As part of national and global Black resistance activism in the late 1960s, a group of U.S. Black sociologists agitated and organized for greater representation in the field’s dominant U.S. association and advocated for resources to support Black sociologists and Black sociological thought. Out of this work, the Caucus of Black Sociologists was formed in 1970 at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association in Washington, DC, becoming the Association of Black Sociologists and struggling with and for Black people globally towards liberation through the use and remaking of traditional sociological methods, theories, and epistemologies, and the recovery and innovation of distinctly Black methods, theories, and epistemologies. Each year since its founding, the Association of Black Sociologists has assessed the state of Black sociology and Black life at its annual conference. On our 50th anniversary, we return to Washington, DC, to continue this practice, reflecting upon this past half century of Black sociology in the organization and setting a course forward for the next half century in and beyond it.

This is a unique conference convening in that our originally scheduled physical meeting needed to be postponed for the safety of our members, their families, and their communities. The global pandemic has underscored the prescience and significance of the scholarly and community work we do—illuminating systemic anti-Black oppression embedded in social institutions, including the healthcare and justice systems. Moreover, the uprisings in response to the continued terror and violence of policing in our communities, illustrated by the murders of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and George Floyd, further reflect the import of *and challenge to* Black sociological thought in this moment. Our work must always move towards liberation and must always respond to the profound movement work in which our people are engaged.

So that means that the original theme takes on new depth of meaning, and we invite you to dive into and stretch that depth in your submissions and re-submissions for our spring convening. Now more than ever we should feel and heed the impetus to assess, through the expansiveness of the Black sociological lens, the value of Black sociological work as well as the conditions that enable and constrain it. Let us trouble practices of assessment, valuation, and enumeration that objectify and obscure Black life. We are perpetually exposed to valuations of blackness and Black life, whether through its quotidian devaluations by the state; its extracted value as a commodifiable signifier of consumable cool; its broad and contested internal valuation in Black communities; and the cumulative value of the repair owed to Black people globally. This year’s conference invites considerations of the value of blackness, broadly construed, including considerations that reject capitalist norms and enact others. What is this Black capital? Where is it located, and what are the various possible conditions of its valuation (or anti-valuation)? How is it manifested in organizing,
struggle, and various resistance movements? In formal politics? How might we think about power relations within the group of people racialized as Black globally and between those Black folks and other racial groups? How does Black capital emerge in struggles against racialized disenfranchisement and state violence, in struggles for reproductive justice and an end to gendered and sexualized oppression, in indigenous and First Nations struggles, contestations for immigrant rights and border re-imaginings, and calls to rectify climate inequities, disaster, and a global pandemic that affects all life on this planet, and disproportionately affects the most vulnerable lives? From the politics of the everyday in every place Black people exist (or can be imagined to exist)—the kitchen, the block, the corner—to the politics of transnational Black critiques of imperialism, from the beginning of this world to the end of the next, we invite observations, speculations, riffs, remixes, and provocations around this year’s theme. This conference considers the idea of Black capital as intertwined with the occasion of the Association’s 50th anniversary. We imagine the Black sociological enterprise as itself a manifestation of Black capital, a rigorous social scientific engagement with Black life that challenges white hegemonic devaluations of Black lived experience and offering needed analyses to ongoing internal discourse on Black life. We therefore also invite general papers and sessions that reflect the state of the field, outline the work ahead, and name the conditions of Black sociological futures. All interested individuals are invited to submit papers as well as proposals for complete sessions (three-to-four papers) and roundtables (including: Regular Sessions, Author Meets Critics, Regional Spotlight Sessions, Thematic Sessions, Poster Sessions, and Workshops) on the conference theme, the state of the field, or any general substantive field related to Black sociology.

Questions can be sent to the program committee at absociologists@gmail.com, but all new submissions and revisions to existing submissions must be made through the online system by January 15, 2021. To withdraw your conference submission, please click here and provide your name, institution, and title of your presentation/panel. Further, all program participants must be current 2021 ABS members.

The ABS membership year runs from January 1 through December 31 each year. To be included in the final program, all participants must register by the registration deadline of March 1, 2021.

Conference Registration:
Membership renewal and conference registration can be completed online here. Mail-in forms for membership payment and conference registration are included here and available online via the ABS website.

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We look forward to seeing you in Washington, DC.