

Between 1865-1930, Black Texans founded 540+ historic black settlements called freedom colonies. Freedom colony founders and their descendants owned 31% of all farmland in Texas by 1910, but settlements' populations declined after World War II. While most freedom colonies are unmapped, some settlement location data is scattered across various archives and agencies. An interactive atlas of freedom colony maps and archival materials would make settlements and their challenges visible to other descendants, researchers, planners, and preservationists. The PI's research in two counties has already revealed that knowledge of place locations is at risk, because aging descendants' memories of freedom colonies are going unrecorded. PESCA funding would finance a research assistant responsible for cataloguing, analyzing, and mapping available data about freedom colony place locations in Hurricane Harvey-impacted counties. The research assistant's work will enable the PI to efficiently record oral histories, conduct participatory mapping activities, and produce scholarship on settlement conditions.