Catalyzing Social Change Through Music
2026 Accomplishments

13th Annual Springfield Jazz & Roots Festival

♦**6,000 diverse people** of all ages returned to the festival's original Court Square home in downtown Springfield July 9th-10th for:

- ➤**20 free performances of music of the African diaspora** on two stages
- ➤Fascinating **talks linking music to culture & social justice**
- ➤**Family art activities** & a participatory New Orleans-style second line parade
- ➤Largely BIPOC **local artisan and food/drink** vendors
- ➤**Local nonprofit** information tables



♦Music:

- ➤Big band, vintage, Afro-Cuban, & Gullah-inspired Afro-Caribbean jazz & East African groove-forward jazz fusion
- ➤Funk, bebop, motown, blues, R&B, soul, neo-soul, hip-hop, rock, & chamber pop
- ➤World music, tropical rhythms, Caribbean groove, and Latin



♦New this year, **Nadim's Dance Patio** was a 3rd music venue guaranteeing **dance music all day** long, plus hip-hop dance performances and Latin dance lessons.

♦Another highlight was All the Rivers, an ensemble of **immigrant and refugee musicians from 10 nations** playing global **music in 6 languages**.

"The vibe is absolutely beautiful."

"This is just fantastic, and it's just what Springfield and the area needs."

~Attendees

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Local & Student Artists

♦The 134 artists included:

- ➤**54 nationally acclaimed artists** who drew audiences from near & far
- ➤**42 local artists paid to perform** for thousands & expand their following
- ➤**30 local youth musicians** who got to perform onstage
- ➤**8 local visual artists** who led family arts activities

Jazz & Justice Series

♦105 people joined **a Latin dance lesson** and fascinating talks on:

- ➤**Afro-Cuban jazz & bebop**
- ➤**Migration**, memory, & belonging
- ➤**Gullah culture** and history

♦A festival artist gave a pre-event workshop on **East and West African instruments, rhythms, and storytelling** for 30 middle and high school students at the Community Music School of Springfield

"So heartwarming and created so much genuine connection."

"Amazing! Love it when culture, history & music are seen and experienced as a whole!"

"So moved to hear these artists speak about what music means to them, how vital it is to their existence as immigrants/asylees in the US, and the power of music to build bridges of cultural understanding."

"I loved the discussion about the language of music and how it is universal. Hearing the common threads from people around the world was beautiful and hopeful."

~Jazz & Justice Attendees

Family Art Tent

♦In our art tent, **450+ children & adults:**

- ➤Decorated pieces of a **"Be Love" community puzzle**
- ➤Made **eco-friendly rings** with ribbons for dancing
- ➤Helped paint a **community mural** about **immigrant and diasporic experiences** to be erected on a **Springfield public housing building**
- ➤Of survey respondents, 95% rated their experience 4 or 5 out of 5 stars, and 90% 5 out of 5.



"Awesome! Engaging and inviting! First thing the kids were drawn to when we arrived."

"It was a lot of fun to enjoy the music while drawing and painting with the kiddos. We loved the environment too!"

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Supporting Local Businesses

♦The event brought **economic stimulus to local, largely BIPOC businesses:**

➤**45 paid local musicians & visual artists**.

➤Thousands of attendees made purchases from the **12 local artisans** and **10 local food/drink vendors**.

➤Vendors were **85% from Springfield** and **68% BIPOC**.

➤Vendors offered: handmade clothing and accessories, fragrances and skincare products, incense and incense holders, personalized gifts, vinyl records, henna and face painting, caricatures, and world cuisines for every diet.

➤Many attendees also stayed in hotels and enjoyed restaurants, bars, stores, and other businesses throughout the city.





Supporting Local Nonprofits

♦The event was a **platform for 11 local nonprofits** to reach thousands by leading arts activities, performing, hosting programming, staffing information tables, helping the festival stay green, and educating attendees.



"Loved the welcoming environment. Loved seeing a diverse group of people, especially black people, as a black American. Food and vendors were amazing!"

~Attendee



A Fabulous Time

♦Among random festival evaluation survey respondents, **100% would recommend the festival to friends and family,** and **100% want to return next year.**

"The people are nice and friendly. The atmosphere is always welcoming to everyone!"

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5th Annual Legacy Education Project

In All…



♦**8 public middle and high schools** in Springfield and Holyoke and an arts afterschool program in Springfield

♦**7 Resident artists**

♦**A 10-hour residency** for 29 students with a performance for 150 students

♦**19 single sessions** of 1-2.5 hours for 1,260+ students

♦**1,440+ students**

Residencies

➤**In a 10-hour residency**, 29 music students at Springfield Conservatory of the Arts studied the **history of blues music,** including its roots in displacement, struggle, and resilience, and explored regional styles that emerged over time. The students then **wrote their own blues songs** and **performed for 150 classmates**.

"He explained music to us like I have never heard before."

"The artist really made me change my point of view about music and helped me learn more."

~Students



➤In an hourlong workshop at Hope Center for the Arts, 50 students from Libertas Academy and the Hope Center for the Arts afterschool program learned about **New Orleans' jazz** and its cultural roots, as well as **life as a professional musician**.

➤In 6 hourlong sessions at Springfield Honors Academy, Central High, Holyoke High, and Hope Center for the Arts, 182 music students studied the **Afro-Caribbean and Latin foundations of jazz**, as well as life as a professional musician.

➤In 3 hourlong sessions at Veritas Middle & High Schools and Hope Center for the Arts, 160 students learned about **New Orleans music and culture**.

➤In 8 hourlong sessions, 660 6th-12th graders at Duggan Academy enjoyed storytelling, musical performance, music playing, and dialogue about **Ugandan culture** and themes of **environmental issues, migration, healing, and global empathy**.

➤In an hourlong session at Springfield's Central High, 20 percussion students learned **African talking drum rhythms and meanings**.



"Samite was very inspiring, sharing his journey from being a refugee out of his home country."

"His story really touched me because it's sad how we think that we are struggling but it all becomes the smallest thing when you look at situations like his."

~Students

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Impact

♦Educated students about **music of the African diaspora**, its **cultural roots**, and its use to build **personal and community resilience** and effect **social change**.

♦Helped **correct white-centric education** and **make school more enjoyable**

♦**Inspired students' musical creativity** and **connected them with their heritage** or taught them about other cultures

♦**Filmed sessions** with all of the artists **to make an online** version of the program and **increase access** for teachers and students





"The artist taught me a lot about how impactful and inspiring blues is. He helped me understand the use of blues and why it's so important in Black history."

"Now when I think of blues, I think it's a book of colored people or Blacks who project that feeling of oppression through the music."

~Students

"I think it will help me evolve as an artist and in my songwriting skills."

~Student

"The way that he can just play music and make up words that come together in perfect harmony was absolutely amazing."

~Student



Evaluation Results

♦In evaluation surveys, students said the residencies deepened their understanding of:

➤**Black music** (83%)
➤**Black culture** (78%)
➤**Black history** (74%)
➤How **music and other arts are tools for healing, resilience, & social change** (78%)
➤How the history of movements against oppression can **inform & strengthen those movements today** (74%)

"This session was inspirational, making me question life itself through lens of music that I didn't even think to consider about. As somebody who sits and thinks, this opened my eyes to further think deep about life itself and our peoples' histories."

"The musician had me question myself on forgiving the unforgivable and how the world ends once humans have stopped feeling/being empathetic to everything and everyone around us."

~Students

"I wouldnt add or change anything to this program. In my opinion it is perfect just as is."

~Student

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Arts for Racial & Climate Justice

Beyond the Storm

We are developing our 2nd documentary film, 30 minutes on the **large Springfield & Holyoke Puerto Rican community's resilience in the face of climate injustice** in Puerto Rico and MA.



- It shares **stories of 5 Puerto Rican women:**
  - Facing **Hurricane Maria** & its aftermath in Puerto Rico
  - **Migrating** to Holyoke or Springfield
  - In Puerto Rico & MA, nurturing **resilience through culture with traditional dance and farming**
  - Coping with & teaching youth about local environmental justice issues like **poor air quality from pollution** (which once made Springfield Asthma Capital of the US) and **flooding from climate change overrunning sewers and polluting the river**
- We also filmed interviews with 2 city public officials to be used as supplements on the film website

"I left Puerto Rico because of climate change. And then I'm here living the same situation with my daughter, but I don't know where to move. I'm battling the big problem of climate change and all these wildfires and stuff that affects my daughter's health."

"To help climate change definitely, we need to plant more. We need to teach our children about growing vegetables, about growing their own things."

~Priscilla Rivera, Holyoke community volunteer, featured interviewee



"It's a music of strength. It's a music of resilience. It's a music of just letting our voices be known."

"We are combining together, bringing up our culture, our traditions, and we are sharing it as a community. For me, that's healing."

~Brendaliz Cepeda, bomba dancer, Springfield resident, featured interviewee

Culturally Congruent Film Contributors

- Of 7 interviewees, 8 advisors, & our 8-member film team:
  - **Puerto Ricans**: interviewees 100%, advisors 63%, film team 50%
  - **Living in Holyoke or Springfield**: interviewees 86%, advisors 100%, film team 75%
  - **Working in Holyoke or Springfield**: interviewees 100%, advisors 100%, film team 75%
  - Gender: interviewees 71% women, 14% nonbinary, 14% men; advisors 63% women, 37% men; film team 50% women, 50% men

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Documentary Expertise

♦Experts from the following city agencies and nonprofits contributed to the film:

- ➤Bomba de Aqui, **traditional Puerto Rican dance troupe** based in Springfield
- ➤Nueva Esperanza, Holyoke **Puerto Rican & Afro-Caribbean community development** organization
- ➤Pa'lante Transformative Justice, **Holyoke Puerto Rican youth** organization
- ➤Nuestras Raices, **Holyoke Puerto Rican culture, agriculture, & food security** organization
- ➤**Holyoke Public Media**
- ➤City of **Holyoke:** Conservation & **Sustainability** Department Department of **Economic Development** Municipal **Vulnerability** Program
- ➤**Holyoke Public Schools**: Holyoke High School Sullivan Middle School
- ➤Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, **regional planning** agency
- ➤**Health Resources** in Action, state public health organization
- ➤MassDevelopment, state development agency
- ➤Mass in Motion, state agency for healthy eating & active living

"I know that I'm one of many that are making small changes with what I can every day."

"A lot of that is going back to my roots and being able to save seeds if I can, be able to share that with others and go back to those practices."

~Cynthia Feliciano, public health expert, Holyoke resident, featured interviewee



"Climate change has become really personal in my life because it changed my life."

"The program of Daybrook gave me the opportunity to make [my students] conscious that catastrophes and climate change—it's real, it's happening,and we can do something."

~Maria Negroni, Holyoke middle school teacher, featured interviewee

So Far, We Have:

♦Interviewed 19 community members

♦Filmed 7 in-depth interviews

♦Had interviewees help edit their sections

♦Hosted a rough-cut screening to gather input from 12 community members

♦The film is now in post-production; we are working on B-roll, editing, translation/captioning, and music



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Blues to Green Updates

This Political Climate Needs Arts for Change!

Many now see the arts as unimportant, with US culture so divisive, and the government **cutting funding to basic needs programs**.



Through art and community, we celebrate our connections and our differences, nurture our values and our resilience, and cultivate an anti-racism culture.

Actually, the arts are now even *more* important.
Why? The arts are a powerful tool to:

♦**Convene diverse people** to share good times, empathize with one another's perspectives expressed in art, and **see us all as equally human**.

♦**Engage people to *enjoy*** learning about and supporting **different perspectives, cultures, and causes** – especially Black culture, when anti-Black racism is rising.

♦**RESIST intentional efforts to drive US culture away from multiculturalism and deeper into racism.**

♦Create spaces for shared joy, human connection, and rich cultural experiences that **NURTURE personal and community RESILIENCE.**



This Political Climate Harms Fundraising

♦**Blues to Green has always been a small nonprofit, with very few funding opportunities** for the innovative arts for change work we do.

♦Our work is run by only:
- ➤**1 full-time staffer** (Founder/Executie Director)
- ➤**2 consultants** (grants & communications)
- ➤**Seasonal contractors for programming**

♦We support our programming through tireless work soliciting a few small project grants and many little festival sponsorships from local businesses.

Most funds come shortly before the festival and must be stretched across the year.

♦Our high-caliber festival leads people to assume high funding – actually **we are simply skilled at doing a lot at low cost.**

♦**While our work is needed now more than ever**, like most nonprofits, **we are losing funding**:
- ➤The City of Springfield slashed their funding for us due to their own federal funding losses.
- ➤Federally funded arts agencies have cut support.
- ➤Many donors and sponsors have less to give.

For a small nonprofit like us, **EVERY DOLLAR COUNTS**, especially in these hard times.
Will you donate to support art for social change when our nation needs it most?

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Introducing…
the Blues to Green Jazz Club!
A new way for fans to support us year-round and enjoy extra perks as part of the Blues to Green family

Members receive:

♦Access to the new **Jazz Club Lounge at the Springfield Jazz & Roots Festival,** a comfortable space to:
- ➤Socialize with fellow members
- ➤Connect with the Blues to Green team
- ➤**Meet the festival musicians**

♦Behind-the-scenes VIP festival experiences, including **backstage access**

♦**Special events** throughout the year featuring **intimate performances**, **conversations with musicians**, and unique cultural experiences

♦Membership in **a warm community** of diverse artists, music lovers, and community social change leaders

Membership levels from $250-$1,000+.
Learn more at:
springfieldjazzfest.com/#jazz-club



Take Me to the River pre-event Jazz Club Reception

♦*CENTER: Jazz legend Cyril Neville, brother & bandmate of the late Charles Neville, Blues to Green's inspiration*

♦*2ND FROM LEFT: Blues to Green Executive Director Kristin Neville, Charles' widow*

♦*OTHERS: Springfield community leaders on the Blues to Green Board of Directors*

♦*BACKGROUND: Jazz Club members socializing with musicians and Blues to Green Board Members*



Jazz Club perks will grow as membership does – come be a founding member to start the unforgettable experiences now and support us to expand them and create social change through the arts!

Take Me to the River – 1st Jazz Club Special Event

♦In early 2026, we brought Springfield **Mardi Gras Indian tradition, funk, R&B, brass-band fire, and soul** with a rare New Orleans all-star ensemble inspired by the award-winning documentary and album *Take Me to the River:*
- ➤Grammy-winning director Martin Shore
- ➤Mardi Gras Indian Big Chief Bo Dollis Jr
- ➤The legendary Cyril Neville of The Neville Brothers
- ➤Ian & Omari Neville carrying on their family lineage
- ➤Jelly Joseph's powerful vocals
- ➤Deep groove from Brian Richburg, Joe Ashlar, & Robert Mercurio

♦Co-hosted by Hope Center for the Arts, it drew **a packed house of 500**, and its tickets fully covered the costs.

♦**Blues to Green Jazz Club** members received **VIP seating** and a pre-show reception to **shmooze with the artists** and the Blues to Green staff and board.

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