

JENNIFER R. BLANKS

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RESEARCH INTERESTS

My dissertation is at the intersection of preservation planning and disaster management of cultural resources to identify where I apply geo-ethnographic approaches to identify anthropogenic and anthropocentric threats impacting the existence of Black cemeteries. I believe that using participatory action research, exceptionally non-professionally trained cemetery stewards and volunteers can increase the protection and presence of historic cemeteries in the wake of multi-hazards such as climatic disasters, development/encroachment, and the ability to provide perpetual care.

EDUCATION

- Fall 2023** **Urban and Regional Science, Ph.D Candidate**
Certificate: Digital Humanities
Texas A&M University Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning
Title: (in)Visible Hazards Disrupting Preservation: A Geo-Ethnographic Approach to Examine Threats Impacting Black Experiences in Black Cemeteries
- 2017** **Master of Science Environmental Science**
Jackson State University
Title: Mapping seagrass using Landsat 8: A case study in the Pascagoula River Basin
- 2015** **Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science**
Certificate: Environmental Management
Northern Arizona University

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- 2022-2023** Graduate Assistant, Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning, Texas A&M University, College of Architecture. Course: Landscape Architecture Writing Intensive Course
- 2019-2022** Graduate Assistant, Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning, Texas A&M University, College of Architecture. Course: Cultural and Social Issues in the Natural and Built Environment and Building Better Cities
- 2018-19** Graduate Teaching Assistant, Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning, Texas A&M University, College of Architecture. Course: Building Better Cities Writing Intensive

2017 Graduate Teaching Assistant, Department of Biology, Jackson State University, College of Science, Engineering, and Technology (CSET). Course: Introduction to Biology Lab

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Bill Anderson Fund (BAF) August 2018 – Present

Executive Student Council Board Member

- Contributed to recorded breaking Disaster Dash 5k Fundraiser (\$20,000+ in donations)
- Ability to manage multiple tasks related to each student committee
- Participate actively in executive student council meetings, serving as an effective representative of BAF fellows
- Upward mobility within the executive student council by serving as Vice Chair 22-23 academic year
- Coordinate and plan travel logistics for fellows' annual workshops
- Maintain the relationship between active fellows and BAF alumni as Vice Chair
- Emotional development due to working with diverse perspectives and interdisciplinary

Brazos Valley African American Museum October 2022 - Present

Internship

Museum Curation

- Identify cultural heritage organizations for engagement
- Curate museum exhibits
- Host events at the museum
- Influential in developing and curating museum exhibits, including the Black Veterans Day and Canaan Cemetery exhibitions.
- Assist with developing marketing and promotional campaigns for special events and educational programs.
- Remain abreast of applicable laws, ethics, and museum management and operations regulations

The Texas Freedom Colonies Project August 2019 – August 2022

Research and Project Assistant

- Identify cultural heritage site risk management tools and policies to create the Texas African American Cemetery Registry
- Geodatabase management assistant for the Texas Freedom Colonies Project Atlas
- Manage crowdsource geospatial collection tools
- Work alongside diverse stakeholder groups such as community groups, state policymakers, policymakers, non-profit groups
- Conduct internal research and contribute to multiple projects within the organization.
- Host interactive workshops to train preservationists, planners, and non-professionals on various archival management best practices
- Present relevant research updates, demonstrations, and presentations to the general public

- Manage a portfolio of client projects to deliver strategic planning, technical assistance, meeting facilitation, and partnership development, research and analysis, grantmaking, and other services as requested.
- Visit African American cultural heritage sites to participate in co-planning activities with stakeholders

USGS HayWired Project

July 2021-October 2021

Virtual Internship

BAF Representative for HayWired Earthquake Scenario System

- Identify cultural heritage organizations for engagement
- Interview partner organizations
- Create a participatory disaster scenario tool

ESRI

June 2020-September 2020

Redlands, California

ArcGIS Analyst Intern for Health and Public Safety Professional Services

- Support solutions to market of Esri products
- Services team to support COVID-19 relief via Esri products, such as improving contact tracing, volunteer management, and laying out hospital beds
- Racial equality task force within the Esri network

ESRI

May 2019-August 2019

Redlands, California

ArcGIS Analyst Intern for Local and State Government Professional Services

- Create a digital Local Profile Hub website for Long Beach, California
- Learn innovative ESRI software and apply it to specific government projects
- Test beta products to identify software malfunctions
- Develop a training plan and practical application techniques of the software our clients will use, ranging from basic demos to advance in-person training sessions

Shaanxi Normal University

May 2016-June 2016

Xi'an, China

Study Abroad: Department of Environmental Science

- Shadow University lab peers during their lab operations
- Assisted with soil analysis.
- Peers also introduced students abroad to Chinese culture via history seminars on campus.

USDA Forest Service

June 2016-August 2016; October 2013-December 2015

Field and Lab Technician

Rocky Mountain Research Station Flagstaff, Arizona

Project title: Mapping regeneration patterns of Pinus Ponderosa in Northern Arizona following high severity fires

- Collect GPS coordinates of Pinus ponderosa using GIS technology in 100m x 100m plots by physically hiking and camping in mountainous, rugged climates.

- Served as a GIS expert in the field amongst student peers in the absence of lab supervisors.
- Regularly monitored greenhouse experiments in regenerating *Pinus ponderosa* seedlings collected during field data trips.
- Prepared soil samples to test total carbon and nitrogen levels using Elemental Analyzer, EA.
- Routinely monitored lab supplies and cleaned the lab following the end of the workday.

SKILLS

- Novice skillset in using R Studio
- Moderate skillset in using STATA
- Remote sensing (ERDAS Imagine) process and analysis
- Geodatabase management
- Intermediate skill set in using Geographic Information Systems (GIS/ArcGIS Map/ArcGIS Pro)
- Ethnographic data management
- Facilitate focus groups and workshop
- Maintain relationships with community partners and stakeholders
- Fundraising
- Interpersonal and leadership skills (supervises junior researchers)
- Written and oral communication
- Project management and organization
- Archaeological Surveys
- Continuous Process Improvement
- Grant management
- Technical and critical writing skills
- Grant writing
- Regulatory compliance

WORKSHOPS AND CONFERENCES

Urban Affairs Association (UAA) Nashville, Tennessee	April 2023
PRIMIR Conference Prairie View A&M University, Prairie View, Texas	March 2023
Arizona State University Bill Anderson Fund Workshop <i>Tempe, Arizona</i>	October 2022
Association for the study of African American Life and History Conference <i>Montgomery, Alabama</i>	September 2022
Aya Symposium	May 2022

Dallas, Texas

American Association of Geographers Annual Conference <i>Virtual</i>	February 2022
Texas Historical Commission Real Places Conference <i>Austin, Texas</i>	January 2022
ACSP Annual Conference PhD Dissertation Workshop <i>Virtual Conference</i>	October 2021
46 th Annual Natural Hazards Research and Applications Workshop <i>Virtual conference hosted by University of Colorado- Boulder; Broomfield, CO</i>	July 2021
45 th Annual Natural Hazards Research and Applications Workshop <i>Virtual conference hosted by University of Colorado- Boulder; Broomfield, CO</i>	July 2020
Resilience Rising: Research and Practice on Harvey and Hazards of the Future <i>Texas A&M University; College Station, TX</i>	September 2019
44 th Annual Natural Hazards Research and Applications Workshop <i>University of Colorado- Boulder; Broomfield, CO</i>	July 2019
ESRI User Conference <i>San Diego, CA</i>	July 2019
Texas A&M University (BAF) Workshop <i>Bill Anderson Fund Fellow; College Station, TX</i>	April 2019
University of Delaware 3.0 (BAF) Workshop <i>Bill Anderson Fund Fellow; Newark, DE</i>	October 2018
Texas A&M University (BAF) Workshop <i>Bill Anderson Fund Fellow; College Station, TX</i>	April 2018
International Symposium on Recent Advances in Environmental Health <i>Jackson State University; Jackson, MS</i>	September 2017
Emerging Researchers National Conference of Science <i>Washington, D.C.</i>	March 2017
Mississippi Academy of Science <i>University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS</i>	February 2017

International Symposium on Nano-environment Science and Health Conference May 2016
Shaanxi Normal University, Xi'an, China

International Symposium on Recent Advances in Environmental Health September 2016
Jackson State University; Jackson, MS

Environmental Sciences and Studies Senior Research Seminar December 2015
Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ

PRESENTATIONS

“Did you check on the cemetery?” A geospatial risk assessment of cemeteries in Southeast Louisiana PRIMIR Conference; Jennifer Blanks and Alex Abuabara

Jennifer Blanks and Valentina Auden “The Texas Freedom Colonies Project: Centering Black Communities in Planning and Historic Preservation” ICOMOS Panel presentation at Association for the study of African American Life and History September 2022

“Assisting Cemetery Stewards Reclaim, Maintain, and (Re)Imagine Memorial Landscapes”: Aya Symposium, Dallas, Texas May 2022

“Planners Advocating for the Deceased”: American Association of Geographers, Virtual February 2022

Dr. Andrea Roberts and **Jennifer Blanks** “The Critical Cultural Landscape Framework: Integrating Black Cemetery Preservation Into Public Planning: Sugar Land and African American History-Convict Leasing and its Legacies in Current Scholarship, Education, and Activism hosted by Rice University September 10, 2021.

“Preservation at the Intersections: Patterns of Disproportionate Multihazard Risk and Vulnerability in Louisiana's Historic African American Cemeteries”: 46th Annual Natural Hazards Research and Applications Workshop July 2021.

“Preservation at the Intersections: Patterns of Disproportionate Multihazard Risk and Vulnerability in Louisiana's Historic African American Cemeteries”: Dismantle Preservation Symposium July 2021.

Jennifer Blanks and Schuyler Carter, “The Texas Freedom Colonies Project”: The Real Places Conference hosted by Texas Historical Commission February 2021.

“Preservation at the Intersections: Patterns of Disproportionate Multihazard Risk and Vulnerability in Louisiana's Historic African American Cemeteries”: Disaster PRIMR Texas A&M University Hazard, Reduction, and Recovery Center, January 2021.

Schuyler Carter and **Jennifer Blanks**, “Preserving Black spaces through grassroots archives and cemeteries” Health, Hazards, and Harmony: The Future of the Built Environment Texas A&M University College of Architecture Symposium September 2020.

“Honoring our Ancestors: Burials Grounds, Cemeteries, and Final Resting Places” Speaker on Texas Freedom Colonies Project Coffee Talk August 2020.

“Cemetery management for natural disasters and preservation planning” Esri Black History Month Event at Esri Inc. Main campus in Redlands, California February 2020.

Jennifer Blanks and Dr. A. Roberts, “Impacts of chronic flooding on an African-American Cemetery: The case of Sweet Rest Cemetery in Tamina, Texas”, Resilience Rising: Research and Practice on Harvey and Hazards of the Future, September 2019.

Jennifer Blanks and Dr. A. Roberts, Impacts of chronic flooding on an African-American Cemetery: The case of Sweet Rest Cemetery in Tamina, Texas. Natural Hazards Research Workshop, University of Colorado, July 2019

Jennifer Blanks and Dr. A. Roberts, Temporal analysis of cemetery landcover in Tamina, Texas, Texas A&M University Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning faculty meeting, May 2019

Mapping seagrass using Landsat 8: A case study in Pascagoula River Basin. Mississippi, USA, 14th International Symposium on Recent Advances in Environmental Health Resources. Jackson, MS September 2017

Mapping the spatial density of seagrass using Landsat 8. Emerging Researchers National Conference of Science. Washington, D.C. March 2017

Mapping the spatial pattern of seagrass using Landsat 8. Mississippi Academy of Science, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS, February 2017

Mapping the spatial pattern of seagrass using Landsat 8. International Symposium on Nano-environment Science and Health Conference, Shaanxi Normal University, Xi’an, China, May 2016

“How does high severity fires affect regeneration patterns of Pinus ponderosa in Northern Arizona?” 13th International Symposium on Recent Advances in Environmental Health Resources. Jackson, MS September 2016

Jennifer Blanks, C. Smolenski, S. Stanfield, Dark Sky Meter: Measuring Night Sky Light Pollution in Flagstaff, AZ. Environmental Sciences and Studies Senior Research Seminar of Northern Arizona University, December 2015

NON-PEER REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS/REPORTS

Roberts, Andrea; **Blanks, Jennifer** (2022). TX Freedom Colonies Project's Plan to Preserve Endangered Historic Black Settlements & Cemeteries. Available electronically from <https://hdl.handle.net/1969.1/195850>.

Blanks, J. (2020). Facetime Funeral. Legacy: A William Averette Anderson Magazine. William Averette Anderson Fund (Vol. 2, Issue 1).

Semien, Joy, **Jennifer Blanks**, Antione Richards, Benika Dixon, and Lorita Daniels. (2019) Legacy: A William Averette Anderson Magazine. William Averette Anderson Fund. Volume 1 Issue 1.

Lorita Daniels, Semien, Joy, **Jennifer Blanks**, Antione Richards, and Akilah Alley. (2019). Southbridge Community Report. William Averette Anderson Fund. Volume 1, Issue 1.

PEER-REVIEWED UNDER REVIEW AND PENDING PUBLICATIONS

Blanks, J., Abuabara, A., (2024). "Did you check on the cemetery?" A geo-spatial risk assessment of cemeteries in Southeast Louisiana.

PEER-REVIEWED LITERATURE

Blanks, J., Abuabara, A., Roberts, A., & Semien, J. (2021). Preservation at the Intersections: Patterns of Disproportionate Multihazard Risk and Vulnerability in Louisiana's Historic African American Cemeteries. *Environmental Justice*, 14(1), 1-13.

Roberts, R., Aduen, V. **Blanks, J.**, Carter, S., Girault, K. January (2023). Digital Juneteenth: Territorializing the Freedom Colony Diaspora. *Public Culture*.

ESSAYS, OPINIONS, FEATURES

Featured in The Guardian: The quest to find African American graves before they're lost to climate crisis by Colleen Hagerty (September 10, 2021) <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/sep/10/african-american-graves-climate-crisis>

Blanks, J. (2020). Cemetery Management Today or Reinterment Management Tomorrow. In D. Newton (Ed.), *The climate change debate* (Vol. 1, p.141-145). Santa Barbara, California: ABC-Clio. <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=WU3bDwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&ots=FNl4Rfe5XQ&sig=-jRsQSCJynzo9JrXNUcCStldsXs#v=onepage&q&f=false>

PRESS

Hagerty, Colleen. "The quest to find African American graves before they're lost to the climate crisis". *The Guardian*, September 10, 2021. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/sep/10/african-american-graves-climate-crisis>

Nira, Richard, "App developed by graduate student aims to help preserve African-American cemeteries". Texas A&M University College of Architecture Newsletter, January 11, 2022. https://www.arch.tamu.edu/news/2022/01/11/app-developed-by-graduate-student-aims-to-help-preserve-african-american-cemeteries/?fbclid=IwAR3ky9L0sXaOhe5SI858tLbASV4v21b0Ha1BgAC8UdzXklwsg8U_K6Aig1s

USDA Monthly News Letter the Explorer, *USDA Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station* 2015

Owen, S. et al.; *Spatial patterns of ponderosa pine regeneration in high-severity burn patches. Forest Ecology and Management*, pg. 134-149. September 2017.

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

McKain Scholarship April 2023
Texas A&M University

ACSP Diversity and Inclusion Fellowship 2023 Cohort
Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning

RESI/Cantu Scholarship September 2022-May 2023
Texas A&M University

PastForward 2021 Diversity Scholarship October 2021
National Trust for Historic Preservation

PastForward 2020 Diversity Scholarship October 2020
National Trust for Historic Preservation

Cultural Heritage Center Prize for Planning and Preservation May 2020
Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning, Texas A&M University

The William Averette Anderson Fund (BAF) August 2018- Current
Fellow- Texas A&M University

- Present research at conferences throughout the United States
- Assist in editing cohort and other peer fellows' writing as a member of the writing committee
- Participate in monthly teleconference calls to learn update of peers research
- Attend virtual webinars

NSF LSMAMP Bridge to Doctorate Fellowship January 2016- December 2017
Fellow- Jackson State University

- Tutored Biology to undergraduate students
- Presented research at conferences, nationally and internationally
- Mandatory study abroad summer session in Xi'an, China at Shaanxi Normal University

- Assisted in hosting annual State of Mississippi Science Fair
- Served as a peer mentor for undergraduate students
- Attended and presented research at weekly meetings hosted by LSMAMP directors

Certificate of Appreciation December 2015
Awarded by: USDA Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station

National Society of Collegiate Scholars September 2012
 Northern Arizona University Chapter

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Lincoln Center Volunteer March 2022- Current
College Station, Texas

- Tutoring students (K-6th grade)
- Arts and crafts with students (K-3rd grade)
- Event volunteer (annual holiday events)

Wellborn Community Center Cemetery Volunteer May 2020- August 2020
College Station, Texas

- Remove overgrown vegetation
- Scrub headstones
- Maintain burial records

Council of Texas Archeologists Lost Cemeteries Task Force January 2020- Current
Texas, USA

- Participate in monthly meetings which supports the archeological community throughout Texas via cemetery management and professional services

Black Girls Mapp June 2019-Current
Esri, Redlands, California

- Formal geospatial networking group created on Esri main campus
- Participate in collaborative research across the United States
- Mentor young women of color who use GIS, remote sensing, and other geospatial tools

Urban and Regional Science Student Organization (URSSO) President May 2019-Current
Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas

- Represents the URSSO to the university and non-university communities
- Plans prepare and chair all Executive Committee meetings
- Completes annual URSSO recognition procedures as mandated by Texas A&M University
- Appoints other URSSO members to ad hoc committees and task forces, or delegates that power to other Officers/Delegates on a case-by-case basis
- Facilitate the realization of the goals of the URSSO.

- Informs the Executive Council regarding the President's activities and all associated matters

The William Averette Anderson Fund (BAF) Writing Group August 2018-Current

- Create a community portfolio for partnered communities.
- Assist in creating a writing workshop webinar series.
- Create a BAF magazine, which highlights the current work of fellows and alumnus.

The William Averette Anderson Fund (BAF) Community Engagement August 2018-Current

- Participate in community outreach with neighborhoods and partner communities.
- Create presentations and reports the communities can share with their local government to improve various development in their neighborhood.

Urban and Regional Science Student Organization (URSSO) August 2018-Current

Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas

- Participate in community service projects.
- Support peers via Lunch and Learn lectures

MSEF Region II Science Fair May 2016 and May 2017

Jackson State University, Jackson, MS

- Science fair judge for elementary students between 1st and 6th grade.

RECOGNITIONS

Cultural Heritage Center Prize for Planning and Preservation May 2020

Texas A&M University, Dept. of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning

Habitat for Humanity April 2019

Fayette County, Texas

- Honorable mention in an online news article discussing my goal and involvement in hosting a community focus group in March 2019.

Forest Ecology and Management Scientific Journal September 2017

Suzanne M. Owen et al.; Spatial patterns of ponderosa pine regeneration in high-severity burn patches. Forest Ecology and Management, pg. 134-149. September 2017.

- Mentioned in research acknowledgments.

USDA Monthly News Letter the Explorer May 2015

USDA Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station

- Honorable mention in the newsletter regarding senior seminar presentation and research milestones in the research lab.

