
These are a few of the names of more than two hundred communities commonly referred to as Black Towns. At different moments over the past two centuries, these settlements formed or were intended to form spaces of security and freedom for people of African descent in the U.S.

Scholars of black towns – who are rarely joined together in the relatively small field of Black Town studies – explore the material, social, political and cultural dimensions of black towns’ development, transformation, achievements and struggles. The speakers at this event will discuss black towns from New York to Texas, offering digital, textual, photographic, and material evidence of black town realities, past and present.
Cynthia Copeland is Adjunct and Supervising Instructor at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development in the Department of Teaching and Learning. Her areas of specialization are in public history, education, educational media, and in archiving pre-emancipation NY Communities. She has worked closely with esteemed urban archaeologists on the Seneca Village Project, Weeksville, The African Burial Ground and other buried "community treasures" in New York City.

Edward González-Tennant is a researcher whose work combines approaches from archaeology, history, and folklore. His recent book, *The Rosewood Massacre: An Archaeology and History of Intersectional Violence*, published by the University Press of Florida explores the community and history of Rosewood, Florida, a prosperous African American community destroyed in 1923 during a weeklong episode of violence commonly known as the Rosewood Massacre. This research is supported by a multidisciplinary toolkit combining archaeological methods, geospatial technologies, and virtual reality to support public outreach. You can learn more about this work at [www.virtualrosewood.com](http://www.virtualrosewood.com). His published articles have appeared in journals such as *Historical Archaeology, International Journal of Historical Archaeology, Heritage & Society, Fire!!!: The Multimedia Journal of Black Studies; Journal of African Diaspora Archaeology and Heritage*. He has published on a broad range of topics in several edited volumes, including *Participatory Visual and Digital Research in Action, Excavating Memory: Material Culture Approaches to Sites of Remembering and Forgetting*. Dr. González-Tennant holds a BA in Anthropology from the University of Arkansas (2004), an MS in Industrial Archaeology from Michigan Tech (2005), and MA and PhD degrees in Anthropology from the University of Florida (2008 and 2011, respectively). You can learn more about his research at [www.gonzaleztennant.net](http://www.gonzaleztennant.net).

Cheryl Janifer LaRoche works at disciplinary intersections. She is an associate professor and has recently moved from the Anthropology Department to Historic Preservation at the University of Maryland, College Park. She combines history and geography with archaeology and material culture, historic preservation with cultural landscapes and mapping to produce a more fully realized narrative of the African American experience. Her focus is on pre-Civil War Black communities and their institutions, particularly the Underground Railroad. She has physically explored sites from New Hampshire to Missouri and into Canada. She holds a Ph. D. in American Studies with a Concentration in Archaeology and African American history from the University of Maryland College Park. She was the Project Historian for Cultural Expressions for the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture. She has consulted for several National Park Service sites, the African Burial Ground Project and numerous museums, cultural institutions and historic sites. The Society for Historical Archaeology honored Dr. LaRoche with the John L. Cotter award for her “remarkable work in expanding the interdisciplinary development of historical archaeology in examinations of African American history and culture.” She drew on her multidisciplinary methodology for her first book, *Free Black Communities and the Underground Railroad: The Geography of Resistance*.

Danielle Purifoy is currently a Carolina Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Department of Geography at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She recently completed a Ph.D in Environmental Politics and African American Studies at Duke University. She earned a B.A. in English and Political Science from Vassar College, and a J.D. from Harvard Law School. Her current research focuses on the historic roots of contemporary environmental conditions in the U.S. South, specifically in Black towns dating back to the post-Bellum era. Purifoy has also written about the legal dimensions of environmental justice and equity in food systems. Additionally, she is an editor at *Scalawag*, a magazine devoted to Southern politics and culture, and a board member of the *North Carolina Environmental Justice Network*. 
Andrea Roberts is Assistant Professor of Urban Planning, an Associate Director of the Center for Housing & Urban Development, and Fellow at the Center for Heritage Conservation at Texas A&M University. She is the founder of The Texas Freedom Colonies Project, a research & social justice initiative documenting African American's placemaking history & their contemporary planning practices and challenges. More broadly, Roberts’s research aims to diversify planning history, identify promising grassroots preservation practices, and amplify concerns of descendants of settlements founded by formerly enslaved Africans in the Americas. Her activist scholarship frames planning and historic preservation as cultural resilience and social justice practices and documents grassroots planning history and contemporary place preservation practices. She has written about intersectionality and preservation for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, rural Black women’s placemaking in The Journal of Planning History, and storytelling among grassroots preservationists for the Journal of Community Archaeology and Heritage. Current projects include a book about Black historic preservation practice and a statewide Texas Freedom Colony Atlas & Study. The Atlas is a participatory action research tool designed to crowdsource diverse forms of “place” data while supporting descendant communities’ preservation & heritage conservation projects. From 2016-17, Roberts was an Emerging Scholar Fellow at the University of Texas at Austin's (UT) School of Architecture where she also earned a Ph.D. in community and regional planning. In addition to her Ph.D., Roberts holds an M.A. in government administration from the University of Pennsylvania, & a B.A. in political science from Vassar College. She brings to her scholarship 12 years’ experience in community and economic development in Philadelphia and Houston.

Melissa Stuckey is assistant professor of African-American history at Elizabeth City State University in northeastern North Carolina. Author of “Boley, Indian Territory: Exercising Freedom in the All-Black Town,” published in the Journal of African American History (2017), Stuckey currently completing her first book, entitled “All Men Up”: Race, Rights, and Power in the All-Black Town of Boley, Oklahoma, 1903-1939, which unveils the black freedom struggle in Oklahoma as it took shape in the state’s more than two-dozen all-black towns. She also serves as senior historical consultant to the Coltrane Group, a non-profit organization in Oklahoma committed to helping these towns survive in the 21st century. In addition to her work on Boley, Stuckey was recently awarded $350,000 from the National Endowment for the Humanities to rehabilitate two historic buildings (a Rosenwald school and the original Principal’s house) at ECSU towards the creation of a regional African American history research center. Stuckey also serves as a researcher and writer in the Beaufort County, South Carolina Lowcountry Reconstruction History Center project, which, in partnership with the National Park Service, will interpret the history of Reconstruction for a national and international audience. Stuckey earned her bachelor’s degree from Princeton University and her Ph.D. from Yale University.

Karla Slocum is the Thomas Willis Lambeth Distinguished Chair of Public Policy, Associate Professor of Anthropology and Director of the Institute of African American Research at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. She specializes in studies of global economic change, place identities, race and history in the Caribbean and the United States. Slocum is the author of Free Trade and Freedom: Neoliberalism, Place and Nation in the Caribbean (University of Michigan Press, 2006). Her second book, Black Towns, Black Futures: The Enduring Allure of a Black Place in the American West, is forthcoming with the University of North Carolina Press and explores rural, historic Black towns as contemporary spaces of attraction. Slocum has published articles and book chapters in such journals and edited volumes as American Anthropologist; American Ethnologist; Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture and Society; Transforming Anthropology; and the Routledge Companion on Inter-American Studies. She is the recipient of the Academic Excellence Award from UNC-Chapel Hill’s Institute for the Arts and Humanities and she has also been awarded fellowships from the National Science Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities. the School for Advanced Research and the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation.