-making/creative expression; 2) barriers to art-making; and 3) art-makers' role in social change. Lastly, the students conducted a story circle with a group of art-makers from West Baltimore.

There were nine key findings from these focus groups. First, participants said that art-making gives them the ability to express themselves, relieve stress, and express their thoughts and feelings to others. Also, many participants agreed that the terms "art" and "artists" are not appropriate as they limit how people think of creativity and creative expressions and should include all forms of creativity such as cooking, dancing, making wine, baking, painting, etc. The focus group concluded that the largest barrier to creative expression for all groups was the lack of resources in the home and community. Respondents also identified that taking arts out of schools and closing after-school opportunities were other deterrents to art making.

The consensus was that the community should look for more opportunities to engage youth or create a program that can help youth develop socially and artistically while avoiding other risky behaviors. Participants noted that ROOTSFest 2011 was a great tool in bringing the community together that could be used to bring a positive association to West Baltimore, a community

[1] Stein and Seifert, 2009

which in the past has been linked to violence and disaster as depicted in such television series as *The Wire*. Further, they felt that ROOTSFest would serve as a reminder for West Baltimore residents that "a tree cannot stand without its roots" and, in doing so, bring the community together. Despite the importance of ROOTSFest, many were not sure what would happen after ROOTSFest 2011, about how the community interaction/engagement would be maintained after the festival. Finally, however, everyone agreed that, while it was unclear how community unity could be sustained in West Baltimore that uniting the community would be a great step toward bringing about social change.

DJ: The power of this project, for me, was that it challenged people to visualize something beyond what's been sitting there in the community forever. That was a big "wow" for me. Ashley and I started to share information and, as I listened to him, my mind started to process how we could execute this thing. Ashley was able to visualize different things, such as the Highway to Nowhere story, and talk about other ways he could present art in the community.

BL: When I got started with this project, I began to realize that Ashley was providing other ways of thinking about the reality that was given at the time, that the great expanse of cement and the cut into the earth that was the highway was an impediment to the community. It was a weight, a wound. You were talking about putting murals on the walls, and using the thing as a way to restore a vision. It gave people an opportunity to think about their future in terms that were building from hope.

DJ: Oh, absolutely.

AM: And to value the path, their path.

DJ: The delicate piece that I think an organizer needs to always pay attention to is you bring people together around an idea, you want them to participate, and then you want them to do particular things. In the end, you need to produce something, because that's the only way you sustain buy-in and create change. To bring people together and, at the end, there's nothing? You wasted community members' time, and that's disrespectful and unfair. That's often what government and private entities do. They come into a community, they have people visit over and over again, and community members say what it is that they want and what's important to them. And at the end, the community members don't get any of the stuff they named, and that's where the distrust that community has about projects comes from.

So CultureWorks moved from just soliciting people, storytelling, and leading the group in the creation of a definition of art and culture to asking people to become part of an advisory committee. Those were the people that were going to show some commitment. We wanted them to do something. Our advisory group further conceptualized and defined the slogan, "remembrance, healing, celebration, and resilience."

CHAPTER 3

Alternate ROOTS Joins as a Partner

BL: CultureWorks' intersection with Alternate ROOTS and its Resources for Social Change (RSC) working group goes back to an RSC introductory organizing workshop, a Learning Exchange that you attended in 2008, Ashley, but it also goes back even earlier to a festival that ROOTS produced in Baltimore about two years before the workshop.

What is Resources for Social Change?

Resources for Social Change (RSC) was a training program developed by ROOTS from the early 1990s to 2013 that taught ideas and techniques to create social change through art. The program began in recognition of the need to institutionalize ROOTS' knowledge in the field. RSC trainers were artists experienced and schooled in the methods of using and bringing art into communities that traditionally may not have considered the important role that the arts can play in addressing oppressions and effecting social change. RSC taught methods for initiating and building partnerships between cultural workers and their community partners, and ways of using the arts as "search engines" in community work. The RSC program provided training, mentorship and peer education to artists, cultural workers, arts administrators, students, and community activists from diverse cultures and disciplines, using local community artists to present case studies of model projects taking place within their communities.

AM:I sat next to Ashley Sparks, the coordinator of that local festival in Baltimore back in 2006 when I was doing the graduate community arts program at Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA). Ashley Sparks laid out Alternate ROOTS' vision. And I'm going, "what the blankety-blank? Where are these people? I need them!" I contacted Alternate ROOTS, which was going through several directors at the time, and I would leave just terrible messages, threatening messages. Carlton Turner had just shown up three weeks into his executive directorship at Alternate ROOTS and, unfortunately for him, he picked up the phone and I laid into him. "What the hell is going on with you guys? I need you!" and all other stuff. And, then, Bob invited me to -- where was that?

BL: That was the RSC Learning Exchange we were planning down on the Eastern Shore in Chestertown, Maryland, with Hope Clark, another ROOTS/RSC member, and several other ROOTS people. Chestertown is Hope's hometown and she was asking ROOTS to bring RSC in to talk with people there. It was open. Hope invited folks from Baltimore, as well.

AM: And that's where we met.

BL: And I'll never forget the dinner we had after the Learning Exchange on the Chester River. It was really pleasant, cracking crab, and listening to what you were doing up in Baltimore. I couldn't believe my ears.

AM: I couldn't believe my ears. It was like what I felt when I sat next to Ashley Sparks at MICA. A lot of what we at CultureWorks talk about is the lack of resource. Drives us crazy. I think that's what I was begging you to help me with on the Chester River. I can't do this by myself.

BL: What ROOTS can offer by way of resources is not always money. Sometimes, ROOTS has some money, but more often ROOTS can offer people. So ROOTS was able to set it up so we (RSC and CultureWorks) could have an ongoing dialogue and exchange in Baltimore. Maurice Turner, Hope Clark, and I were able to get up there and work with you many times over the next three years.[2]

During that time, CultureWorks had these eruptive moments of presence in West Baltimore. You had that drumming weekend. You had the sculpting project with young people that created sculptures in neighborhoods. You had a theatre project that produced a play around the history of the Highway to Nowhere. At the same time, you developed working connections with the network of neighborhood associations and organizing efforts inside West Baltimore. This kind of artistic and organizing work happens in other communities around the country that are in similarly difficult cultural, social, and economic straits. And so, CultureWorks found that its own expressions resonate with the struggles of many other groups and efforts nationwide.

Ashley, your call for help, your invitation for RSC to join with your effort was a long hoped-for opportunity for RSC. For years, RSC had hoped to become directly involved at the beginning stages of local community cultural development action. RSC charged Maurice, Hope, and myself to investigate the potential of a real partnership between CultureWorks and RSC. What would it look like and what would it take to make that happen? I believe we are still in that process. ROOTS made a relatively short-term project partnership with CultureWorks around the festival. I believe ROOTS is still interested in the longer term, more ongoing

Free Southern Theater's
John O'Neal*:*

"I think this is not a good time. I remember when my kids were small I used to tell them, as it became clear, that the Movement was not going to reach the end that we dreamed of. We were not going to find what we used to call the "New Community" in a few years. And as I get older, I've come to realize that we're perhaps worse off now than we were in 1963 by common measure. If you look at the quality of education that's available to us, if we look at employment, if we look at housing, if we look at life expectancy… we're in a state of decline right now. And we tend, all too often, to want to pass the job of arresting the decline to our quote "leaders." "Let the President take care of that, let the Mayor take care of that, let the Congress do this…" on down the list. Well, those who have the good spirit are doing the best they can already. Those who have bad spirits seem to be in prevalence right now. And they're happy with the way things are rolling. Change tends to come from the bottom-up, not from the top-down. I think that that means we have to find people who share our condition. Share our situation in life and work as hard as we can to build common cause with those people. And that's about building coalitions and making partnerships."

[2] "Maurice Turner is co-founder of Turner World Around Productions, Inc. and one-half of the group M.U.G.A.B.E.E. (Men Under Guidance Acting Before Early Extinction), an artistic ensemble composing and performing a blend of jazz, hip-hop, spoken word poetry, and soul music on a totally conscience tip."

- *m.u.g.a.b.e.e.* Turner World Around Productions Inc., n.d. Web. 9 Nov. 2013. <http://www.turnerworldaround.org/pages/maurice%20bio.html>.

partnership. From my point of view, the festival, once mutually agreed to happen in West Baltimore, needed to be not an end in itself for CultureWorks, but a mechanism to allow CultureWorks to leap. With a successful festival, how could CultureWorks benefit into the future, coming out of the festival? That was a goal of the RSC group that was working with CultureWorks. We were not working on how to make the festival happen, but how to make the festival work for CultureWorks.

In some ways, the festival in West Baltimore was completely unexpected, though it was one of the results of the exchange between RSC and CultureWorks. The festival could provide a growth place for ROOTS, as well as for CultureWorks. ROOTS had produced festivals for three-and-a-half decades in various communities, mostly, if you pardon the phrase, as "parasitic events," where the event would come into a town but the town itself had no real relevance to the festival. ROOTS became aware that this wasn't a healthy practice. In preparing for its 2011 festival, ROOTS was looking for ways to be more connected to a community in which it might produce its festival. The opportunity to work with a willing partner, who was at work in the community and who was already asking ROOTS to join in that work, was compelling. An agreement was struck, as I understand it, for CultureWorks to be the host/cultural activist/local organizer, and Alternate ROOTS to be the outside festival producer/organizer. This partnership acknowledged mutual need of each partner for the other, despite the obvious disparity of capacities. In the planning process, ROOTS looked to CultureWorks' expertise and experience as a guide towards the vision and purpose of the Festival.

I'd love to hear your perspective on your work with Resources for Social Change, ROOTS, and how that that process went.

DJ: People in West Baltimore were extremely excited about outsiders coming into the project and RSC got a very positive response from the community; this was evident in the number of people that showed up for that first whole weekend to welcome RSC. People felt really good. RSC was even able to attract more people to the project at the here and now, when it was happening.

Just like any relationship, it has its challenges in terms of "whose piece is whose." And I think from our perspective, it started to get muddy. Between RSC coming up and what it was that CultureWorks was trying to do. Our advisory committee got confused. Ashley and I were grooming people into specific roles. And I believe when RSC was doing workshops with us, that's when people started to get confused. Part of my personality is to take things slow as I groom people into leadership roles. I want them to be clear about and take ownership of the roles. I do that as a managing style overall, so people can do what they do best. That's where it started to get a little muddy, because folks were saying that they weren't clear anymore.

I would also say that Ashley's way of doing things as an artist and my way of doing as an organizer sometimes were opposite. That further confused people. That's where I think the dynamic started to change for me in terms of our relationship with RSC, me not being totally clear about what RSC was going to do with our group.

As we were moving towards the festival, telling the community about the festival, about the empowerment that they can have and the roles that they can play, how they could help execute the festival--those community members didn't have a role to play in the festival. As a result, we weren't able to realize any of that for community folks. It was wonderful, powerful, great energy, but that's where the engagement piece got lost.

AM: CultureWorks was utterly dedicated to testing the concept of what art and culture is, really, in the community. We didn't impose a preset way of doing it, but we did observe how that concept evolved around engagement. Some of the practices of Resources for Social Change butted up against CultureWorks' by defining a role for art and culture in the community. Water in oil. You know, when you shake it real, real good, it disappears, but it always goes back to what it was. I can remember, and I can feel it now, the realization that we were a different kind of animal than RSC.

DJ: Yeah, we were.

AM: We charged and challenged ROOTS and RSC to help us in this new, undefined thing, to understand what WE were doing.

DJ: At that point, we were trying to get our advisory group—the group that was going to help us move art and culture forward in the community—to take on roles. As an organizer, I wasn't being forceful with that process. As a group, we were gelling. My role was to see who was able to do what based on their natural or learned abilities. For example, we asked X could he be the chairperson of the group? And X agreed. Now, observing X, X wasn't acting as a chairperson. So as an organizer, I knew that we needed to do more work with X to understand what a chairperson's role is, see if X was really good for and still wanted the role, and so on. We were in the process of talking to people, asking them what they were good at, why they were good at it, further defining what CultureWorks needed as an advisory board including the different roles that we needed, and who would be willing to take on those roles.

Things started to get muddy with the group because RSC was focusing on more project-related stuff, and we were focusing on getting people to take specific roles so we could build our capacity. Prior to that, Ashley and I just had multiple roles. We were always engaging people in the conversation and executing different things with people, but we were trying to get leadership to emerge so that Ashley and I could do some other things. So this wouldn't just be, let's say, *our* project and we were just "talking" to community. Next thing you know, ROOTS accepted us as a city to do the festival, and then "boom," we kind of all fell apart and people got confused between RSC, the Festival, and CultureWorks.

RSC brought in some real powerful stuff in terms of methodology, but I don't think our people were ready for that yet. They had not emerged as a group. Individually, folks had particular roles. For example, a person to write grant applications, or a person to chair a committee and keep people on task, and so on. We were just beginning to get that in order.

AM: We needed RSC to step out of its analytical role and become true partners in the relationship that built a community, helped a community build itself. That's what we needed. I

kept thinking, “Why, why, why? Why wait until a community invites you? You have the resource—and that was the whole point of bringing ROOTS into West Baltimore.” This was an opportunity for ROOTS to focus on what it was in a laboratory that was open and waiting for new approaches. I thought that ROOTS was not giving RSC an opportunity to fly.

It may be wrong to say that that [REFERENCE] has nothing to do with art and culture, but it does. It gets into resilience. You can’t be resilient unless you can paint, you know? Unless you can come up with creative ways of expressing an outlet from trauma.

DJ: I also thought that, when it was decided that the festival was going to happen in West Baltimore and ROOTS’ Community/Artist Partnership Program grants were issued for projects there, the community didn’t know that these intentional things were happening, because they weren’t at the table in the first place. That doesn’t speak to RSC or the community; it speaks to CultureWorks’ very, very limited capacity, not being able to develop specific leaders. We had some people who knew what they did best, but there were others who were still looking for a role and I think that those community members got a little disappointed, because they had already invested a lot of time in working with CultureWorks in the community. I think they felt lost. But all of that, I clearly understand, goes along with community organizing. We had so many moving pieces with such a limited capacity; we just could not keep up with it.

AM: But in a community that’s been torn apart—where resources are diminishing and opportunities for leadership are very limited—there wasn’t the base of skill set among community members that the festival required. CultureWorks needed to communicate that to ROOTS.

BL: I remember you telling me, Ashley, that someone reached out to said, “I’ll bring you to the guy who’s really key in the neighborhood. He’s the barber.” And Ashley says, “Okay, fine.” Ashley decides he’s going to get a haircut. So, he’s sitting in the barbershop, and it takes a little while because the barbershop’s full-up. And then Ashley gets up in the chair and the barber knows already because of Ashley’s friend that he’s there to talk with him about a project. Ashley starts to talk about the project; the guy’s clipping his hair. I introduce the straight razor in this story, but that’s my addition. I don’t think there was a straight razor involved.

AM: I like it.

BL: This man is clipping Ashley’s hair and towards the end of the conversation he says to Ashley, “Don’t ever come back here, I don’t ever want to see you again, and I don’t want you to do anything that you’re talking about doing.” And, in that intimacy of haircutting, something happened that put Ashley on the same kind of alert that I experienced when I was starting my theatre ensemble. When someone who I thought I might need to help me, told me, “I’m going to work actively against you doing what you’re doing.” Those are moments when we have to assess. “Maybe I should pack up and go home?”

RR: It’s rare, but what about the ones that smile?

BL: Well, there are a lot of people that smile and still don't help. How do we assess that, ahead of time?

The turmoil of social trauma lasts a long time, decades, if not centuries, and is happening all the time.

We, artist/responders, come in with our energy and our sense of value. I have to assess the value that I have in the work that I would intend to do when I reach those points of intersection that say, "No you shouldn't do this; or, yes, you should do this." And how do I understand that? Because in some ways, I can hear the poked and prodded and over-surveyed and under-assisted and so forth and, then, academics or Alternate ROOTS or local artists, or real estate agents, or banks, or anyone might come in and do stuff and take stuff away and, I say, "No, that's terrible. I wouldn't ever do that." Well... do I *know* I won't do that? How do I know that I won't do that? And when someone says, "You can't do it, don't do it here," how do I assess whether they are onto something that I don't see in myself? And, at the same time, do I have the strength of my own resolve?

AM: That hair cut was a moment of clarity for me because my response to the barber was sort of dismissive: "Well, I'll put my name on all my body parts." I didn't hear him. But I heard the Open Society Institute director when she called me and said, "I got a call from a city planner who suggested that I end your fellowship." Of course, she told him to go to hell and all that kind of stuff. Or PNC Bank trying to get Alternate ROOTS to agree to their finding a white group to bring into West Baltimore to work because ROOTS can be manipulated, and Ashley at CultureWorks can't be. The dialogue between Denise and me is, "Do you understand, now, that what we're doing is working?" The power of the work that we do... it's dangerous and threatening to the structures that have created the reason why we're there. So, if you're actually doing your work and it's working, you are in opposition to the thing that created the reason to come there. So, what is the response and what are the survival strategies for when the thing is working? 'Cause, in the old days, you disappeared. It was a reality.

> *"In terms of the Teatro work, there were at least two occasions in which a loaded gun was put to a head. The first time was on the picket line during a grape strike. A son of a grower pulled his gun, put it to my head, and says, "Act." And... I almost shit. Yeah, almost, almost... The thing is, I did ask myself almost instantaneously a question that I've thought about all these years and the question was: "Is what I'm doing worth dying for?" "Doing theatre, is it worth dying for?" And I concluded that it was, at that particular moment, in that particular place."*
>
> - **Luis Valdez**, Teatro Campesino

BL: The razor was in the hand...

AM: The razor *is* in the hand or in the voice or in the action.

CHAPTER 4

ROOTSFest 2011: a Milestone

> *"The festival was set to assist in West Baltimore's transformation of itself."*
>
> - **Dudley Cocke**, Appalshop/Roadside Theater

Baltimore Sun photo by Gabe Dinsmoor
June 29, 2011

From June 22-26, 2011, Alternate ROOTS and CultureWorks hosted ROOTSFest 2011 in West Baltimore, Maryland. The festival featured a three-day National Learning Exchange at Bluford Drew Jemison STEM Academy West--an all-male 6-12 public school in Fairmount, a lower-middle class African-American neighborhood in southwest Baltimore--and then a two-day festival of art and activism beside the concrete of the Highway to Nowhere.

The Festival

AM: You have to understand that the push-back from those in power against something happening like the festival on that space was humongous.

"You can have a festival there, but we'll help you if you do it on the *other* side of Martin Luther King Boulevard."

"Okay, if you're going to do a festival there, we're going to tax you with a cultural tax. If you want to fix something that we designate and stamp 'unfixable,' you can do it, but you're going to pay for it." As someone from ROOTS said, "There is a price that will be paid for social change."

Part of that price wound up being an additional $50,000 in police coverage because the city believed that was where the riot was going to happen. "According to our statistics, that's where you all are just going to blow it out. We need to charge you for the ability to say, 'No, that's not true.'" So this cultural tax for doing social change was an underpinning of doing that work. It was also the deepening commitment of Alternate ROOTS and RSC. "We will pay the tax because we believe that the model that will be revealed will be worth the price."

On the first day of the festival, Denise Johnson and I were walking down the street as they were erecting all the tents and we were talking, having a great time. "Look at what we did!" And

through the side of our eye came this beautiful big black guy: huge, bald. Our paths converged and he asks us, “Who did this? Who did this?”

And I reply, “We did.”

“This for white people?”

“Uh… no, it’s for you.”

And he says, “Really?”

That turned a page of fifty years.

On the 27th and 28th of June, that festival changed the perception of West Baltimore. For two precious days, it created an isle of peace in the midst of 50 years of distress.

CHAPTER 5

Pause for Reflection: Issues and Opportunities

Engagement and Organizing

> *“Build trust. Deliver on your promise. If you can’t do it, don’t say you can do it. As you begin to look at yourself as a community, ask yourself, “Who’s not at the table? Who should be here? Who could make us a more diverse group? How can we take our show to places where people haven’t seen this synergy?” We need to bring a variety of cultures and disciplines together to tell the story because this is the model. The model of the past is not working! And here we are—resource-rich communities, universities… not just rich in dollars, but people—wanting to learn. Communities are waiting, but not waiting for you to come in as if you’re the “know-it-all.” Communities are waiting for you to tap into their assets and their knowledge. Equal partners at the table. We have to study ourselves if we want to be approved and received by others.”*
>
> - **Dr. Randy Rowel**, Morgan State University

DJ: When you’re organizing, you have to be willing to let go of your initial vision. You need to do your work without getting attached to the outcome you, alone, imagined. The reason why that’s important is because you need to let the natural interactions of change take place based on the skill that you have to utilize this. You see what emerges. That approach allows you not to control it, not to be upset about it, not to own it, but know that what you bring is going to produce something much more than what it is that’s in your mind. An example of that would be the ROOTS’ Community/Artist Partnership Program project that Theresa and Omari Fox were working on, the fact that, Ashley, you wanted to do “ABCDE” when you entered the community. And when you started to apply community organizing principles, you realized that what occurred was much more than you had ever expected. It was much richer. That’s the piece that becomes empowering. What you get is much more than you ever, ever expected.

"One of the great surprises for me during the NLE was the value I derived from a simple effort: during the bus tours on Wednesday, June 22, Bob and I offered coffee and pastries to locals at a card table near Hidden Streams Park. I heard unforgettable stories and perspectives on the history and current condition of the neighborhood. I asked questions and offered my own perspective on the value of the festival, ROOTS, and CultureWorks. I shared stories about family and friends. We discussed the intersecting injustices often knit up in education, city planning, and social services. We also laughed a lot. Like nothing else that week, this experience reminded me of the truth to Ricardo Levin Morales' statement: "powerlessness is often misdiagnosed as apathy." I know it's enormously challenging to build meaningful relationships with locals in the context of a short festival, but could this simple model—a coffee station—be adapted to provide a jumping-off point for greater community engagement and organization during art for social change festivals?"

- **Jon Catherwood-Ginn**, Center for the Arts at Virginia Tech

I was very clear about what ROOTS said in terms of the festival. They were going to have their 35th anniversary in West Baltimore, and this would shed light on West Baltimore and maybe build some capacity for CultureWorks. That's what I heard as the message. If that was the message, then ROOTS couldn't do any community engagement with residents or have the community be a part of the festival. So CultureWorks was trying to see what role community could play in executing the festival. The festival was a grand thing that West Baltimore had never, ever seen in its life. That was wonderful, but the community could not have a role in festival execution at that level. Whether that speaks to the lack of resources or leadership in the community, or whether it speaks to the fact that we're doing a professional festival and we need people with specific skill sets to do it, I don't know. Another reality is the fact that we had these other groups who were doing power plays and didn't want to come into the fold. I think if they came into the fold—for example, your TOD group—and PNC had played a different role with the community, then you could have executed something in addition to the festival to make the festival even grander. I think it was a lost opportunity for those "power play groups" that chose not to be a part of the festival. And CultureWorks just didn't have any success in trying to bring them into what we were doing to share.

BL: Exactly.

DJ: I wasn't sure whether ROOTS related to or participated in the community organizing part, whether ROOTS was aware of how important that piece is in working in community. Examples of that would be some of the C/APP projects that were issued. The artists wanted to show up and do their project, but they didn't expect to have any involvement in the engagement piece. For example, I'll talk about Omari Fox, Theresa, and Gwylene Gallimard. Okay, the project was accepted. There was a core group of people that were a part of the project. The community contact set everything up in terms of the core group: getting their names, telephone numbers, and so on. But the artists didn't want to play a role in contacting the community members to inform them of the next meeting date, or to see if they wanted to meet, or were able to come out and participate. This caused me to think, "Do they not understand that when you're

working in community, that's part of doing the work?" The work can't happen unless you also do that work. People are not just going to show up on their own; somebody has to do that. And so my question was, "Why is it that the artists don't want to do that?" That was always in the back of my mind, my feeling that those artists didn't understand the organizing piece. When you want to do storytelling, when you want to work in community, when you want to convey a new idea, or new project, somebody has to do that footwork to get people to show up.

BL: The C/APP project program has been radically changed as a result of this work together. It's yet to be seen how it will play out, but the conceptual end of it is the need for ROOTS to become much more of a partner in the work and not simply the producer of a piece of the work. Executive Director Carlton Turner has responded that way and has put his time and energy into allowing for ROOTS to learn the lessons that we need to learn out of the experience.

Do you think now that some time has passed since the festival that the advisory group that you worked with in West Baltimore could be brought back together?

DJ: After the festival we got folks together to talk about what the festival meant to them. People showed up, but Ashley and I were in total fatigue. I don't know whether it was the right time to say it, but we definitely stated that, at this point in time, we weren't able to do the grassroots organizing, because we were just tired. I think we did meet and ask people what role they wanted to take in CultureWorks, but Culture Works was not able to develop a structure, because we had to be so focused on planning and executing the festival. People responded with, "Well, where do we start? What does this really mean now? Are we starting from scratch again?"

AM: CultureWorks is in stasis right now. I think ROOTS is picking up on what we did, but follow-up is not necessarily within ROOTS' mandate. Everything is up in the air, and it needs to be brought back down on the ground.

BL: It feels like a lot of these threads can be picked back up. If you can develop capacity to respond, they're not gone.

DJ: On the positive side, Franklin Square Association took one art piece, and they were soliciting people to develop an art group. I think that group's still going on now. Prior to the festival, PNC was not doing an art transformation grant. They were just giving money through foundations and organizations. But shortly after the festival, PNC announced an art transformation grant program, Franklin Square applied, and they got that grant to do a mural program. The fact that PNC and Franklin Square have integrated art into their work is an outcome that we feel good about.

Community groups are discussing ways to re-make this Pulaski Street mural, painted on the part of the highway to be torn down. (Photo by Fern Shen.)

Festival Planning in Partnership

AM: Unfortunately and fortunately, the festival came upon us, which required a great deal of skill sets that were not to be found easily among the groups within our community. So the decision was made, "Do we go with our limited resources to do the festival? Do we find a way to not do the festival but maintain the context and growth of art and culture as a discussion among communities?" We chose to abandon the community engagement efforts to move towards the festival with a singularity of purpose, because the vision had to happen.

DJ: The time in which we were able to get our advisory group to take on some highly specific roles to further execute some permanent-type activities and projects was the same time that

we had to honor the festival. I would say our grounding group, the advisory committee, was ready to take on some roles, but we had to draw our attention away from that for the festival. That's when our group fell apart, because we couldn't give them any more attention. Those committee members weren't able to find a role in the festival planning process and Ashley and I weren't able to give them a concrete role, other than advertising and talking about the festival.

One of the things that I always say as an organizer: if you want people to show up, you got to give them a reason to show up. You have got to give people something to do so that they will really start to own the process. That was one of the challenges that we had, not having the capacity to be able to have a structure for those people that had the highest skill sets to be a part of this. We could figure it out, but there weren't enough of us to keep those people connected.

There was no room for the role that CultureWorks wanted the community to play in executing the festival because ROOTS was doing a full-scale, professional festival. There was no room for the kind of grassroots stuff that we were doing, so the only role that the community had in the festival was basically serving as the community bridge between ROOTS and West Baltimoreans. Some people in the community—those who were playing a leadership role, for instance—were definitely disappointed, because they were expecting a little bit more based on what we, CultureWorks, were saying. Not what RSC was saying, not what ROOTS was saying. There lies the difficulty in the relationship: how things are communicated and laid out.

AM: You get back to bemoaning the lack of resources. When you start engaging people for the first time in a community like West Baltimore, you need as many resources as you can gather. In retrospect, that dilemma could have been an opportunity for RSC to engage the community that we were gathering around to build relationships, resources, and power. But we were so busy carrying multiple plates—

RSC got involved in it, carrying plates, but if we had that kind of resources from the beginning… We should have been smart enough to know, "Okay, we need to continue to engage community in preparation for leadership roles."

DJ: And the other piece is power. CultureWorks' projects were framed around, "Can art and culture be a tool for neighborhood revitalization?" So we were interacting with everybody, as many players, groups, and leaders as we could interact with. There were people we were acting with who had their own agendas. That's just the landscape that you work in. Our project was an innocent project in that we wanted to engage everybody around this idea to see what was going to be produced. Part of the ultimate outcome, for me, was for people to own this, execute it, and continue to get empowered by it. But we had a lot of power plays. One of them was the Fayette Street outreach organization. In executing the innocence of the project, we didn't pay much attention—I didn't pay much attention and I usually never do—to power plays, because everybody has a right to their own agenda. For example, one power play was with—

AM: PNC Bank.

DJ: Yeah, that was a power play with the TOD group. We invited RSC to come in and they didn't have a clue about any of this! We didn't inform RSC of all of these different groups and their agendas, so I think RSC was innocent of the power plays that were going on. So RSC was talking to different groups and these groups were trying to own RSC, for lack of a better word. It became muddy for CultureWorks in terms of the role that we were playing with the groups. But I don't think any of this was actually communicated during the time, because we were just in the midst of it.

AM: Yeah, there was nobody sitting back and watching the field. Everybody was a combatant. Everybody was a player.

BL: The execution of a really complex, big project requires a lot of people, and the application of resources. We were present only momentarily, from the point of view of RSC. I can't speak for the festival staff, but RSC was present only on occasion. We'd come up for a weekend or a day. There wasn't the kind of continuity…

AM: But it was intentional, Bob. It was. And this is at the foot of Alternate ROOTS. I got the definite message that RSC was not to be involved in the festival, that it would suffer. Some of the comments from ROOTS were disappointing that, as well as from my end, because what that did was cut all of the additional resources to follow through that we needed. RSC could not play an active role in that festival. That hurt, and cut what CultureWorks could do. It was a bad decision.

BL: My perspective is that given the limitations that I had in terms of my time and focus, I could not—I didn't, as you didn't —have the capacity to draw in all the elements of West Baltimore. I didn't have the capacity to bring what I knew about CultureWorks and its intentions into the festival thinking. I wasn't involved and RSC, in a sense, wasn't involved in the decision to have the festival in West Baltimore. Not that I would have opposed it, because I thought it was a wonderful thing that it was going to happen there. But keeping track of ROOTS' investment in CultureWorks in West Baltimore from the point of view of RSC was beyond my capacity and our capacity to bring that into the planning and execution of the festival. And there was a fair amount of disappointment on the RSC side, I will admit, because as you and CultureWorks decided to put your energy into doing the festival, I similarly had to figure out where I was putting what I had to offer. And I think that Maurice Turner, Hope Clark, and I became confused about what our function was.

ROOTS and RSC have a lot to learn from this. I heard you say some time back, Ashley, not only was it a grand festival, it was a grand lesson. And I'm grateful for that, but there's certainly some pain in that lesson.

AM: It was a test of approaches in community building. You have the development of the cultural initiative that's empowering—it's dedicated to the empowerment of community, and the need to cherish and honor that. And you have an organization with a requirement to put on a national festival.

DJ: It also speaks to the challenge of having various groups work together. Whose principles are you operating from, how do those principles overlap, will everybody get some of what they're looking for, which is always the biggest piece of partnerships. And is what they get going to be enough?

Critique: National Learning Exchange

JCG: As part of its three-day National Learning Exchange (NLE), over breakfast on the morning of Thursday, June 23, ROOTS hosted a casual Q&A with three local activists who were working to organize West Baltimoreans around transformational projects on the Highway to Nowhere. The invited speakers shared their achievements: polling citizens to gain input on how best to use the Highway to Nowhere, responding to those requests by petitioning the city to build a large parking lot and community garden on the infamous site, and so on. This Q&A opened my eyes to the ways in which local leaders view the Highway to Nowhere and how they are mobilizing West Baltimoreans to revitalize the area. As one speaker put it, many view the Highway to Nowhere as Baltimore's "Berlin Wall."

What accomplishments can these leaders and community members lay claim to? What challenges lie ahead as they take on larger projects for social and infrastructural change in West Baltimore? These are essential questions, and over the course of the Q&A they bubbled to the surface, and I sensed that this discussion left a deep impression on the morning's attendees. The Q&A was an ideal forum for resource sharing and brainstorming about potential solutions to issues prevalent in West Baltimore. I think the session provided the local guests with a wealth of perspectives and best practices from artists, community organizers, and culture workers from across the country. Likewise, the guests' descriptions of their triumphs and travails in West Baltimore seemed to offer Breakfast Conversation attendees a much deeper understanding of the unique challenges in the community and the engagement and organization methods that have been most effective. The sharing of expertise, encouragement, and hope in the room was reciprocal.

While I certainly feel that the National Learning Exchange achieved its aim of "elevating the national conversation about the power of art, culture, and creativity in building and maintaining resilient communities," I wish that ROOTS and CultureWorks had devoted time for that conversation to transition to the next step: application in the community. As I saw on a small-scale during the Thursday Breakfast Chat, connecting local people with NLE attendees provided a fruitful ground for resource-sharing and inspiration. If a portion of the conference had been devoted to community engagement in West Baltimore, what else could have been achieved? How could we have contributed to CultureWorks' capacity-building? What could we have learned from individuals in the community about past and present assets and challenges in West Baltimore? How could our own understandings of community-building and skills in outreach efforts been augmented by on-the-ground work among the abandoned row-houses? Perhaps, most importantly, how could building relationships with community members and organizing citizens around community revitalization through the arts have contributed to the future betterment of West Baltimore? While I think Bluford STEM Academy served its function well as a conference location, I felt that its nearly 3.5-mile distance from the Highway to

Nowhere posed a challenge in connecting NLE attendees with individuals that live and work in West Baltimore. One local mentioned to me that many from the area consider Bluford STEM's neighborhood the "suburbs of West Baltimore."

How changes to the festival location and structure could foster more interaction between conference-goers and local folks? What if we had held portions of the conference at different community gathering sites near the Highway to Nowhere (i.e. churches, Bon Secours, Hidden Streams Park, etc.)? How could greater participation among conference attendees in the West Baltimore bus tours have initiated this engagement with the community?

AM: Amen, Brother. This was a mirror for us and what was facing back at us wasn't who we thought would be there.

BL: Jon and I wondered whether the NLE might have been able to be put under tents in Harlem Park, a large open, tree shaded park just around the corner from the Festival's anchor "Hidden Streams" park and performance venue. No doubt a lot of logistics would have been difficult, perhaps prohibitive, yet the idea of open tents invites the notion of removing the walls between the NLE and the neighborhood folks that both Dudley and Jon have advocated and the distant STEM school denied. The NLE programmers' and the Festival designers' choices resulted in remarkable successes, accomplished against seriously difficult odds. Yet, just talking with local folks over coffee on the sidewalk was truly inspiring and makes the work that Culture Works is undertaking seem imminently do-able if time and focus is provided right at the street, at the door-to-door level.

The Thursday breakfast event at the NLE was a presentation by a few of the associations in the West Baltimore Coalition. In the course of putting the NLE and Festival together, these associations and the WBC became more engaged in the community cultural development strategies being utilized by Culture Works and, to a lesser degree, ROOTS. The WBC in particular was "won over" to embrace art and culture as an important ingredient in the strategies for community social health. In the category of "next time," the NLE might have been hosted from time to time, by some of these associations in their own neighborhoods.

DC: To our detriment, the nonprofit arts are more often than not snugly ensconced in the dominant consumer paradigm that greatly undervalues participation and local life. At the festival, I especially liked listening to a local drumming group. With the drummers coming and going. I felt I was listening to the community. I wish there had been even more such opportunities to hear the community express itself. Churches are a ready source of such expression. In addition to making soul-stirring music, church is often about doing the community's work with the community. For example, I noticed that the Edmonson Avenue Manifest Wonders Christian Center and Ministries runs The Handyman Network, which installs and repairs just about anything in West Baltimore. During the NLE, Jessica Disu, aka FM Supreme, created and performed the slam piece, *This Is the Movement/Let's Move.* It could have become the rallying rhyme binding the NLE to the Festival. And with *This Is the Movement* as prompt, I bet we could have heard some amazing, galvanizing freestyle from West Baltimore

poets. Festivals need organizers and producers whose sole job is to spot and take advantage of such opportunities.

BL: That's the difficult aspect of dominant paradigms: when the going gets tough, those paradigms become the default positions or approaches, even for those of us who want otherwise. The diligence needed to overcome the simple power of the paradigm is substantial. It requires regular reinforcement of alternative options and constant access to learning from others' successes.

Your idea of the persons who spot and take advantage of opportunity during the event is right on the money. Those people need to be educated and informed about what those opportunities might look like, because the opportunities are difficult to spot through the persistent presence of the dominant paradigm. This need for shared learning remains a critical piece in the development of the movement we believe is moving around us.

Critique: The Festival

JCG: ROOTSFest 2011 featured diverse offerings for attendees: Q&As, performances, art-making experiences, interactive urban planning stations; stands for vendors, social change organizations… powerful stimulants that encouraged citizens to celebrate community assets and activate their imaginations of a better tomorrow. The enormous turnout for the festival and the fact that the majority of festival-goers were from West Baltimore was thrilling. I sensed a spirit of joyful gathering and possibility for the future of the community, and I thought the choice to hold the festival on the 52-acres of green space adjacent to the Highway to Nowhere was brilliant. ROOTS and CultureWorks helped create a positive association with that space for local people. Also, the festival boosted exposure for small businesses and organizations, all the while reconnecting individuals from northern and southern neighborhoods in West Baltimore.

BL: I wonder at the unfortunate ease, however, by which CultureWorks was allowed/allowed itself to become as invisible as it was.

JCG: Yeah, at the NLE and the Festival, I'm afraid I learned little about CultureWorks and its mission, successes, and challenges. What if CultureWorks—as a fledgling organization in the area, much smaller and younger than ROOTS—had instead served as a "case study in action" for the conference? Ashley and Denise have identified a community they hope to revitalize and a project-based methodology for doing so. What could we as ROOTers have learned from them and what could we, in turn, have provided in the way of expertise and on-the-ground assistance to their organization? Such a dialogue among ROOTers, CultureWorks, and community members could have deeply impacted conference attendees' understanding of community building through the arts and CultureWorks' development and citizen membership in the area.

How can innovative festival design foster deeper relationships among conference-goers and community members and their organizations, activate community interest in organizing, and set a stronger foundation for future civic participation/grassroots action?

DC: A design challenge was to keep the National Learning Exchange and the Festival linked and grounded in the daily realities of West Baltimore residents. As for the NLE, I have the same general question you raise about a broader and deeper relationship to West Baltimore. From a community organizing perspective, I think there were missed opportunities. To help festival-goers focus, we could have built towards collective actions such as rallies and perhaps a march to address a pressing West Baltimore issue. The NLE could have helped prepare those actions. That would have provided the national performance acts with community grounding, a sense of where they were and that their performances were more than about their outstanding talent: "Chuck Brown and Go-Go for Change," here and now in West Baltimore.

There are models for a national festival *rooted* in a particular community's emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and material traditions, with a festival that leads to action and change. More than a decade ago, Junebug Productions mounted the Environmental Justice Festival in New Orleans, and ROOTSFest could have benefited from the lessons learned there. A decade ago, I helped organize the first Tamejavi Festival in the Central Valley of California. The sponsor was not an arts-presenting organization, but a community organizing organization. Tamejavi's premise: cultural understanding and exchange is the foundation for community solidarity and action. To this day, members of new immigrant communities and Central Valley organizers continue to lead Tamejavi. They understand that festivals cannot do their social justice job if they are conceived as one-off great events; the festival itself should be a marker and celebration for year-round organizing that prepares the conditions for action – and even may be the occasion for those actions.

What is "Tamejavi?"

Tamejavi is a word meaning "cultural market," originating from the concept of a "plaza" or place of exchange.

Tamejavi is a space where diverse cultures converge to express and share stories, music, food, traditions, and ways of interpreting the world. Through cultural exchange and artistic expression, Central Valley immigrants participating in Tamejavi join voices and create new bonds, thus forming a solid sense of community and establishing foundations for active civic engagement.

We need Tamejavi because it...

- Offers a medium through which immigrants express themselves and voice their ideas.

- Builds new relationships and understanding among immigrants and long-standing residents in the Valley who share a commitment to fostering civic participation and who seek public recognition of community diversity.

- Opens a public space that enhances expressions of creativity to stimulate a sense of belonging and promote civic participation.

- http://www.tamejavi.org/resrcs.php?page=about_tmj

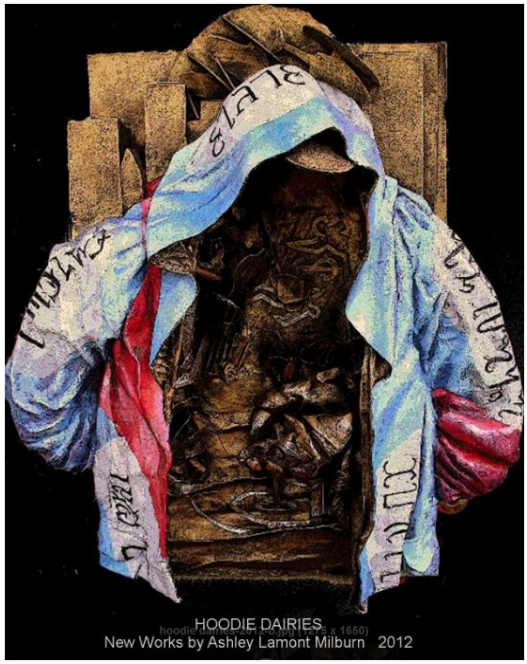
Final Thoughts

AM: It's not necessarily a bad thing that CultureWorks did its thing and faded away. The community gathered up, took CultureWorks and the festival as a vehicle, and made it go. On that part, we were very successful, which is not *us* building, it's community building itself. To me, that's beautiful.

DJ: We did create change. We can name some very concrete things that occurred, like the art transformation grant, Franklin Square, Kenny…

BL: The Bon.

DJ: Not to mention the images that the community artists created to spark further conversation, such as the hoodie. The hoodie image came out of an aspect of the engagement.



AM: I realized that, as an art maker, I have the responsibility of pursuing that thing that started with the remembrance. The hoodie diaries resonated, and the dialogue kept the community discussions around the exhibition. We always talk about where the image came from, way back when we did the work in West Baltimore.

DJ: So the story's still being told.

AM: For me, regardless of the pain and the happiness, and the successes, and the failures, the festival did exactly what I'd wanted it to do: explore the concept of how does art and culture work in community. That was why we started the whole process.

DJ: And, on a more personal note, Ashley, my understanding of this project was your seeking what it means to be a community artist. I think you got that answer. As for me, I learned how to use art and culture as a tool. That was something new. And now, a part of my own thinking whenever I'm doing community work, is we need to bring some art and culture in. If I ever work on a project like that again, I would mention the arts as being a part of it, and the significance that it'll play in it.

We're able to denote real, concrete things that occurred as a result of using the arts. I don't think that we would have gotten the same response from community if we weren't talking about art and culture. I think the numbers of people that showed up did so because this was something fresh and different. And they continued to come back.

> *"The concept of community engagement never came up as a thing that we should learn. I went into West Baltimore as a traditional community artist: you show up, you do art, you have fun, and you go out... There need to be more opportunities for artists in ROOTS who choose to do social engagement work to learn about working in community."*
>
> - **Ashley Milburn**, CultureWorks

RR: When CultureWorks started, I asked Ashley, "How many partners do you have?" and he said, "A couple." Later, I asked, "How many did you have after ROOTSFest?" And I think Ashley said, "Twenty." That's twenty different groups—public, private, academic—that decided to become a part of this. That need not go unnoticed.

There are certain other things you can look at as intermediate outcomes: 10,000 people standing on a section of land that hadn't been occupied for 50 years, celebrating. This need not go unnoticed. This is a long haul process. This is not, "We do it and it's over." When you're working with groups—in particular, groups where things traditionally have not happened—you need to see some immediate results from the labor. You can't say, "We're going to work on this and, five years later, we're going to have this problem solved." Community members need to see something and ROOTSFest was the something that they saw. Then there needs to be another benchmark or intermediate after that. These things are counted toward the ultimate outcome of positive change in revitalizing the community that was otherwise devastated by the veritable "hurricane-in-place." The visionary will see this change happen well beyond his living. That's the kind of process it is.

One of the outcomes you look at that can be measured is social capital. That is, when you look at where community members were—people not working, not solving problems together—you can look at how many more organizations are starting to work together in that geographical area now, the number of new projects that spun off of that festival, the new partners that became engaged. I look at my time, my students' time... this was a $25,000 investment for me and my students. So, you've got to start measuring your in-kind as an outcome. Anything anybody does, if you say, "I was paying them," that's money. Bob: all that driving up to Baltimore? How much did you get reimbursed? This is all people's pocket-money, invested time and effort into something they believed in. These are the kinds of process outcomes you need to look at.

But ultimately we're looking for changes in the economy and culture. These are all parts of resilience. When a town or group is disrupted by a hurricane or flood situation, often the biggest problem is you lose your infrastructure. That's why everyone comes in, because they want to get the businesses back up and running. Well, in this case, we're talking about forty years later. This was an economically rich area prior to the Highway to Nowhere. Now you gotta rebuild all these things forty years later. Those are intermediate outcomes you can look for, but there's a long range of outcomes. Health outcomes. If you could do a stress indicator for those two days of the festival, people could say, "Today, my blood pressure was down."

AM: We went fourteen days—'cause they keep records like that—after, and on that spot there were only two criminal incidents. And they were both only break-ins in automobiles.

A week after we had our festival, the city did their AFRAM—the annual festival to celebrate African-American life, music, and culture--and there were two killings: a twelve year-old and a twenty year-old student. A gunshot and a stabbing in a public space, downtown.[3]

[3] http://www.africanamericanfestival.net/

We walked with the extra police that we had to pay for. I was looking, really, to see "How far away were the SWATs?" I know they expected that stuff during ROOTSFest. But the police were

> *"I felt that the Civil Rights Movement was my movement. I felt that basically, I was a black man, there was no distinction between what I was in my life and what was happening in this movement. My dedication to the Civil Rights Movement was not inconsistent with everything that I had known in my life. I had to participate in this movement because it was me. Martin Luther King was my leader as much as anybody else's. I intersected with people in the African-American movement because we were part of the same movement. Somewhere along the line, we became the Chicano Movement. But it's really another branch of the same movement as far as I'm concerned. If we feed each other, we are one continuum."*
>
> - **Luis Valdez**, Teatro Campesino

> *"Most great ideas--ideas that were pushing society forward--came not from the top-down but from the bottom-up. I saw evidence of how that was working in the Movement. The people who were challenging the social system, the political and economic system of the nation, were poor people, rural people, grassroots people. And they're the ones who made the Movement. And made the Movement move. We in SNCC [Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee] always admired and celebrated the notion that legitimate power should come from the ground-up. And that our job was to help support and create leadership from that ground. When we started the theatre, we said we want our theatre to be useful to people and, ultimately, we wish to tell their stories. I didn't have the benefit of growing up in that culture... well, I didn't know I had that benefit. Then I started paying attention to my grandfather. The idea was to make a theatre that took on the purposes and goals and aims and techniques of the Movement. As the leading element in what we tried to make the theatre do. And when we heard that you guys. Luis, had started a theatre on the Coast... it sounded like what we were trying to do, but we didn't know what was going on, so we just admired it from a distance. And a couple of years later when we had the chance to meet, I thought, "Yeah. They're doing the right thing and we're flattered by the fact that we see ourselves as one."*
>
> - **John O'Neal**, Free Southern Theater

saying, "I've been to almost every festival in Baltimore and this is amazing. I had no idea." Police were talking to people, holding one another, and laughing.

RR: You got to count these things as intermediate outcomes when you're doing this kind of work. The amount of crime that would normally take place during that time that didn't take place.

AM: What we're doing is so informal, for us it was hard. That's why Randy has to remind us of the work that we're doing.

We had a community bridge. We had 24 community groups together. One of the community organizers said, "Y'know, this is wonderful. This is the first time we've all been together. In 25 years. In one spot. This is fun!"

RR: This festival modeled something unique for the field of community cultural engagement, the City of Baltimore, and residents of West Baltimore.[4]

[4] CultureWorks Final Report, 2011.

In addition to its large turnout, the festival celebrated the resilience of those that survived the effects of the Highway to Nowhere, inspired the West Baltimore Coalition to embrace art and culture as an important ingredient in social change, and created an island of peace in West Baltimore. There was boosted exposure for small businesses and organizations and reconnections among individuals from northern and southern neighborhoods in West Baltimore. Finally, the Festival increased the amount of social capital in West Baltimore, the level of volunteerism, and number of partnerships for social change.

Partnership requires work. There's a lot of work in sustaining relationships.

There is a need to get back with those groups who were part of that success and say, "Thank you. We're looking to do more, but we don't want you to think that we forgot you." You don't want to lose those relationships. We have to be real careful and know: what is our ultimate outcome that we're looking for? I want you to figure out what piece of this you can be a part of and start where you are.

AM: Regarding CultureWorks' role as the "thing between a rock and a hard place," the festival created an opportunity for the two opposing, juxtaposing things to separate from one another. Because the "rock" and the "hard place" can be many things… External forces like City Hall or law enforcement. Internal forces like established community organizations. Even timeless trends and conditions like poverty, drug dealing, pride, or despair. But the festival created a space between those things. And in that separation, we got peace. We got a community that saw itself and was praised for itself and reaffirmed for itself by outsiders who came in to celebrate the story of that place. The other pressure point got the chance to say, "Well, maybe I was wrong. That is not Hell. But you're too small to handle it, so we'll help you with this next time."

I can't explain to you walking among 11,000 people at rest. It is something to behold.

Jon Catherwood-Ginn *is the Partnerships & Engagement Manager at the Center for the Arts at Virginia Tech. Jon received a Master of Fine Arts degree in Directing & Public Dialogue from Virginia Tech and a Bachelor's degree from Bucknell University. Since 2010, Jon has partnered with the New River Valley Planning District Commission as co-director with Bob Leonard of a trans-disciplinary project titled Building Home that uses interactive theatre and music to open up public dialogue on the topic of sustainability in southwest Virginia. Building Home's community gatherings and original plays have created avenues for 900+ citizens from the New River Valley, Virginia to contribute their stories and perspectives to the regional planning process through art-making. Building Home's work has been featured in Animating Democracy's "Landscape of Arts for Change" series and presentations at conferences hosted by Imagining America, the Network of Ensemble Theatres, and the Association of American Colleges & Universities. Jon has taught secondary English as a Teach for America Corps Member in high-needs schools in New York City, conducted classes in interactive theatre at the Danville Center for Adolescent Males, a drug and alcohol treatment facility for juveniles in Pennsylvania; and worked with Sojourn Theatre, Theatre of the Emerging American Moment (TEAM), Lost Nation Theatre, Hamilton-Gibson Productions, Extant Arts Company, and the Off-Broadway Aquila Theatre in New York City.*

Dudley Cocke *is artistic director of Roadside Theater, the professional theater wing of the arts and humanities center Appalshop in Whitesburg, KY. Appalshop began in 1969 as a War on Poverty film training program for disadvantaged youth and now includes a radio station, record company, an extensive multi-media regional archive, in addition to vibrant filmmaking and theater divisions. The Appalachian Media Institute is one of Appalshop's several year-long programs providing arts and media training for the region's youth. The Roadside Theater ensemble is known for its deep work in community cultural development, its artistic collaborations with African American, Latino, and Native American artists, and for its ability to attract an audience reflective of the nation's economic, racial, and geographic diversity. Under Dudley's direction, Roadside has created 58 original plays, which it has toured to 43 states and performed in big cities from London to Los Angeleshttp://roadside.org/*

Denise Johnson *began Community Organizing in 1980 as the Lead Organizer in West Baltimore as an undergraduate student with the Sandtown Winchester Community Development Project. This project received national attention as the former Baltimore City Mayor, Schmoke, attempted to create a different approach to community revitalization. My work further led to working specifically around family and community functioning in the areas of: Infant Mortality, Homelessness, Substance Abuse, Domestic Violence, Housing, and Literacy. Served as Consortium Chair with Baltimore City Healthy Start, Board Member Baltimore City Partnership For Drug Free Neighborhoods, and active member with Baltimore City 10 year plan to end Homelessness.*

Co-founder of Culture Works in 2008 as the Lead Organizer working as a Project Director for the southwest revitalization strategy with Bon Secours Health System. The introduction of Art and Culture in community development as a paradigm shift formulated Culture Works.
Graduate from Coppin State University, Bachelor of Science in Biology and a Master of Science in Clinical Family Counseling.

Bob Leonard *teaches in Theater and Cinema at Virginia Tech. He is the director of the MFA program and the primary advisor for the Stage Management, and Directing and Public Dialogue MFA programs. At Tech, Bob's directing projects include: Never In My Lifetime, Much Ado About Nothing, Dream Of A Common Language, Far Away, Romeo and Juliet, Abingdon Square, The Trestle at Pope Lick Creek, and Living Darwin. With Ann Kilkelly, he is the co-author of Performing Communities, An Inquiry into Ensemble Theater Deeply Rooted in Eight U.S. Communities, New Village Press (2006). His current work includes: The Christiansburg Institute, Inc., a revitalization of the 100 year-old African American school; Building Home, a grass-roots community dialogue project in the New River Valley; and CultureWorks, a community cultural development project in Baltimore. Bob founded and led The Road Company, a theatre ensemble in Johnson City, TN, from 1974 to 1998. He was a co-director of the Community Arts Network (CAN) from 1998 to 2010. He is a co-founder of the Network of Ensemble Theaters (NET) and Alternate ROOTS.*

Ashley Milburn *graduated from the Tyler School of Art of Temple University with a BFA in art education and printmaking in 1968. He holds a Master's in Education with a focus on Multiple Intelligences (MI) from the University of Rio Grande and a Master's in Art Education for Community Arts from the Maryland Institute College of Art. He is an OSI Fellow, a former Peace Corps Volunteer, teacher, and arts administrator. He is a former Executive Director of the Salt Lake City Arts Council. He refers to himself as a Contemporary Vernacular Artist. He is currently working on visualizing racism to rewrite its racist messages. Ashley has been working in West Baltimore since 2006 on exploring how art and culture can be a social change agent.*
Web Gallery: http://www.wix.com/ashleyisart/west-baltimore-remembrances
http://members.tripod.com/ashley_milburn0/contemporaryvernacularart20002005

http://ashleyisart.wix.com/hoodie-diaries
Teaching portfolio http://www.wix.com/ashleyisart/cultureworks

Randy Rowel, PhD *is the Director of the Why Culture Matters Disaster Studies Project. Dr. Rowel came to Morgan with considerable experience in community organizing, partnership development and evaluation, and teaches Community Needs and Solutions, Community-Based Participatory Research, Preventive Health, and Qualitative Research in Public Health. Recently he received an invitation from FEMA (Federal Emergency Response Agency) to serve as the Private Sector Liaison representative. Dr. Rowel is currently co-investigator with Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health Preparedness and Emergency Response Research Center (PERRC) on Towards a Community Resilience Index; a project that will develop an index to be used as a predictor or pre-event, of pre- and post-event resilience. His research is also exploring strategies to support FEMA's "Whole Community Approach" and developing partnerships that aim to leverage technology, social media, and citizens to build disaster*

resilient communities. Dr. Rowel served as an investigator for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) funded National Center for the Study of Preparedness and Catastrophic Event Response (PACER). He has conducted several studies in Maryland to exam disaster experiences of minority low-income populations. including one focused on the relationship between daily crisis (community stressors) and disaster preparedness. Dr. Rowel is dedicated to developing tools to help emergency management and public health practitioners work more effectively with low-income and other vulnerable populations. A recent example is the "Guide to Enhance Grassroots Risk Communication Among Low-Income Populations." He is also in the process of developing a course for FEMA's Emergency Management Institute concerning principles and best practices for working with faith-based organizations in emergency management.