# Payton Croskey

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Santa Barbara, California

## Objective

I seek to develop tools and methodologies that enable marginalized communities to secure their place in the future historical record, ensuring that emergent technologies elevate and empower communities by reflecting their histories. My research is at the intersection of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Augmented Reality (AR), and Afrofuturism.

## Education

- **University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB)** — *Sept. 2023 - June 2028 (Expected)*
  *PhD, Media Arts and Technology* — Santa Barbara, CA
  *NSF Graduate Research Fellow (GRFP)*

- **Princeton University** — *May 2023*
  *BA, African American Studies and Computer Science* — Princeton, NJ
  *summa cum laude*

## Research Experience

- **Expressive Computation Lab at UCSB** — *Sept. 2023 - Present*
  *Graduate Student Researcher* — Santa Barbara, CA
  - Reimagining AI data generation practices with a community-first approach.
  - Generating robust datasets valuing community consent, participation, and access.
  - Developing strategies for ethical and community-centered AR development.
  - Integrating marginalized communities in technology development processes.

- **Ida B. Wells Just Data Lab at Princeton University** — *Jan. 2021 - Sept. 2023*
  *Lead Researcher and Creative Content Director* — Princeton, NJ
  - Led research associates in investigating and documenting liberatory technologies.
  - Organized the lab's inaugural tech-justice conference, reaching nearly 100 participants from 13 countries.
  - Collaborated with community partners to develop ethical data conception, production and circulation strategies.
  - Designed and curated the lab's visual brand and identity.

## Publications

C=Conference, J=Journal, T=Thesis, *=Both authors contributed equally

**[C]** [Under Review] Payton Croskey and Jennifer Jacobs. 2027. Toward Liberatory AI: A Toolkit for Conducting Justice-Centered AI Research.

**[J]** [Under Review] Payton Croskey*, Ana María Cárdenas Gasca*, Jiwon Ham, and Jennifer Jacobs. 2027. Uncovering the Political Dimensions of Computationally Supported Creative Collaboration with Youth and Artists.

**[C]** Payton Croskey, Ruha Benjamin, and Jennifer Jacobs. 2026. The Augmented Undercommons: A Framework for Liberatory HCI Research within Ethically Compromised Institutions. In Proceedings of the 2026 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '26), April 13–17, 2026, Barcelona, Spain. ACM, New York, NY, USA, 15 pages. https://doi.org/10.1145/3772318.3791108

**[C]** Ana María Cárdenas Gasca*, Payton Croskey*, Tobias Höllerer, Kai M Thaler, Emilia Yang, and Jennifer Jacobs. 2025. Lessons from AR Memorialization: Artists' and Activists' Approaches to Responsible AR Development. In Designing Interactive Systems Conference (DIS '25), July 05–09, 2025, Funchal, Portugal. ACM, New York, NY, USA, 19 pages. https://doi.org/10.1145/3715336.3735815

**[C]** Payton Croskey, Fabian Offert, Jennifer Jacobs, and Kai M. Thaler. 2025. Liberatory Collections and Ethical AI: Reimagining AI Development from Black Community Archives and Datasets. In The 2025 ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency (FAccT '25), June 23–26, 2025, Athens, Greece. ACM, New York, NY, USA, 14 pages. https://doi.org/10.1145/3715275.3732058

**[T]** Payton Croskey. 2023. *Fashioning New Worlds: Weaving Alternate Futures through Fashion Technology and Black Ingenuity*. [Unpublished bachelor's senior thesis]. Advised by Ruha Benjamin. Princeton University.

**[T]** Payton Croskey. 2022. *The Augmented Undercommons and The Path to The Sun: An Exploration of Liberatory Technology and other Revolutionary Tools*. [Unpublished bachelor's junior thesis]. Advised by Ruha Benjamin. Princeton University.

## Other Projects

- **Call/Code/Response (Processing Extended Realities Fellowship)** *June - Nov. 2025*
  - Co-created an immersive youth theater production [🌐]
  - Collaborated with four non-profits, an open-source programming foundation, and high schoolers.
  - Developed custom p5.js-based authoring tools for AR collaborative authoring, including a collage tool that allowed youth to design AR visuals together without coding.
  - Created a rendering and visualization tool to design simulations of the graphics and present them to stakeholders.
  - Developed a control interface to synchronize multiple projected AR animations and effects with live-theater cues.
- **The Just Futures Hub** *Jan. - Sept. 2023*
  - Coordinated the Just Data Lab's inaugural tech justice conference. [🌐]
  - Curated two days of presentations, strategy sessions, and community-building activities.
  - Gathered over 100 artists, scholars, and technologists from 13 countries.
- **Weaving Fashion Technology and Black Ingenuity** *June 2022 - Apr. 2023*
  - Examined emerging technology within the fashion industry. [🌐]
  - Programmed and embedded motors within original fashion pieces.
  - Curated an exhibition showcasing my novel fashion-tech designs.
- **Practices and Tools for Tech Freedom Schools** *June - Aug. 2022*
  - Developed lesson plans centering on the history of Freedom Schools and other Black Radical education strategies.
  - Investigated the presence of surveillance technology in modern learning environments.
  - Sought to uncover how— if at all— technology can promote better education practices for diverse students.
- **Liberatory Technology and Digital Marronage** *Jan. - Apr. 2022*
  - Led undergraduates in locating and evaluating technologies that subvert surveillance systems. [🌐]
  - Developed a digital toolbox, an open-source GitHub repository for organizers and activists.
  - Documented the group's findings in an openly accessible zine.
- **Building a Legal Case Against Clearview AI** *Jan. - Apr. 2021*
  - Worked with the grassroots organization Mijente to investigate facial recognition company Clearview AI.
  - Assisted the organization in building a legal case against Clearview AI.
  - Designed an open-source document explaining the dangers of unregulated AI to Mijente's Latinx community members.

## Talks and Presentations

- **"Live from LA!": Facilitating Personal and Political Storytelling through Immersive Youth Theater** *July 2026*
  *Special Interest Group on Computer Graphics and Interactive Techniques Conference (SIGRGAPH) (California)*
  Presenter
- **The Augmented Undercommons** *April 2026*
  *Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI), (Spain)* [🌐]
  Presenter
- **Liberatory Collections and Ethical AI** *Nov. 2025*
  *Fairness, Accountability, Transparency, Ethics, and Society (FATES) - Reading Group (Virtual)* [🌐]
  Invited Presenter
- **Lessons from AR Memorialization** *July 2025*
  *ACM Designing Interactive Systems Conference (DIS) (Madeira)* [🌐]
  Presenter
- **Liberatory Collections and Ethical AI** *June 2025*
  *ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency (FAccT) (Greece)* [🌐]
  Presenter
- **Challenges and Contradictions of the Digital Transition in Fashion** *Nov. 2023*
  *Society for the Social Studies of Science (4S)/ESOCITE (Virtual)* [🌐]
  Panel Participant
- **The Algorithmic State: Abuse of Power and AI Today** *Mar. 2023*
  *School of Visual Arts (SVA) (Virtual)* [🌐]
  Invited Panelist
- **Liberatory Technology and Digital Marronage** *Dec. 2022*
  *Society for the Social Studies of Science (4S)/ESOCITE (Mexico)* [🌐]
  Workshop Lead
- **The Augmented Undercommons and The Path to The Sun** *Nov. 2022*
  *Twin Cities Innovation Alliance: Data 4 Public Good (Virtual)* [🌐]
  Invited Speaker

- **The Augmented Undercommons and The Path to The Sun** *Oct. 2022*
  *Association of Black Sociologists Annual Conference (Chicago)* [🌐]
  Presenter
- **Privacy and Autonomy in the Metaverse** *Sept. 2022*
  *Princeton University Library and the Center for Information Technology Policy (Princeton)* [🌐]
  Invited Panelist
- **Reimagining Education Justice: Practices and Tools for Tech Justice Schools** *July 2022*
  *Civics of Technology: Visioning Just Futures (Virtual)* [🌐]
  Panel Participant
- **Liberatory Technology and Digital Marronage** *June 2022*
  *Clark Atlanta University: Digital Humanities Summer Institute (Virtual)*
  Invited Panelist

## Press, Citations and Mentions

B=Book Section, P=Podcast, M=Media Articles

**[M]** UC Santa Barbara. 2025. Two More UCSB PhD Students Receive Prestigious NSF Fellowships. https://engineering.ucsb.edu/news/two-more-ucsb-phd-students-receive-prestigious-nsf-fellowships.

**[M]** Processing Foundation. 2024. Announcing our 2024 Processing Foundation Finalists. *Medium*. https://medium.com/processing-foundation/announcing-our-2024-processing-foundation-finalists-0876e33cffd4.

**[B]** Greg Epstein. 2024. Finding a Tech Humanist Home in the Digital Undercommons. In *Tech Agnostic: How Technology Became the World's Most Powerful Religion, and Why It Desperately Needs a Reformation*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 257–261. https://mitpress.mit.edu/9780262049207/tech-agnostic/.

**[P]** Joseph Shepherd Miller. 2022. Payton Croskey: Subverting Race-based Surveillance in a Digital Age-Tech Policy Leaders. https://music.amazon.com/podcasts/d68c8f75-8ee8-4b18-bdc5-534faaaf4199/episodes/9659efbe-3286-44c3-a457-74aa2f927b1a/tech-policy-leaders-payton-croskey-subverting-race-based-surveillance-in-a-digital-age.

**[M]** Nadira Jamerson. 2022. Black College Students Are Leading the Movement to Eliminate Bias in Tech. *Word In Black*. http://wordinblack.com/2022/08/black-college-students-are-leading-the-movement-to-eliminate-bias-in-tech/.

**[M]** Nate File, Payton Croskey, and Kenia Hale. 2022. How a New Generation Is Combatting Digital Surveillance. *Boston Review*. https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/how-a-new-generation-is-combatting-digital-surveillance/.

**[M]** Wendy Plump. 2022. Princeton Research Day returns, fully in-person for the first time in three years. *Princeton University Research Day*. https://www.princeton.edu/news/2022/05/10/princeton-research-day-returns-fully-person-first-time-three-years.

## Teaching Experience

- **Media Arts and Technology 111NW: Designing Tech through Diverse Cultural Practices** *Aug. 2025 - Sept. 2025*
  *Course Instructor* *UCSB*
  - Undergraduate-level course redefining technology by examining Black, Indigenous and other non-Western communities' computational contributions to global innovation through practices like braiding as algorithmic design and DJing as data manipulation.
- **Black Studies 1: Introduction to African-American Studies** *Mar. 2025 - June 2025*
  *Teaching Assistant* *UCSB*
  - Undergraduate-level course examining the historical and contemporary social conditions of Black people in the U.S. as explored through six major intellectual traditions: Black Nationalism, Black Marxism, Black Feminism, Black Queer & Trans Studies, Afrofuturism and Afro-pessimism.
- **Black Studies 14: The History of Jazz** *Jan. - Mar. 2025*
  *Teaching Assistant* *UCSB*
  - Undergraduate-level course surveying the culture and society of the Caribbean with a focus on the Atlantic slave trade, colonialism, Amerindian communities and the issues accompanying an independent nationhood status.
- **Black Studies 7: Introduction to Caribbean Studies** *Sept. - Dec. 2024*
  *Teaching Assistant* *UCSB*
  - Undergraduate-level course surveying the historical origins and development of jazz, beginning with the African-American folk tradition, and examining the social and cultural context of this 20th century music.

## Volunteer Experience

- **Ruha Benjamin's Seeding the Future Newsletter** *July 2022 - Oct. 2022*
  *Editor*
- **National Society of Black Engineers** *May 2021 - May 2022*
  *Social Media and Communications Chair*
- **Princeton's African American Studies Department** *May 2020 - May 2023*
  *Undergraduate Board of Advisors*

## Honors and Awards

- **Graduate Research Fellow (GRFP)** *June 2025*
  *U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF)* [🌐]
  ◦ Selected from tens of thousands of applicants, this fellowship is granted to highly qualified students who demonstrate exceptional achievements and strong potential to become future leaders in STEM.
- **Processing Extended Realities Fellow** *June 2025*
  *Processing Foundation* [🌐]
  ◦ This fellowship is awarded to a group of creative technologists to develop projection mapping for a live high school theatre performance in LA, in partnership with four community organizations.
- **The Princeton Senior Thesis Prize in Race Relations** *May 2023*
  *Princeton University's Effron Center for the Study of America* [🌐]
  ◦ Awarded annually to a single member of the Princeton senior class, irrespective of academic concentration, whose senior thesis adds significantly to understandings of issues of race and race relations in the US.
- **The Peter W. Stroh '51 Environmental Senior Thesis Prize** *May 2023*
  *Princeton University's High Meadows Environmental Institute and the Program in Environmental Studies* [🌐]
  ◦ Awarded to a single member of the Princeton senior class who has been determined to have written the best thesis on an environmental topic.
- **Ruth J. Simmons Thesis Prize** *May 2023*
  *Princeton University's Department of African American Studies* [🌐]
  ◦ Awarded to the African American Studies major whose senior thesis best exhibits excellence in research and writing within the field of African American Studies.
- **Outstanding Junior Paper in African American Studies Prize** *May 2023*
  *Princeton University's Department of African American Studies* [🌐]
  ◦ Awarded to the African American Studies major who submitted the most outstanding junior thesis paper.
- **Scholarship and Book Award** *May 2022*
  *Association of Black Princeton Alumni*
  ◦ Awarded to the African American Studies major who submitted the most outstanding junior thesis paper.
- **FitzRandolph Gate Award** *Apr. 2022*
  *Princeton University* [🌐]
  ◦ Recognizes the research presentation that is most popular and well-received by the Princeton community.

## References

1. **Jennifer Jacobs**
   Assistant Professor of Media Arts and Technology and Computer Science
   University of California, Santa Barbara
   Email: jmjacobs@mat.ucsb.edu
2. **Ruha Benjamin**
   Alexander Stewart 1886 Professor of African American Studies
   Princeton University
   Email: ruha@princeton.edu