

University of Orange

2024 Year End Report



UofO Vision



We envision a society in which place-based knowledge is honored, learning is recognized as a life-long and collective endeavor, and every person has the right to stay, learn and grow with the places they love.

UofO

by the numbers 2024

18 *community courses offered*

30 *community events held*

45 *volunteers activated*

83 *musicians supported*

368 *community campus events welcomed*

5,068 *people came!*

About Us

The University of Orange is a people's free school founded in 2008. At the UofO, we use art and learning to connect fragmented parts of our city, join with neighbors and colleagues to explore the questions of our time, and build people's power to advocate for development built on culture and community.

We believe that our free school in Orange sets us on a better path because we create opportunities for connection, celebrate our many cultures, and understand complexity. Our practice of restoration urbanism shows clear and simple actions we can all do to reweave the social fabric of our society.

We are rooted in Orange at the HUUB, our community campus, but our circles spiral outward so that we can support our region, our nation, and our world.



Overview

Our offerings and network grew and deepened in 2024. Locally in Orange we have grown our community courses including welcoming Zaki Michael as our sewing instructor. We launched our steel pan program featuring classes for youth and adults, and our students performed at this year's 9th annual Remembering Rosa Concert for Peace. We have continued cultivating the Planning to Stay coalition, growing the network of partners who seek equitable development in Orange. In addition, we have held our usual events including monthly building solidarity potlucks with our partners at the HUUB and our greatest Music City Festival yet.

Regionally we have been lead partners developing the Community Campus at the HUUB. We activate the community campus to serve Essex County and northern New Jersey alongside the HUUB, LANBI, the Laundry Workers Center, the National Domestic Workers Alliance, and the Faith + Works Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Orange. The space is also offered affordably or at no cost to people in the area to use for meetings, celebrations and other convenings.

Nationally and globally we convened thought partners – organizers, researchers, artists, urban planners, and more – to join us in honoring the 20th anniversary of the publication of *Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America and What We Can Do About It* by Dr. Mindy Fullilove. Activities included an exhibit, editing a journal, hosting events and commissioning an original piece of music. We also offered online workshops to multiple organizations in the public health and urbanism fields about root shock and collective recovery.

As we face the challenges ahead, we take heart in the lessons we carry forward and maintain our commitment to cultivating durable relationships and the flexibility to be responsive to emergent needs.



Local Activities

Community Courses

This past year we have been committed to growing our in-person and hybrid classes. During our two-week summer intensive we held eight classes on our community campus and launched our Steel Pan program. We expanded many of the summer classes during Fall Term with in-person and hybrid offerings. Some of our courses included:

Sewing 101

This class taught students the basics of using a sewing machine and all participants made a tote bag. This course was led by Zaki Michael, an alum of our ORNG Ink youth arts program, community organizer at the HUUB, and fashion designer. We offered this course during our summer session and our fall term.

Reading Groups

We launched the year with a reading group of *The Long Haul* by Myles Horton and we studied the history of the Highlander Folk School. We also read selections from *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change* and *A Singing Army: Zilphia Horton and the Highlander Folk School*.

In the fall we held our first hybrid reading group and hosted folks on zoom and at the HUUB for discussions of *The Path: What Chinese Philosophers Can Teach Us About the Good Life*.

Dr. Margaux Simmons wrote of the group:

These philosophers lived through times of immense war and social upheaval, much like the atrocities that we are enduring at the current moment. It was enlightening to learn of varied ways of thinking about our lives that might bring about changes that could ease the suffering of the individual, as well as, the broader world.

What's the Story? Memoir Writing Class

Developmental editor Susan Hasho has taught the *What's the Story?* Memoir class online three times per year since 2021. The class finished its 10th session in December. Approximately 12 students attend the ten-session weekly classes, and the online format has enabled students to join from all over the US and world, including Ireland, Italy, and India. The intent is to publish a small volume of work in the coming year.

Other courses offered in 2024 included Civics 101, Stone Seal Carving, Dharma Yoga, Steel Pan for Kids and Adults, and Monuments and Sculptures of Orange Walk.



I took a sewing class with the University of Orange led by Zaki Michael. I've been wanting to sew FOR A WHILE and I finally did it. I wasn't even expecting to make anything, just to learn the basics, and we ended up designing and making our own tote bag! Zaki, thank you for teaching us, your patience, the supplies, quick thinking and kind soul. Thank you, University of Orange, for the many other programs you offer and give lovingly to the community.
-- Eboni Pearce

Music City

Our Music City program began in 2016. Music City cultivates pride in Orange's musical identity, and aims to create a lasting legacy of community strength and cultural richness with a goal of fostering multicultural, multilingual, and intergenerational connection within and around the City of Orange. We host an annual Music City Festival, annual choir concert, several concert series, educational programs, cultural events, and stimulate grassroots networks of support that extend beyond the musical.

Highlights from this year included our Wind Down series, the launch of our Steel Pan ensemble, and the growth of our community choir.

The Wind Down

The Wind Down concert series showcases the work of local emerging artists from the region, often highlighting the work of BIPOC female artists. Jhette Lafond, the series lead, said that performers have shared how meaningful it is to work with a curator who is also a woman of color. The space is supportive and provides opportunities for artists to connect.

Steel Pan Ensemble

A highlight of 2024 was launching our steel pan ensemble. Both the adult and children Steel Pan classes are designed to introduce people to playing steel pans, musical instruments originating in Trinidad & Tobago. Participants are introduced to playing the tenor pan, double guitar pan, double seconds pan, and four-bass pan. Classes are taught by steelpan musician and educator Jevaun Grant. Local parent and scholar-activist Tabitha St. Bernard Jacobs has helped to develop and grow our program.

Remembering Rosa

The intergenerational community choir gathers each year for *Remembering Rosa: A Concert for Peace*, an annual celebration of choral music in Orange and commemoration of the legacy of Rosa Parks. The community choir consists of church choirs and Orange Public School choirs that come together for the concert, and in 2024 featured an age range of 6 - 86. In past years the number of students aged 5-18 has been up to 39. After a drop in youth participant numbers during the pandemic, this past year the choir featured 23 children.

Music City Festival

Our 8th annual Music City Festival, frequently cited as the best MCF yet, paid tribute to Nat King Cole with the theme "Unforgettably Orange" and delightful performances of his music. You can read some testimonials from participating artists in this report.

This year it feels so natural and genuine, like, I feel like I just performed in front of family. Like that's how we built a connection now, so I love it.

-- KarmaKarmz

Here, you still got that sense of community. Everyone knows each other, everybody relates, they went to school together. So it always amazes me.

-- Earl Nelson

***So amazing. It feels like I'm
doing something positive
for the city, y'know.
Giving back.
-- Idris Michael***

***So amazing. Such a safe
space. So many kind
people. It's very obvious
everyone here wants
everyone to succeed and
feel good in their skin
and just have fun. So, not
only was it a positive
experience to be [here]
with my band for the first
time, but also just for me
personally, 10 outta 10
experience.
-- Hanaroe***



Music City Festival Photos by Jersey Left Productions



Planning to Stay

The University of Orange is a co-convener of Planning to Stay, a coalition dedicated to advocating for equitable development and preventing displacement in Orange. Facing a surge in luxury housing development that threatens to exacerbate the existing affordable housing crisis, P2S connects organizations and civic leaders in a coalition to identify shared issues and learn how to advocate collectively. Planning to Stay begins with two questions: *What brought you here? What do you need to be able to stay?* The Planning to Stay Coalition's goal is to protect Orange as a city where working class communities can cultivate a dignified life and reliable future. This year our team attended city meetings (City Council, Planning Board, Chamber of Commerce, Ward level, etc.) to document them and inform residents about the political process. We finalized our P2S platform and used the platform as a guide to develop questions for the mayoral debate. We convened a broad coalition of local organizations including faith-based, labor and neighborhood associations, to develop a rapid response to the proposed development on the site of the Orange Memorial Hospital. We also developed our first iteration of a Civics 101 curriculum in response to needs highlighted at our third Planning to Stay People's Assembly, which was held in March 2024.

***What brought you here?
What do you need to be able
to stay?***

***The Planning to Stay
Coalition's goal is to protect
Orange as a city where
working class communities
can cultivate a dignified life
and reliable future.***

Regional Activities

Community Campus at the HUUB

In September of 2023 we began dedicating staff time to serve on the leadership team at the HUUB. The HUUB, founded in 2015, is an anchor institution in Orange building on the 135-year legacy of its founder, Orange's Unitarian Universalist congregation. The HUUB cultivates neighboring and community connections by nurturing a community campus in Orange, NJ and welcoming organizations and individuals to their spaces. The HUUB is retrofitting its 135-year-old church buildings as a 21st century campus for these purposes. The HUUB works with partners to achieve the synergies of a community campus and maintain connections with the city's other anchor institutions.

The campus is activated by several nonprofit organizations. The University of Orange office is housed at the HUUB and many of our in-person programs take place on the community campus. The community campus is also home to LANBI Center for Humanities & Civics, the Laundry Workers Center, and the FAITH + WORKS Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Orange.

Many other organizations regularly use the spaces, including the NJ Abolitionist Reading Group and We've Got Friends, who support young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Programs and events at the Community Campus this past year included financial literacy workshops, health fairs and vaccination sites, graduation parties, workshops on labor organizing, placemaking events, movie screenings, urbanism convenings, ESL classes, legal clinics, community-led popular education and civics classes, repasts, sweet 16's, quinceñeras, photo shoots, fashion shows, and concerts.

Potlucks

We have collaborated with the HUUB on the Building Solidarity Potluck Series since the program's inception in 2016. Potlucks are held monthly in the HUUB's Parish Hall to break bread with friends and neighbors. As our networks expand, new faces join us each month. In 2024, potluck themes and celebrations included Black History Month, Ramadan, Community Seder, the Thomas Edison Film Festival, UofO Graduation, and Harvest Festival.

National and International Activities

Consulting / Workshops

We led restoration urbanism workshops for the Fannie E. Rippel Foundation for their ReThinkers Collaborative and Rethink Health Toolkit initiatives connecting us with a national group of leaders in health. We also led a webinar sponsored by Kresge Foundation and Next City entitled "Reckoning with Root Shock: How Understanding Urban Renewal Prepares Us for This Moment" with Dr. Mindy Fullilove, Terri Baltimore from the Hill District in Pittsburgh, PA, and Evelyn Burnett from the Third Space Action Lab in Cleveland, OH.

For the second year in a row we partnered with an anthropology class at Montclair State University led by Dr. Julian Brash. The students explored themes related to land use and real estate development in Orange. We led the students on a tour of the Heart of Orange and consulted with them as they developed their research projects.

Root Shock 20

Twenty years ago, in her book *Root Shock*, Dr. Mindy Fullilove (UofO co-founder) prophesied that displacement would be the problem the 21st century must solve. Because of the situation we're in now – with complex intersecting problems, such as climate change, financialization of housing, post-pandemic adjustment, war and migration crises – we are, indeed, seeing displacement all around us. As Dr. Fullilove showed in her book, displacement leaves people stressed, angry, depressed, frightened, confused, and concerned. This is what she called “root shock,” the traumatic stress reaction to the destruction of all or part of one's emotional ecosystem. We believe that, because of the scale of the intersecting problems, massive upheaval is causing WORLDWIDE root shock. On the 20th anniversary of its publication, we revisited the book and the story it tells of 1950s urban renewal that bulldozed African American neighborhoods in hundreds of US cities. Fullilove's analysis holds lessons for this precarious moment in world history.

There are always lessons in these types of gatherings. One such lesson for us who experienced Root Shock 20 in person is that we need to prepare ourselves and our world for the impending onslaught of more serial displacement and forced migration. However, with twenty years of learning on our side, we can Hope Like The Sun, to rise up in joyful love and resistance to build healthier communities.
-- Dominic Moulden

Root Shock 20 Activities

Editing a Special Issue of a Journal

We produced a special issue of the journal *Built Environment*. This journal is published in Britain and reaches an international audience. We decided to ask scholars in Ireland to join us in writing papers on root shock. The issue features 14 papers from scholars, activists, journalists and others. Mary Bishop, whose work in Roanoke inspired Mindy Fullilove’s study, wrote a retrospective on the experience of her city. The special issue was published in June 2024, coinciding with the celebration.

Commissioning an Original Piece of Music

We commissioned Dr. Margaux Simmons, a renowned composer and musician, to create a piece of music for the anniversary. She debuted her piece *Home* on June 8th at our event, *Carrying the Message*.

Curating an Exhibit

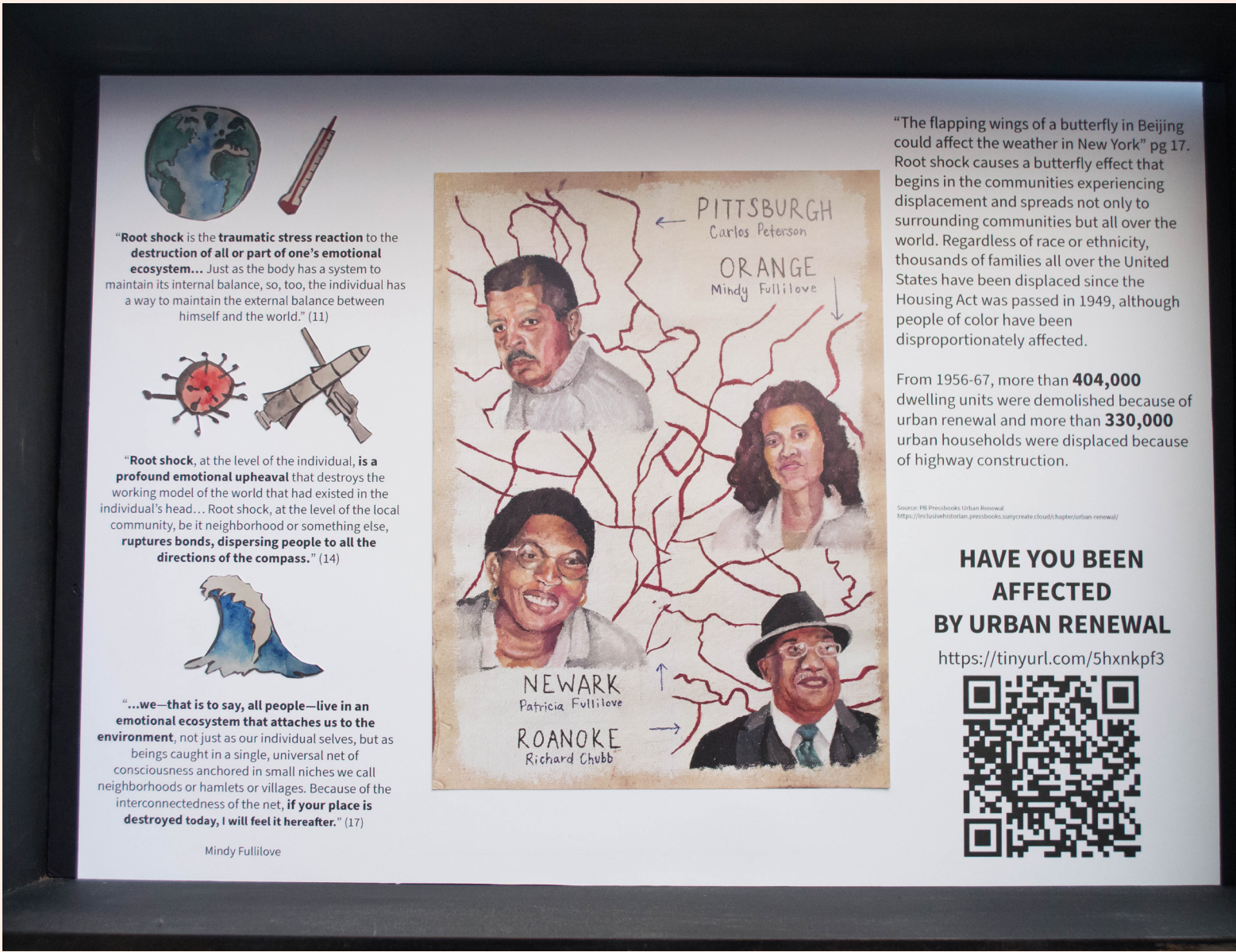
Mindy Fullilove’s students at the New School did a deep reading of *Root Shock* and curated an exhibit about the book at the Orange Public Library. This was a special place for the exhibit because the Orange Public Library is Dr. Fullilove’s childhood library and where she developed her love of reading and research.



Events

We worked with our teams to plan a series of events. We kept in mind the many ways we could engage people and the lesson that we must develop our gatherings using our principles of Collective Recovery in acknowledgement of the collective trauma associated with root shock.

Events included our online symposium, an exhibit opening at the Orange Public Library, and *Carrying the Message*, an afternoon of readings, reflections, film, live music, and great local food. The events convened organizers, researchers, and community leaders from NJ, NY, MD, NC, MA, Ireland, and more.



World Fellowship Residency

Since 2013, University of Orange has had a residency every summer at the World Fellowship Center in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. In 2024 our group included Molly Rose Kaufman, Doug Farrand, Margaux Simmons, Holly Barszcz, Cesar Presa, Ray Sykes, Janis Blumgart, Mindy Fullilove and Reinita Persaud. We offered workshops, spent time in nature, and spent time visioning about our organization. We recommitted to our core values and programming and discussed why our work is meaningful in this moment. Mindy led us in a generative activity where we reflected on ways we can “make a mark,” that is, create something that expresses our values in the public space.



Looking Ahead

In the year ahead we are committed to working with you all on the question: *what do we need to be learning together to protect each other and our places?* Now more than ever we know that we cannot retreat into our smaller spheres. We must grow our communities and networks and tend to the spaces where we can learn, create, and express our solidarity with all people and things. We will be continuing to offer our community courses, grow our Planning To Stay coalition and develop Music City. We will also continue to teach and share about Root Shock and Collective Recovery so that we can support our partners around the world in the activities of naming the moment and developing magic strategies. Magic strategies acknowledge that there is no ‘silver bullet’ to solve our problems and rather we need to work at multiple levels of scale simultaneously. Our work in Orange constantly reinforces this message for us as we stay rooted in place but connected to many networks.

UofO Teams

All of this work is managed by a set of teams: Administration, Urbanism, Music City, Collective Recovery, Grant Club, and Board of Directors. The teams meet regularly to develop and carry out work plans, to participate in fundraising, and to connect the team activities to the larger UofO community. UofO staff provide core support to the teams and are joined by a network of volunteers.

Thank you to our 2024 funders and sponsors:

Funders & Partners

CULTURE AND COMMUNITY POWER FUND
KRESGE FOUNDATION
CALLAHAN-DEE FOUNDATION
GERALDINE R. DODGE FOUNDATION
FANNIE E RIPPEL FOUNDATION
PRINCETON AREA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
ESSEX COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS
MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY
ORANGE ORPHAN SOCIETY
THE 1772 FOUNDATION

Sponsors



SUSAN BLAUSTEIN



NANCY HOVING

And with great appreciation for all of our individual supporters, like you!

INDIVIDUALS \$500+

STEPHEN & LYDIA FARRAND
ANGELINE GERDYMAN
FERAS NAMOUZ
DAVID RODERICK SMITH
DR. MINDY FULLILOVE
JOSEPH HUBER
ROCCO GIANNETTI
PORTER JAMES
MIA WHITE
FRANK BARSZCZ
DAVID CHAPIN
SHARON FORDE
EVA-LYNNE GREENE
EDGAR RIVERA COLON
PETTER LEWIS
TOM HANCHETT & CAROL SAWYER

| Local and Regional Activities | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Community Courses | Sewing 101 Civics 101 Dharma Yoga Stone Seal Carving Monuments and Sculptures of Orange “What’s the Story?” Memoir Writing |
| Music City | Music City Festival Remembering Rosa Concert The Wind Down Concert Series Steel Pan Band - Performances and Weekly Classes Community Concerts for Peace and Love Trini Holiday Party Cultural Organizing Workshop |
| Planning to Stay | Held 3rd P2S Summit Launched Civics class Attended and documented city meetings Collaborated in the community response to a proposed ‘transformative’ development project Platform guided question selection for Mayoral Debate |
| Building the Community Campus | Held monthly Solidarity Potlucks at The HUUB Welcomed partners to use our office for meeting space Expanded and activated instrument library |

| National and International Activities | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Root Shock 20 | Library Exhibit Online Symposium Carrying the Message Gathering Special issue of Built Environment Journal |
| Consulting/Workshops | Consulted with MSU anthropology students Kresge and Next City “Root Shock and Restoration” Webinar Rippel ReThinkers Collaborative and Rethink Health Toolkit Workshops |
| World Fellowship Residency | Offered activities in WFC program Retreat for UofO Team |
| Reading Groups | <i>The Long Haul</i> , Myles Horton <i>The Path</i> , Michael Puett and Christine Gross-Loh |

| Selected Media and Event Recordings | |
|--|--|
| University of Orange Has Lots to Offer | Record Transcript |
| Looking Back: Root Shock at Twenty | National Trust for Historic Preservation |
| Root Shock 20 | Docomomo |
| Music City Festival ‘24 Unforgettably Orange | Yardbird Entertainment |
| Root Shock Twenty Years On: Displacement—Its Harms and Remedies | Built Environment special issue |
| Root Shock Twenty Years On: Displacement—Its Harms and Remedies [Highlights] | Virtual Symposium |



universityoforange.org
Instagram @uoforange