

# AKILAH FAVORS

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## EDUCATION

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**Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Sociology** 2027 (exp.)

University of California Berkeley

Dissertation Title: “Against All Odds: Black Nonprofits, Gentrification, and the Politics of Liberation in Modern Atlanta”

Committee: Tianna Paschel, Kim Voss, Courtney Desiree Morris

**Master of Arts, Sociology** 2022

University of California, Berkeley

**Bachelor of Arts, Sociology** 2012-2016

Spelman College

Summa Cum Laude

Major: Sociology and Minor: Spanish

School for International Training (SIT): Social Movements and Human 2014

Rights Program, Argentina

## RESEARCH AND TEACHING INTERESTS

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Urban Sociology      Racial Inequality      Gender      Social Movements      Political Economy

Black Feminist Theory      Non-profits      Culture      Social Mobility      Qualitative Methods

## PUBLICATIONS

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### Peer Reviewed Journal Articles

Jenna, Dublin; Lindberg, Jim; Powe, Michael; **Favors, Akilah**; .....Theodore Wilhite. 2020. “Preserving African American Places: Growing Preservation’s Potential as a Path for Equity Report.” National Trust for Historic Preservation: African American Heritage Action Fund

**Favors, Akilah.** 2016. “Invisible Citizen: An Exploration of Youth Participation in a Movement to Reclaim and Protect Afro-descendant Identity in Contemporary Argentina.” *Mellon Mays Undergraduate Journal*

### Articles in Preparation

**Favors, Akilah.** “Reconciled Respectability: Black Interclass Solidarity and Racial Displacement Resistance in Atlanta.” *R&R, Journal of Social Problems*

**Favors, Akilah.** “From the Background to the Forefront: How Familial Class Environments Shape Black Middle-class Perceptions and Responses to Gentrification.”

**Favors, Akilah.** “The Art of Resistance: Fortifying Black Healing and Creativity in Urban Structures of Economic Insecurity.”

## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

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*Principal Investigator, “Against All Odds: Black Nonprofits, Gentrification, and the Politics of Liberation in Modern Atlanta”*

2024-Present

Faculty Sponsor: Tianna Paschel

Berkeley, California

**Aims:** To examine how Black-led nonprofits navigate racialized, classed, and gendered power relations in a neoliberal economy to contest unaffordable housing, economic insecurity and cultural erasure that continue to drive Black displacement in Atlanta, Georgia.

**Duties:**

- Project management, archival data collection, participant observation with Black-led non-profits, semi-structured interviews, urban policy analysis, MAXQDA coding, conference presentations, research mentorship.

*DEIB Coding Consultant, Center Focus International, Inc. Strategic Consultant Firm’s 2023 International Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officers Social Impact Study*

Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts

**Aims:** To investigate how CDIOs impact social, cultural, and institutional practices in workplaces across multiple industries; reshape structures of opportunity for underrepresented groups; and perceive the future of DEIB work.

**Duties:**

- Used MAXQDA to code 50 interviews of senior executive leaders of DEIB across sectors spanning tech, health care, financial services, government, education, law, corporate, human resources, non-profits, etc.
- Wrote a descriptive analytics report of professional pathways to senior DEIB roles, career motivations, organizational infrastructure for DEIB support, institutional challenges and future impact.

*Principal Investigator, “Gatekeeping the Black Mecca: Race, Class, and Curtailing Displacement in Atlanta.”*

2018-2022

Faculty Sponsor: Kim Voss

Berkeley, California

**Aims:** To examine Black middle-class strategies of working with low-income renters to combat the increasing threat of housing and cultural displacement.

**Duties:**

- Conducted participant observation at meetings, initiatives, and organizations working to address the scope of redevelopment in SW Atlanta neighborhoods.
- Administered semi-structured interviews with Black middle-class negotiators and investors involved in shaping the trajectory of redevelopment.
- Analyzed historical and contemporary redevelopment practices of

exclusion and inclusion in working-class communities.

*DEIB Coding Consultant, Center Focus International, Incorporated Strategic Consultant Firm's DocuSign's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Report*  
San Francisco, California

2022

**Aims:** To develop a global strategy for DocuSign to improve DEIB efforts after the company's international headquarters proliferated during covid.

**Duties:**

- Used MAXQDA to code 20 interviews with executive leaders and 25 focus groups of domestic and international DocuSign employees.
- Wrote a descriptive analytics report of thematic patterns under the identified core topics of optimal performance strategy and support, opportunity support, global collaborations, DEIB strategy and culture.
- Informed development of new policies, institutional practices, and workplace culture at DocuSign.

*Qualitative Data Analyst, Albireo Financial Consultant Company's TransFormation Alliance Strategic Fundraising Report*  
Atlanta, Georgia

2019

**Aims:** To gain funding for public-private partnership, TransFormation Alliance (TFA), to support racial equity as low-income SW Atlanta neighborhoods are redeveloped.

**Duties:**

- Conducted a content analysis of fundraising models for ten community development alliances similar to TFA.
- Recorded extensive field notes of TFA's workshops with all of its partners.
- Analyzed interviews of key stakeholders and members of TFA.
- Conducted a comparative analysis to propose a comprehensive fundraising strategy for securing large grants to assist low-income families at high risk of Black displacement.

*Atlanta Research Fellow, National Trust for Historic Preservation: African American American Cultural Heritage Action Fund*  
Atlanta, Georgia

2018-2019

**Aims:** To conduct a national study of affordability issues and risk of displacement in ten historically Black neighborhoods across major cities.

**Duties:**

- Observed neighborhood associations and organizations in SW Atlanta.
- Administered semi-structured interviews with Black neighborhood preservationists.
- Analyzed the historical relationship between transportation expansion and Black displacement in Atlanta.
- Conducted a socio-spatial analysis of key shifts in infrastructure.
- Analyzed Black activists' perceptions, critiques and responses to gentrification.

*Qualitative Researcher, Rhodes Must Fall Student Protests at Afrikaans Universities in South Africa* 2015

Johannesburg/Pretoria, South Africa; Los Angeles, California

**Aims:** To investigate how Black and brown South African students contest rainbow ideology and protest a lack of racial-ethnic equality at Afrikaans universities.

**Duties:**

- Interviewed student activists who protested a campus statue of an apartheid leader and created a memorandum for diversity at The University of Witwatersrand.
- Attended focus groups at the South Africa Freedom Park Summit to critically discuss post-apartheid social inequality.
- Met with Witwatersrand faculty and administrative leaders to discuss their perspective of protests and potential solutions.
- Analyzed the association between rainbow nation rhetoric in South Africa and colorblind mentality in the US to theorize ideological challenges to achieving educational diversity.

*Independent Researcher, Youth Participation in the Argentine Afro-descendant Movement to Gain Cultural Visibility and Claim Civil Rights* 2014-2016

Buenos Aires, Argentina

**Aims:** To investigate how racial identity construction and shifts to multicultural ideology in Argentina shape racial politics and cultural practices of youth in the Afro-descendant Movement.

**Duties:**

- Conducted participant observation with two major Afro-Argentine organizations leading the Afro-descendant movement in Buenos Aires.
- Administered interviews with youth activists and major political leaders.
- Conducted content analysis of art, pamphlets, and flyers from movement events.
- Analyzed the impact of cultural and racial factors on collective action amongst youth activists and significant movement leaders.

**PROFESSIONAL ACADEMIC ROLES**

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<i>Program Director, Berkeley Connect Course in African American Studies and Ethnic Studies</i>	2022-2023
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<i>Community Builder, The UC Berkeley Department of Sociology's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Initiative Team</i>	2022-2023
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<i>Associate Grant Writer, Berkeley Social Sciences Division- HBCU Summer Research Internship and Mentorship Program</i>	2023
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<i>Workshop Series Director, Underrepresented Minority Professional Development Workshops in UC Berkeley Department of Sociology</i>	2020-2021
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<i>Associate Director, UC Berkeley: Department of Sociology's Summer Scholars of Race Research Program</i>	2019-2022
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**FELLOWSHIPS, GRANTS, AWARDS**

UC Berkeley, Graduate Division Doctoral Completion Fellowship, \$34,000	2025
Berkeley Transfer and First Year Summer Connect Fellowship, \$21,000	2023-2025
Department of Sociology Traveling Grant, \$5,000	2023
Black Studies Collaboratory Small Grants Program, \$5,000	2022-2023
Berkeley Department of Sociology's Equity Diversity, and Inclusion Community Builder Fellowship, \$5,000	2022-2023
Berkeley Connect African American and Ethnic Studies Fellowship, \$35,000	2022-2023
Institute for the Study of Societal Issues: Graduate Fellowship Program, \$28,000	2021-2023
Berkeley Sociology Summer Scholars of Race Associate Director Fellowship, \$21,000	2019-2022
UNCF Mellon Mays Research Completion Grant, \$5,000	2021
Black Graduate Collective Development Fellowship, \$1,000	2021
National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity Write Now Access Program	2021
National Trust for Historic Preservation: African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund Fellowship, \$5,000	2018
UC Berkeley, Chancellor's Fellowship for Graduate Study, \$48,000	2017
Phillips Academy: Institute for Recruitment of Teachers Fellowship	2016
Phi Beta Kappa, Spelman College:	2016
Alpha Kappa Delta: International Sociology Honor Society	2016
1 <sup>st</sup> Place, Research Day, Spelman College	2016
Outstanding Senior Thesis in Sociology, Spelman College:	2016
UCLA-HBCU Summer Fellowship for South Africa and UCLA Research, \$4,000	2015
UNCF Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship, \$10,000	2014-2016

**CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS AND INVITED TALKS**

“Disrupting Inequality: A Quest to Understand Black Resistance to Displacement in Southwest Atlanta.” <b>Quest Community Development Corporation.</b> (August 2025)
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“Gatekeeping the Black Mecca: Race, Class, and Curtailing Displacement in the Atlanta.” **Southeastern American Studies Association Conference: Undiscovered Country: Inhabiting the Edge of Catastrophe and Possibility.** (October 2023)

“Filming Hope: A Visual Collage of Black Resistance to Displacement in Atlanta.” **Black Studies Collaboratory 2023 Small Grantee Symposium.** (September 2023)

“From Exclusion to Inclusion: The Politics of Inter-class Solidarity in Black Anti-displacement Strategies in the City.” **American Sociological Association Conference** (August 2023)

“Transcending Respectability: How Race and Class Shapes Black Agency in Neoliberal Structures of Gentrification.” **Institute for the Study of Societal Issues, UC Berkeley** (May 2022)

“Into The Future: How Black Resistance to Displacement in Atlanta Reflects Afrofuturism.” **UC Berkeley Black Geography Graduate Student Conference: Black Futures Presentations Panel** (March 2023)

“Gatekeeping the Black Mecca: Race, Class, and Curtailing Displacement in the Atlanta.” **Association of Black Sociologists Conference** (Oct 2022)

“Revitalization in the Black Mecca: Politicking with the Atlanta Beltline from the Bottom Up.” **PastForward National Preservation Conference** (Nov 2019).

“Revitalization in the Black Mecca: Politicking with the Atlanta Beltline from the Bottom Up.” **Affordability and the Risk of Displacement in African American Neighborhoods Research Summit** (Nov 2018)

“Interrogating the Call to Transform the Academy: The Responsibility of Mentors, Scholars and the Higher Education Community.” **UNCF Mellon Mays Programs Conference** (Sept 2015)

“Invisible Citizen: The Emergence of ‘Black’ Youth Activism in Contemporary Argentina.” **MMUF Southeastern Regional Conference at Rice University** (Oct 2015)

“Invisible Citizen: The Emergence of “Black” Youth Activism in Contemporary Argentina.” **Spelman College Research Day** (April 2016)

“Trick or Treat: What Really Lies at the End of Rainbow Nation Ideology?” **HBCU Research Showcase, UC Los Angeles** (August 2015)

“The Recovery of Afro-descendants: Exploring the Participation of Youth in a Movement to Recover and Protect Afro-descendant Identity in Contemporary Argentina.” **School for International Training (SIT) Social Movements and Human Rights Program in Argentina** (Nov 2014)

“Making Sense of Charles Cooley’s Looking-glass Self Concept: Understanding Black Women Experiences at Predominantly White Institutions.” **UNCF Mellon Mays Presentations Emory University** (July 2014)

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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### UC Berkeley Courses

#### *Graduate Student Instructor:*

- First Year and Transfer Summer Connect Course Summer 2023-2025
- Berkeley Connect: African American Studies and Ethnic Studies Course Fall 2022 and Spring 2023
- Introduction to Sociology Fall 2019 and Spring 2020

#### *Graduate Student Reader:*

- Sociology of Culture Fall 2023, 2024, and Spring 2026
- Sociology of Gender Fall 2020, Fall 2021, Spring 2025
- Sociology of Entrepreneurship Spring 2022
- Sociology of Sexual Cultures Spring 2021

### Atlanta School System: K-12

- 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Math, Thomasville Heights Elementary School Fall 2016 and Spring 2017
- Assistant Instructor, Kipp Strive Academy Elementary Spring 2016

## ACADEMIC SERVICE

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- Program Mentor, First Year and Transfer Student Summer Connect Program* 2022-2025
- Program Mentor, UC Berkeley: Department of Sociology’s Summer Scholars of Race Research Program* 2019-2023
- Graduate Student Mentor, UC Berkeley Sociology Honor’s Thesis Mentorship Program* 2021-2022
- Graduate Student Mentor, UC Berkeley UNCF Mellon Mays Mentorship Program* 2018-2019

### **WORKING GROUP MEMBERSHIPS**

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Race and Inequality Workshop. UC Berkeley  
Sociologists of Color and Allies, Department of Sociology, UC Berkeley  
Sister Circle, Department of Sociology, UC Berkeley

### **MEMBERSHIPS & PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

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American Sociological Association (ASA)  
Association of Black Sociologists (ABS)  
Institute for the Study of Societal Issues (ISSI)  
Cohort Sistas  
UNCF Mellon Mays Programs  
Institute of Recruitment of Teachers (IRT)

### **PROFESSIONAL TRAINING**

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*Technical:* Proficient in Microsoft Office, including Excel, PowerPoint, Internet Search, MAXQDA (qualitative coding software), and MS Excel

*Qualitative:* Participant Observation, Semi-structured/Focus group interviewing, Historical Archival Research, Content Analysis, Surveys

### **REFERENCES**

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Associate Professor Tianna Paschel  
University of California, Berkeley  
Department of Sociology

Professor Kim Voss  
University of California, Berkeley  
Department of Sociology

Associate Professor Courtney Desiree Morris  
University of California, Berkeley  
Department of Gender and Women's Studies

Professor Cihan Tugal  
University of California, Berkeley  
Department of Sociology