Black Geographies Specialty Group

2026 AAG Pre-Conference
March 16, 2026

PROGRAM



Hilton San Francisco Union Square.
Yosemite Rooms A&B
Address: 333 O'Farrell St, San Francisco, CA 94102
9:00-5:30 pm

WELCOME

The Board of the Black Geographies Specialty Group (BGSG) of the American Association of Geographers welcomes you to its 2026 Pre-conference! We are excited that this pre-conference provides a welcome space for the exchange of research insights, teaching ideas, and organizing approaches between Black geographies scholars, allied researchers, activists, practitioners, and community organizations.

The pre-conference is grounded in the recognition that the BGSG's members share common concerns with articulations of racial regimes of power that mediate material and symbolic spaces. The pre-conference centers on themes of anti-fascism, academic freedom, and anticolonial struggles across the diaspora. Attentive to our particular political moment, the sessions, workshops, and field trips that are part of this pre-conference will engage with unfolding and long-term political situations (such as in Sudan, Palestine, Haiti, and Venezuela); federal immigration enforcement in the US; and the federal roll-back of social and environmental justice policies.

We hope that the pre-conference will provide resources, skills, and knowledge that enrich your study of the interconnections that shape Black people's lives and geographies across scales, spaces, and time.

This group emerged out of a collective interest in holding space for Black geographies and Black geographers. The commitment of our group's membership and leadership to that goal has created space for critical study of Black geographies, careful attention to Black livingness, and thoughtful commitment to anti-racist teaching, organizing, and practice as part of an abolitionist ethos. In keeping with that tradition, we look forward to your help making this pre-conference a space of care, community-building, and consciousness-raising that will support the flourishing of Black geographies and the BGSG.

Sincerely,

The Board

The Black Geographies Specialty Group Executive Board 2025-2026

SESSIONS AT A GLANCE

Time	Session Type		Title	Organizer/ Facilitator
SESSION 1				
9:00-10:30 am	Forum	**Room A**	The Imperative of Black Geographies for this Political Moment	Kaily Heitz and Teona
SESSION 2				
10:45-12:00	Workshop:	**Room A**	Black Geographies and The Archive	Mae Miller-Likhethe and Deshonay Dozier
10:45-12:00 pm	Panel	**Room B**	Centering Black Youth in the School Choice Movement	Jose Arriaza - Center for People Power
12:00- 12:45	Lunch Break			
SESSION 3				
12:45-2:00 pm	Teach In–Hybrid	**Room A**	From Sudan to the World: What Sudan Can Teach Us in This Moment.	Yusra Khogali Ali and Nisrin Elamin
2:15-3:30 pm	Panel	**Room B**	Bay Area Black Geographies	LaToya Eaves Priscilla McCutcheon Elena Serrano
FIELD TRIP				
4:00-6:30 pm	**Track 2:** Field Trip		Black Queer SF Walking Tour	Joshua Reason
	BGSG Mixer			

DETAILED SCHEDULE

SESSION 1: 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM

9:00-10:30 AM

The Imperative of Black Geographies for this Political Moment

Kaily Heitz, University of California, Los Angeles (kheitz@g.ucla.edu)
Teona Williams, Rutgers University–New Brunswick (tw615@geography.rutgers.edu)

The Imperative of Black Geographies for this Political Moment is a community forum that brings together leading scholars to confront the escalating crisis facing higher education today. This session moves beyond theory to address the systematic dismantling of Black Studies and Ethnic Studies departments, the eradication of DEI programs, and the intensified attacks on academic freedom that have led to mass firings. By using a Black geographies lens, we will discuss how increased campus surveillance, the doxxing of faculty, and the rising trend of arresting students for protesting are not just isolated events, but part of a broader shift toward fascism on campus. This conversation connects these local struggles to global anti-colonial movements and the ongoing resistance against genocide, centering the university as a key site of political struggle. We invite participants to explore how Black geographic thought offers the tools to resist these carceral shifts and protect the vital intellectual spaces necessary for our collective liberation.

SESSION 2: 10:45 AM - 12:00 PM-- TWO TRACKS

Black Geographies and The Archive

Mae Miller-Likhethe, University of California, Santa Barbara (Maeml@ucsb.edu)
Deshonay Dozier, Claremont Graduate University (deshonay.dozier@cgu.edu)

Archives are sites of community and contestation where we dare to imagine the spatial possibilities of Black Feminists Place-Making. This workshop is designed for scholars to workshop their spatial analysis of Black Feminist Geographies. Please bring one archival document from the archive you are working with, along with a paragraph or a one-page write-up of your spatial analysis. The session organizers, Mae Miller-Likhethe and Deshonay Dozier, will also facilitate a discussion about the community-based and institutional archives they work with and the relevance of these sites for broader intellectual and organizing work.

Centering Black Youth in the School Choice Movement

Jose Arriaza, Center for People Power at the Miami Workers Center and Power U Center for Social Change (josearriaza925@gmail.com)

In this workshop, attendees will interrogate the legacies of segregation that shape our processes of social reproduction to render Black youth as expendable, while also erasing the labor, memory, and pedagogical traditions of Black educators. The privatization of public schools has become another means of socio-spatial domination, rendering youth in public schools as either accumulation or waste. Participants will explore: How do school closures and charter school co-locations reshape institutional belonging, spatial attachment, and political participation in Black communities? How do Black youth engage in collective organizing to contest the privatization of public education, and what pedagogical knowledge emerges from these Struggles? This workshop advances a Black geographic approach to youth justice by theorizing Black youth organizing as a form of radical place-making, public pedagogy, and community development within landscapes shaped by racial capitalism, privatization, and organized abandonment. It centers Black youth as spatial theorists whose everyday practices of resistance, care, and coalition-building produce alternative geographies of learning, belonging, and political possibility beyond formal institutions through case studies and oral history interviews of current Power U Center for Social Change members. By centering education as a sustained practice of freedom enacted through return, attention, and struggle, the workshop reframes youth resistance to privatization as a community-based pedagogy that produces alternative futures, insurgent forms of learning, and collective modes of Black self-determination. Participants will collaboratively map, diagram, and imagine alternative spatial arrangements for community schools that prioritize freedom, safety, and belonging, asking what becomes possible when surveillance, policing, and extractive logics are removed from educational spaces.

SESSION 3a: 12:45 PM - 2:00 PM

From Sudan to the World: What Sudan Can Teach Us in This Moment—Hybrid

Yusra Khogali Ali, University of Toronto Mississauga (yusra.khogaliali@mail.utoronto.ca)
Nisrin Elamin, University of Toronto (nisrin.elamin@utoronto.ca)

In his book Peasants and Capital (1988), Michel Rolph Trouillot offered a view of the workings of empire and the global capitalist economy from the vantage point of the village of Wesley in Dominica. As Vanessa Agard-Jones put it, Trouillot helped us shift our analysis “from looking at a small unit [a village in Dominica] to looking from its place in the world” (183). This shift from 'at' to 'from' helps us not only uncover and name the ways global power relations are spatialized and concealed, but also understand how this power is regularly disrupted. In this interactive teach-in, we will use Sudan as a point of departure from which to understand the workings of empire, gendered racial capitalism, and counterrevolution across different scales and Black geographies. Participants will explore global phenomena such as the expansion of the security state, the internationalization of counterrevolutionary forces, and the emergence of new projects of empire-making, from the vantage point of Sudan in this moment of multiple genocides and imperial dispossessions. We will also look at how ordinary Sudanese are organizing to counter these forces, offering us revolutionary, non-statist, decentralized models of organizing that are both anti-capitalist and feminist.

SESSION 3b: 2:15 PM - 3:30 PM

Bay Area Black Geographies
LaToya Eaves, University of Tennessee (leaves1@utk.edu)
Priscilla McCutcheon, University of Kentucky (priscilla.mccutcheon@uky.edu)
Elena Serrano, Eastside Arts Alliance

The Bay Area, particularly San Francisco and Oakland, have been at the heart of struggles for Black Studies, Black Power, and Third World solidarity movements. In this panel, we will invite local activists, artists, and story-tellers to reflect on the way that the Black geographies of the Bay Area have created and been shaped by intersecting movements for racial, economic, migrant, and environmental justice; and discuss how the legacy of this organizing has made possible creative forms of resistance to anti-Black dispossession and displacement today.

FIELD TRIP: **4:00 PM - 6:30 PM**

Black Queer SF Walking Tour
Joshua Reason, San Francisco State University (jkreason@sfsu.edu)

The Black Queer SF Walking Tour is an experience curated by SF Black Pride, an organization (501c(3) status pending) that highlights the past, present, and future of Black queer and trans life in San Francisco. The first edition of the walking tour was launched during the inaugural SF Black Pride Week (August 25 – 31, 2025), during which a non-exhaustive map of sites related to Black queer and trans memory in the city was created. The proposed field trip would be an opportunity for pre-conference participants to learn about lesser-known Black histories in San Francisco while also supporting an organization still gaining its footing in the city's cultural tapestry. The goal of the walking tour is to rethink San Francisco's queer and trans geographies through a Black lens. Since the 1950s, Black San Francisco residents and businesses have been violently displaced by local and federal governments, making way for major corporations (e.g. tech companies, venture capitalist firms) to take over the city. This initial gentrification has been bolstered by a predominantly white gay elite whose access to financial opportunities—however limited and fleeting—has rendered invisible the cultural contributions of Black queer and trans communities who call(ed) The Castro, Mission District, and Fillmore home. The walking tour aims to challenge these dominant spatial narratives by presenting the histories of notable individuals, businesses, and organizations who contributed to Black queer placemaking in San Francisco.

The tour will take approximately 90 minutes and start at Mission Dolores Park. The stops on the tour include: 1) Sylvester's Home; 2) Former Harvey Milk Camera Shop; 3) Former "The Pendulum" Bar; 4) Moby Dick; 5) Rainbow Honor Walk; 6) Harvey Milk Plaza/Pink Triangle Park; 7) Mission Dolores Basilica; and 8) SF LGBT Center. To foster community among the attendees, the SF Black Pride organizers have also agreed to end the tour at a bar that hires local

Black queer and trans DJs, a rare opportunity for Black attendees at AAG to connect with one another outside of the conference. SF Black Pride has agreed to offer this tour through a sliding-scale pay-what-you-can model (suggested donation: $10). Joshua Reason will meet attendees in the lobby of the conference hotel at 4:00pm to travel together via BART, though you are more than welcome to arrange your own transportation. They will be present for the duration of the tour and social gathering to ensure that all attendees arrive and leave safely.