

PERFORMING OUR FUTURE

A national, multiracial, rural-urban, grassroots-led coalition working through culture to build power toward a future where we own what we make.

WE ARE residents of some of our country's most abandoned yet beautiful places: the Black Belt of Alabama, the coalfields of eastern Kentucky and central Appalachia, the inner city of West Baltimore, and the urban Rust Belt and rural agribusiness center of Wisconsin.

We have all seen the value inherent in our lands, labor, and imaginations—our commonwealth—get exploited for the profit of others. We all worry about bad water and air, unsellable homes, unpayable debts, and unemployed neighbors. And we all struggle with feelings of isolation and powerlessness.

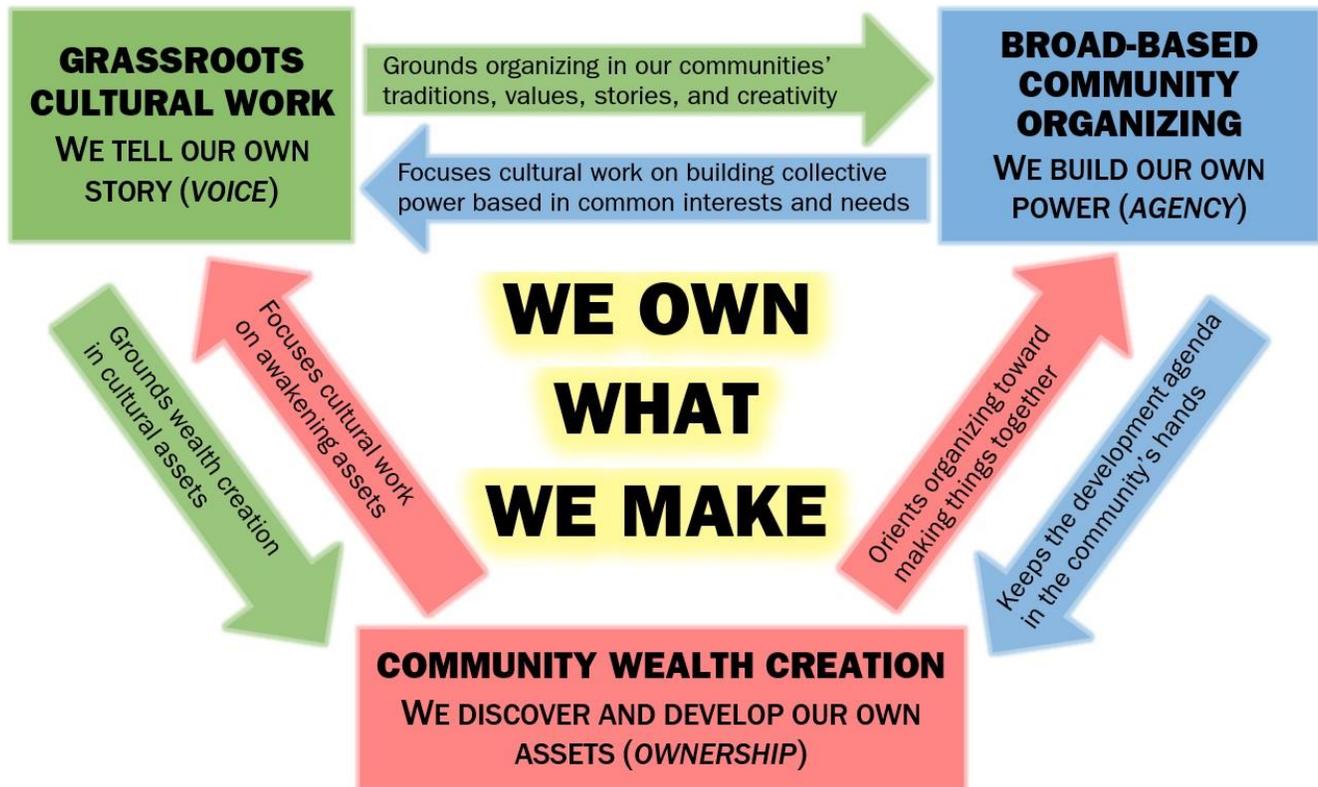
But most of all, we all share a long history of resistance to exploitation. Our most formidable resistance has been rooted in our cultures—in the expression of our intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and material traditions. We have come together to honor and build on this creative legacy, to imagine and work toward a future where everyone belongs and everyone's contribution matters—where as an allied community, we own what we make.

WE BELIEVE culture drives development: a culture of bottom-up collective power and interdependence drives equitable development and counters the culture of top-down administration and dependency that drives exploitative development. And we recognize that bigger isn't always better: through supporting local and regional efforts, and taking the time to address specific community challenges in depth, we can move toward solutions at all scales.

WE ARE BUILDING a national coalition to advance community-led, culture-driven development, through supporting

- Projects in each of our communities that work from and develop our shared approach;
- Joint efforts, to learn across our communities and create together;
- Policy-change efforts at large- and small-scale institutions, grounded in knowledge gained from these local and joint efforts;
- Exchange, training, learning, and collaboration among community leaders;
- Building the partnerships and amassing the resources to employ full-time organizers in each of our communities, provide seed funding for initiatives at all scales, and compensate community leaders;
- Creating methodologies to effectively evaluate and assess our work; and
- Documenting and sharing our methods, skills, theories, histories, and other expertise on an interactive platform, open to all.

OUR CURRENT DEVELOPMENT MODEL is derived from three years of work in Letcher County, KY. It emphasizes flow and synergy between and among grassroots cultural work, broad-based community organizing, and community wealth creation. We expect this model to evolve as we continue to build knowledge drawn from the growing work in all of our communities.



TO LEARN MORE AND GET INVOLVED, contact the lead organizer of Performing Our Future, Ben Fink (benfink@appalshop.org), or any current delegation:

- [Appalshop/Roadside Theater](#), Whitesburg, KY
- [Arch Social Community Network](#), Baltimore, MD
- [Black Belt Citizens Fighting for Health and Justice](#), Uniontown, AL
- [Letcher County Culture Hub](#), Letcher County, KY
- [Rural-Urban Flow](#), Milwaukee and Sauk Counties, WI