



2020 ANNUAL REPORT



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



Friends,

It's been a wild season: a global pandemic that brought the failings of our food system into sharp relief; a national reckoning with anti-black racism and structural violence; and wildfires that ripped through many of the California farmscapes that raised me.

It's also been the year that I've felt the resonance, and the privilege, of our work at DCF most deeply. On the farm this summer, with birds chirping diligently and the early morning light falling on the fields just so, there were moments when the world seemed as it had been. For those of us able to stay on-farm at DCF, the solidity of this work, of being outside together and growing good food for others, offered moments of refuge from the turmoil of injustice and pandemic.

At the same time, these forces are undeniably with us here. We've been working with less than half of our usual student crew and we've missed the hundreds of volunteers who join us in a "normal" year. Everything we harvested this season went to Durham residents experiencing food insecurity, and the number of these households continues to grow at an alarming rate due to COVID-19. The soil we work with and on at DCF is embedded in a longer, darker history, once part of a plantation that enslaved at least thirty-six people. This is a legacy we've been working to understand and to repair.

A campus farm like ours is uniquely positioned to help respond to what 2020 has brought, and to seed critical conversations on the systems, and the states of mind and heart, that uphold and dismantle inequity in our food system and beyond. This is an incredibly important time to be talking about - and reworking - the ways we cultivate, access, value and think about food. I hope you'll join us in this conversation while we wait to safely welcome you back into the field.

Take good care,

SASKIA CORNES

Program Director

OUR COVID-19 RESPONSE

5,458
lbs of produce
donated

Just as spring planting was gathering steam, Duke's campus shut down, part of a university-wide response to COVID-19. With our CSA pick-up points closed to the public, farm neighbors scrambling to make up lost revenue, rationing in Durham grocery stores, and news of hardship for agricultural workers, we decided to redirect everything we grew this season to food-insecure households in Durham. We would never have been able to do this without [Root Causes](#), a Duke Medical Student-led organization working to address the social determinants of health.

Click [here](#) to learn more about our partnership with Root Causes from DCF crew member and dedicated Root Causes volunteer Floey Zhao (pictured bottom right).



"I was a DCF volunteer before I even heard of Root Causes, and at that time, I hadn't given much thought about how the food system ties to health. I hear from patients of our program how DCF's produce brings stability into their home lives, how they're inspired to try new recipes, and how they've come to appreciate the close relationship between food and health."

Jason Lee, Root Causes Fresh Produce Program Manager, Duke '20



"Producing food amidst a global pandemic heightened our team's awareness of the joy and comfort we receive through our daily work. During a time of widespread isolation, our relationship with Root Causes blossomed. What was once a strong, but tertiary partnership evolved to an intimate operation in solidarity."

Leslie Wolverton, DCF Field Education Manager



WORKING TOWARD EQUITY IN THE CLASSROOM, FIELD, AND FOOD SYSTEM

117
student
visitors

In addition to supporting direct service programming through produce donations, we supported Root Causes's community-based research through the Bass Connections course, [Improving Food Security to Increase Resiliency to COVID-19 in Latinx Populations](#). Bass Connections students visited DCF to learn first-hand where and how some of the produce they distribute is grown.



This year's iteration of "Environment in Literature, Law, and Science," a class co-taught by Program Director Saskia Cornes with Prof. of Soils Dan Richter and Prof. of English Priscilla Wald, deepened its focus on environmental justice through a hands-on investigation of the urban lead in Durham's soils and its racialized legacies. Students made two socially-distant visits to the farm, and found creative ways to virtually work together.

Scroll through one team's investigation of Durham's darker agricultural histories [here](#), and listen to a podcast featuring present-day Durham growers [here](#).

RESILIENCE CORPS

45

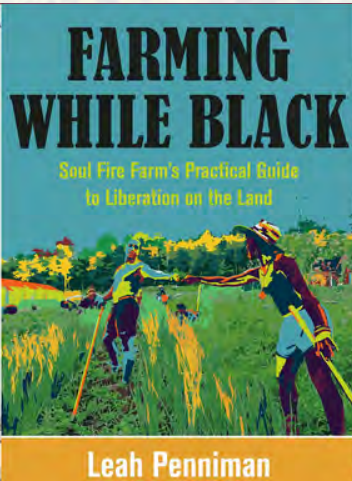
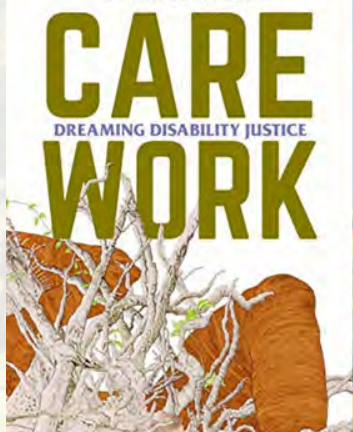
Co-Learning Lab
Participants

This year, we've been thrilled to welcome Durham-raised Abijah Gattis as DCF's first-ever Resilience Corps North Carolina Member. As our Environmental and Food Justice Associate, Abijah deepens our partnership and impact with Root Causes as the organization's communications lead; researches DCF's indigenous and plantation histories; and designed, launched, and now runs DCF's Co-Learning Labs. Abijah's creativity, love of literature, dynamic design sense, and generative research make our team much stronger.

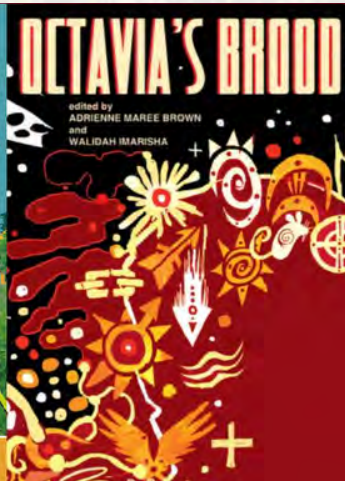
Resilience Corps NC is a partnership between the Conservation Trust for North Carolina and the NC Commission on Volunteerism through a grant provided for by the federal agency AmeriCorps.



LEAH LAKSHMI PIEPZNA-SAMARASINHA
READ BY THE AUTHOR



Leah Penniman



In fall 2020, DCF launched Co-Learning Lab, a digital discussion space, open to the general public, with a popular education bent. Using written and visual media, we explored how imperialism, gentrification, and disability intersect with food systems concepts, and with white supremacy culture.

See all Fall Labs' readings [here](#).

OPPORTUNITIES IN A CHALLENGING SEASON

165
bouquets
donated

As part of our first year-long partnership with the Penny Pilgram George Women's Leadership Initiative, eight undergraduate women inspired wellness and connection around Duke and Durham.

The group harvested, assembled and distributed 165 bright bouquets to Croasdaile Retirement Village, teachers at E.K. Powe Elementary School and Club Boulevard Elementary School, The Duke Women's Center, student writers at HerCampus and The Bridge publications, and Campus Crusades' Women in Religion Retreat.



"The physical act of harvesting flowers, trimming them, and creating and delivering bouquets has been a very healing and restoring act for me. I have never felt more centered and present with myself and have felt the impact of the farm on my mental and even physical health."

PPG Participant



COVID has also brought some unexpected windfalls: hundreds of pollinator plants donated by the Duke Biology Greenhouses, and Cici Stevens, reassigned to us from the Executive Vice President's office during the campus shutdown. Cici brought her artistry to the expansion of our pollinator garden and countless site improvements; she has been a bright spark on the farm from day one.

To do our part to slow the spread of COVID-19, we suspended all community workdays and were only able to welcome a handful of volunteers. Student crew used the time they might have spent facilitating workdays on independent projects around the farm, including a new fruit tree orchard donated and installed by Paul Noah, and DCF's first hugelkultur beds, an effort spearheaded by Garrett Corwin (pictured right).

See this soil-building technique in action [here](#), learn more about this project [here](#), and hear from crew member Avery Davis Lamb (pictured bottom left) about the student crew experience [here](#).



At DCF we usually grow things that go from seed to harvest in a matter of weeks or months. As a Forestry student, I've gotten used to thinking about growth and cultivation on a much longer timescale, which is why I thought it would be nice to invest in some food producing trees for the farm. I imagine these saplings growing into healthy, prolific fruit bearing trees and bringing continuous joy to the farm crew. That feels to me like a great way to give back to this amazing place, even after I'm no longer at Duke.

Paul Noah, Student Crew Member, MEM & MF 21

GROWING NEW GENERATIONS OF FOOD SYSTEMS LEADERS

10 years

This year marks DCF's 10 Year Anniversary. While we haven't been able to celebrate in person, we took this moment to reach out to all 56 of our farm crew alumni to ask how the farm impacted their time at Duke, their career choices, and their self-understanding. Whether working as agricultural lawyers, assistant farm managers, corporate food sustainability professionals or simply bringing an awareness of food sustainability into their day-to-day lives, crew alum have felt the farm's positive impact. Looking ahead, we hope to expand these conversations to dedicated student and community volunteers.

See more snapshots of farm crew alumni interviews [here](#) and a light-hearted celebration of our most recent crop of graduates [here](#).



"Whenever possible, I prioritize finding that same energy I found at the farm: people who center racial equity and value trust, honesty, authenticity, understanding, intersectionality, constant learning, and accountability."

Nathalie Kauz, Public Policy '18



"The conversation and camaraderie fostered by working together outside in/with the soil is qualitatively deeper and richer than those offered by many other institutional, vocational, or social situations. It is as though you grow, like a plant, right beside your fellow crew members such that, after a span of time, you are entangled in ways that you hadn't intended nor noticed."

Jonah Bissell, Master of Theological Studies '20

THANK YOU!

We're moving into a crucial, but COVID-protracted part of our planned expansion on Central Campus – applying for municipal rezoning, a process currently estimated to take 12-18 months. This new phase for our project would not have been possible without the support of Tallman Trask, who took a chance on an out-of-left-field student proposal a decade ago and never looked back. We're grateful to him and to his late wife Julie for their stalwart support, and hope the farm will remain a positive tribute to his 25 years as Duke's Executive Vice President.

We work hard to offer tangible and visible evidence that a restorative relationship to our land is possible, and to spark new conversations about food and food systems. Your generosity is essential to sustaining our momentum and helping us grow.

We welcome financial gifts on our website [here](#).



"In the midst of this pandemic, volunteering at Duke Campus Farm was a safe outdoor space to be in community with others. The farm is full of quality people, healthy crops, and a learning atmosphere."

- Brooke Reardon, MDIV '22 (pictured second from the left)

A big thank you to Artist Jennifer Wood and ENV201 students for designing and creating a new teaching tool and visual display for the future DCF Central Campus site. View more photos of the mural [here](#).

STAFF

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Office of the Executive Vice President

Office of the Provost

Sustainable Duke

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David L. Paletz Foundation

Devonwood Foundation

Luce Foundation

IN-KIND SUPPORT

Cici Stevens

Duke Biology Greenhouses

Durham County Beekeepers' Association

Jennifer Zhou

Kathy Merritt & Family

Rich Pirog and the Wallace Foundation's

Food Systems Leadership Network

Sierra Winters

