

Jennifer Blanks

Jennifer Blanks is pursuing a doctoral degree in Urban and Regional Science at Texas A&M University. Jennifer is a member of the Texas Freedom Colonies Project under the mentorship of Dr. Andrea Roberts. Jennifer's role in the Texas Freedom Colonies Project includes managing the Atlas, troubleshooting issues within the Atlas database, leading demonstrations for the Atlas, creating new spatial layers to the Atlas, and mentoring junior researchers to support her engagement.

Jennifer's research area is in environmental planning with intersections centered on disaster management, preservation planning, community engagement, and environmental justice. Specifically, she wishes to improve cemetery management for a vulnerable cemetery and burial grounds susceptible to natural disasters and other hazards that cause significant damage. Due to the historical significance of cemeteries, Jennifer wishes to understand how community members can use geospatial technology to improve cemetery maintenance and document the valuable information found in cemeteries.

Jennifer is also the founder of the social media platform, The Cemetery Sista - an initiative to raise awareness of preserving Black American cemeteries. Through this platform, Jennifer engages in the storytelling of featured cemeteries and well-known historical figures in addition to Black Americans who made an impact in their communities. Jennifer also visits cemeteries and explains various hazards that threaten them. Lastly, Jennifer acknowledges preservation organizations across the United States who share the same efforts as her: preserving Black American cemeteries. Today, the goal of The Cemetery Sista is to fill in the gaps of Black history through cemeteries.