

SSBR 2026 Building on 2025

Blackwater: Shoals, Canebrakes, and the Roots of Black Transcendence

Our last conference theme explored the Academic Industrial Complex (AIC). We landed in Montgomery, Alabama; visited the Legacy Museum; and critically *and constructively* discussed the journey from slavery to mass incarceration with several of our leading academicians—featuring panels composed of presidents, provosts and deans. We listened to brilliant keynote lectures, engaged in constructive conversations, and some of us dined on rooftops and danced in the local pubs of the city.

Our next conference theme builds on the previous one. We will continue to enjoy what Howard Thurman identified as the “great privilege,” that is, “the watering of one’s roots at a time of such dryness in the world.” We will turn to Black creativity and transcendence in Charleston, South Carolina, a city known for its sweetgrass basket weaving traditions, its soulful culinary landscape, its blackwater rivers, and a rich history that contribute to its special habitats and culture.

As president of the Society for the Study of Black Religion (SSBR), I am grateful to share the theme of next year’s conference: **“Blackwater: Shoals, Canebrakes, and the Roots of Black Transcendence.”** Blackwater, as noted by Manning Marable, is not simply “a quest toward the Spirit.” It is a form of consciousness, a soulfulness, and a radical beyondness in the midst of life. It is characterized by the way Black folk mastered matter and materiality, thriving in habitats that others circumvented. We will experience the Gullah culture, including the soulful cuisine of the low country, and (re)imagine the various ways that Black creativity and consciousness arose from unexpected habitats such as the shoals, the canebrakes, and the roots that still cultivate inspiration and insight as we navigate the challenging habitats we must now transcend.

2026 AGENDA

Coming Soon!