

Geographic Chronicles

March 10, 2020

Dear California geographers and friends,

Guided by an abundance of caution about the current outbreak of COVID-19 in the Bay Area, the California Geographical Society board has made the decision to cancel this year's conference, scheduled April 17-19 in Oakland. This decision was made both for the health and safety of attendees and the financial health of the CGS as an organization.

We are sorry to report this decision, as the annual conference is a highlight of our year, and an event we and so many other California geographers eagerly look forward to each spring. We hope you will understand and support our decision.

Our intention is to hold the 2021 conference in Oakland, and we are working with the venue to maintain current arrangements for next year.

For those who have already registered, we will refund your registration fees. Please contact Tiffany Seeley at cgsconferencereg@gmail.com to process your refund. Alternatively, you may donate your registration fees to the CGS to help us absorb some of the costs incurred by cancelling this event.

We are tentatively looking into hosting 2-3 informal regional mixers across the state to provide an opportunity for our members to meet together this year despite the cancellation of the conference. If you have any suggestions on where or when we could host these events, please don't hesitate to contact us

Kind regards,

Matthew Derrick (President)
Jenn Kusler (Vice President)
Zia Salim (Co-Treasurer)
Jodi Titus (Co-Treasurer, Past President)
Scott Crosier (Past President)
Stephen Koletty (Board Member)
Alison McNally (Board Member)
Tiffany Seeley (Board Member)
Ryan Koyanagi (SoCal Student Rep)
Ryan Miller (NorCal Student Rep)

June 6, 2020

Dear colleagues,

The governing board of the California Geographical Society (CGS) joins others in calling for a dismantling of racist structures and practices in this country. The killing of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and countless other Black Americans is a consequence of the much larger backdrop of structural racism that upholds historical and current inequities. We issue this statement of solidarity with the acute awareness that the discipline of geography and our own organization have not dedicated enough effort to dismantle these structures within our own spheres of influence. We are committing ourselves to antiracism and will begin defining concrete steps of action at a special meeting later this month. We invite your participation and input.

Sincerely,
Matthew Derrick
CGS president
CGS governing board members

June 17, 2020

Dear colleagues,

On June 13, 2020, following its public statement of commitment to antiracism a week earlier, the governing board of the California Geographical Society (CGS) held a special meeting, open to the public, to begin an ongoing process of examining who we are as an organization and begin identifying concrete action we can undertake to match our stated commitment to antiracism.

With most of the board in attendance, along with many members of the broader CGS community, we held what we think was an open, honest discussion about our organization and discipline, in particularly asking the question of why we—as a membership body and more pointedly as a governing body—so poorly reflect the diversity found more broadly in California.

In previous public communication, we promised that our words would be paired with action. Coming out this Saturday's meeting, first, we agreed that this is only the start of an ongoing process—a portion of each board meeting will be devoted to reflection and assessment of our commitment to antiracism.

Second, we identified several points of action with synergistic ties to our annual conference, including the following:

- Being more intentional in selecting conference cities/sites in a manner that expands our scope to be more inclusive of people and groups who traditionally have not been made to feel welcome to geographic and other professional conferences. This step includes active community outreach and fostering local partnerships.
- Creating of a formal mentorship/cohort program for undergraduate students of color.
- Forming of a new conference award for “Research in Social and Environmental Justice.”
- Devoting travel awards for undergraduate students of color.
- Organizing at panel discussions on social justice and equity in California geography.
- Holding a book club (via Zoom), inviting the full CGS membership to collectively examine antiracist scholarship, culminating in a panel presentation/discussion at the spring conference.

Third, we identified the follow action items to take place outside our annual meeting:

- Conducting a census on diversity of CGS membership, learning, authorship in *California Geographer*, who we are inviting to speak at conferences, etc.
- Forming a committee on equity in California geography.
- Developing a communication structure to coordinate with geography faculty at the community college, CSU, and UC levels on addressing issues related to social justice and antiracism within our discipline.

These are among the action items we intend to pursue moving forward. We invite your feedback and continued involved with the CGS as we move forward with action to match our stated commitment to antiracism.

Sincerely,
Matthew Derrick
CGS president
CGS governing board members