

Tracing The Turnrow Web: Appalachian Rising

United States

Bard College

Elisabeth Sundberg

a. United States

b. Bard College

Peace is not possible without food security and food justice. The industrial agricultural system undermines peace with the degraded nutritional value of the food it produces. Conventionally grown produce, while cheaper than organically grown produce, is still largely unavailable to people who rely on food stamps for their groceries. Many small towns in West Virginia don't have a grocery store and rely on the Dollar General chain for their groceries. It is important to acknowledge that poor eating habits are not due to ignorance about healthy food choices, but due to lack of access. Peace is promoted when everyone has the right to local, sustainable, and nutritious produce, which is why organizations connecting farming and food access are so important. Turnrow Appalachian Farm collective is a food hub connecting 100+ farms across West Virginia and providing fresh vegetables to their local communities.

The summer of 2019 my internship at Headwaters of Appalachia Foundation placed me at Sprouting Farms, an incubator farm in southeast WV and part of Turnrow where I worked on the farm and learned about their farming practices. Spring of 2020, my submission to the WVU Food Justice in Appalachia exhibit was accepted and is currently being displayed in the exhibition. In 2020, I was invited back to Sprouting Farms as an Americorps volunteer to become more involved in the coordination of grant funded food access operations, such as bringing vegetables to schools for kids markets, to nursing homes, and packing boxes for Mountaineer Food Bank. In 2021, the executive director of Sprouting Farms asked me to paint a mural as the background for their new outdoor farm-stand. I applied for a grant from the West Virginia Department of Art and Culture and with the money awarded, led a community engagement mural project at the farm. I gridded a basic design for the mural into 2ft x 2ft squares. 24 members of the community of all different ages came and each painted a square interpreting the design they were given. This project was an opportunity for the community to collaborate on an art piece that serves as a celebration of Sprouting Farms' food sovereignty and education work as well as acknowledging the land that the farm resides upon. It was amazing to see members of the community and individuals who work at the farm help paint. Each person who painted contributed their own narrative to the square they were working on. For example, adding in the house they grew up in as a child, a favorite video game character, a tribute to the Greenbrier river, etc. As a result, the design took on new meanings each day as it was pieced together, binding together everyone's stories, ideas and conversations like quilt squares being sewn together during a quilting bee. Throughout the course of the project, the location of the mural became a gathering place for workers on the farm to have meetings and breaks. It also generated conversations with customers at the farm store.

My work in West Virginia laid a conceptual foundation for my senior thesis at Bard as a joint human rights and studio arts major. One of the most relevant aspects of campus life is food, because we all need it to sustain us. Food is also one of the largest topics of complaint among the student body. The

objective of my senior project is to engage students with each other and with the food systems on campus through a series of community art events centered around a series of tables. Each table will correspond with an event and each event will be in collaboration with a student organization on campus. This series of events will connect to a mural design which will be collaboratively painted outside of the food pantry in Stevenson Gym. My senior thesis will foster stronger on-campus community connections, which will be documented and archived for use by future students. The significance of this project is to address the disconnect on campus, not solely between students but also between students and food service employees. I am following the Red Hook Community Justice's model of connecting people's personal interests with direct action for change through conversations.

For my proposed peace project, *Tracing The Turnrow Web: Appalachian Rising*, I will scale up last summer's community engagement artwork by facilitating art projects across the Turnrow network in West Virginia. Three years of working within the Turnrow collective has generated a personal network which includes farmers, artists, activists and students. I will use these existing relationships to dig even deeper into the Turnrow communities. I have divided the regions of West Virginia that Turnrow serves into four sections. Each section will host a two week-long art project which seeks to strengthen connections between the organizations within Turnrow and those between food producers and customers, who will attend these events. The art project will celebrate the work that the different parts of the Turnrow food hub are doing, including education, food access, and strengthening local food landscapes. These networks will be strengthened through collaborative work on the mural projects, the patchwork table cloths, and through eating communally. I will facilitate four participatory murals which will be new interpretations of the mural design at Sprouting Farms. These five murals, including the one at Sprouting Farms, will then be printed onto fabric. Because the overall design has already been gridded out, different squares from each mural design can be mixed and matched and sewn together to create five table cloths, generating five new cohesive yet unique designs. Each participant will be connected with another participant from a different region to exchange squares. This mixing of regions to create the table cloths creates unity through the exchange of personal narratives and histories embedded in each participant's square. Like a traditional quilting bee, the community will gather to create the artwork together, an interpretation of the local quilting tradition exemplified by the quilting trail in Monroe county, WV. The murals serve as a lasting visual representation of community work and the table cloths as an artifact which will be used by the network for potlucks, yearly business meetings, fundraising, and other events that Turnrow organizes. The designs of the murals will reflect the different aspects of Turnrow and serve as educational tools through the symbolism of their imagery which will embody the foundational principles of the wider organization. The local population is more likely to return to a site where they have painted a part of a mural or attend an event which uses a tablecloth that they helped to create. Likewise, even those who aren't involved with the creation of these public art pieces will be attracted this artwork. The first half of the summer will be spent painting the murals and the second half will be spent revisiting each of the four regions to assemble and sew together the table cloths. Each project will conclude with a community meal for the participants. The timeline is from Jun 6 - September 1. The goal is to embody peace through connections between community members and art engagement with local food systems.

Tracing the Turnrow Web: Appalachian Uprising Budget

Item	Cost per unit	# of Item	Total	From		
Materials						
Exterior acrylic house paint (gal) for murals	\$40.00	18	\$720.00	West Virginia Paint & Decorating Center		
Seal Grip Primer (gal)	\$30.00	2	\$60.00	West Virginia Paint & Decorating Center		
Paint Rollers	\$3.00	15	\$45.00	West Virginia Paint & Decorating Center		
Paint Tray	\$0.99	10	\$9.90	West Virginia Paint & Decorating Center		
Paint Brushes	\$10.00	15	\$150.00	West Virginia Paint & Decorating Center		
Drop Cloth	\$15.00	2	\$30.00	West Virginia Paint & Decorating Center		
Fabric for quilts (yard packs)	\$24.00	8	\$192.00	Fab Scraps		
Needles (5 pack)	\$2.00	10	\$20.00	Nancy's Fabrics		
Wool Yarn Cones	\$16.00	20	\$320.00	Fab Scraps		
Printing (to archive progress)	n/a	n/a	\$754.00	Greenbrier Printing		
Artist Fees						
Travel	\$71.43	14 (weeks)	\$1000.00			
Housing (14 weeks)	\$138.57	14 (weeks)	\$1,940.00			
Food (for artist and community meals	\$117.14	14 (weeks)	\$1640.00			
Planning	\$20.00	20 (h)	\$400.00			
Set Up	\$20.00	36 (h)	\$720.00			
Artist Collaborators	\$20.00	100 (h)	\$2000.00			
		TOTAL	\$9280.90			

Elisabeth Sundberg

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I am a senior Bard College and am passionate about the intersection of art and community engagement. I think of art as a unifying force and think it is important for it to be accessible to everyone.

EDUCATION

Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY Expected May 2022
Bachelor of Arts in Human Rights and Studio Arts

- Relevant Coursework: What is Togetherness? (2019), Freedom of Expression (2019), (Un)Defining the Human (2020), Contested Spaces (2020), Extended Media II (2021)

Riverview High School, Sarasota, FL IB Diploma May 2018

EXPERIENCE/ SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

Radix Center, AmeriCorps Volunteer Albany, NY Summer 2021

- Worked on urban farm & community gardens in South End of Albany, learned about community engagement, worked alongside high school employees, participated in weekly discussions

AmeriCorps Volunteer, Sprouting Farms, Talcott, WV Summer 2020

- Aided with education and food access work (oversaw volunteers, packed/ delivered boxes to food access markets, coordinated youth work days, wrote the newsletter)
- Public engagement (ran the farm store and social media platforms, organized seed library at Hinton Public Library)
- Helped with farm tasks (cultivating, pruning, shaping beds, etc)

Summer Intern/Counselor, Appalachian Headwaters, Hinton, WV Summer 2019

- Taught environmental stewardship (outdoor activities, engagement with nature, ecology lessons, creative arts, and sports)
- Interned at Sprouting Farms to farm organically and learn to support developing farm businesses

Summer Intern, Coalition of Immokalee Workers, Immokalee, FL Summer 2018

- Strategized and planned support for actions and campaigns
- Learned organizing skills (fundraising, campaigning, database management, and materials production)
- Provided childcare and on-the-ground support to CIW (technical assistance, driving, etc.)

Faith Ally, Coalition of Immokalee Workers, Sarasota, FL 2012 – Present

- Worked with Bard College Center for Civic Engagement to bring Bard students to NYC protest (2019)
- Participated in and organized actions & street theatre asking Wendy's & Publix to commit to fair working conditions; helped found Sarasota Fair Food Chapter to support farmworkers (2017-2018)
- Raised awareness about FL farmworkers in Southeastern U.S. and Nat'l Quaker events

ARTWORK

Mural Project, Sprouting Farms, Talcott, WV Summer 2021

- Grant-funded by West Virginia Department of Art and Culture collaborative mural project with 24 participants of all ages each in charge of a square of the mural design

WVU Food Justice in Appalachia Exhibit Contributor, WVU Library Fall 2021- Spring 2022