

Maya R. Rao

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Education

M.S. University of Georgia, Athens (UGA) **May 2024 (Expected)**

- Department of Geography with a concentration in Human Geography and GIS Science

B.A. University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK) **May 2022**

- Double Major in Geography and Sustainability
- Minors in International Agriculture and Natural Resources and Global Studies.
- GPA: 4.00/4.00
- Summa Cum Laude

Research Interests

- Sustainable Agriculture
- Food Systems and Food Insecurity
- Hunger Aid
- Participatory Action Research
- Housing and Evictions
- Climate Change impacts on Agriculture

Publication

- Deb, N., & Rao, M. (2020). The pandemic and the invisible poor of the global south: Slum Dwellers in Mumbai, India and Dhaka, Bangladesh. *Social Problems in the Age of COVID-19* (Vol. 2) (pp. 51–60). <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv18b5d3b.10>.

Presentations

- Rao, M. (2022). *Hunger and Help: The Role of SNAP and Food Banks in the U.S. South*.
 - Presented at the 2022 annual session of the Southeastern Division of the American Association of Geographers
- Rao, M. (2022). *How to Feed the World by 2050: Mapping Three Solutions*.
 - Presented at the 2022 annual meeting of the Tennessee Geographic Information Council.
 - Built on a class final project to demonstrate how mapping can illustrate solutions to large scale problems such as world hunger.
- Myers-Miller, S., Rao, M. (2022). *Living in a Global Pandemic: Eviction and the Financialization of Rental Housing During COVID-19*

- Presented at the 2022 annual session of the American Association of Geographers.
- Analyzed eviction data compiled from the beginning of COVID to investigate whether financialization of rental housing was occurring in Knoxville, TN.
- **Barnes, C.M, Rao, M.,** Rowe, R.D, Paulsen, D.J., Trout, R.T. (2019). *From county to local: Investigating Aedes egg populations at a local scale*
 - Presented at the Annual Tennessee Entomological Society Meeting in 2019. Received first place in the undergraduate student category.
 - I explored how temperature and precipitation affected the presence of mosquitos and the mosquito season. As the climate continues to change, we can expect longer mosquito seasons in Knox County.

University of Georgia Work Experience

Department of Geography Teaching Assistant

Introduction to Geographic Information Science

January 2023-Present

- Taught students as the lab instructor for an introductory GIS course. In the labs, I served as the primary instructor.
- Assisted students understand data management and visualization techniques, particularly in regard to online mapping.
- Created weekly PowerPoints for instruction.
- Graded students' labs in a holistic manner, using the technique of "[ungrading](#)".

Department of Geography Teaching Assistant

Human Geography: People, Places, and Cultures

August 2022-December 2022

- Assisted instructor with teaching duties for a 300 person lecture course.
- Served as the primary grader for essay and short response questions for 300 students.
- Led class session and supervised students during a documentary screening.
- Created rubrics for ensuring a fair grading scheme for written assignments.

University of Georgia Research Experience

Department of Geography

August 2022-Present

- Collaborated with researchers in various disciplines on a food bank project in Georgia.
- Partnered with Feeding Georgia, a subsidiary of Feeding America, on hunger research in the state. Worked to analyze data of food pantry accessibility and capabilities.

University of Tennessee Research Experience

Department of Geography

July 2021 – Present

- Worked with Dr. Nikki Luke and located information about evictions in Knox County and helped tenants find resources to resist eviction. Done in tandem with GIS mapping to locate hot spots of evictions in relation to race and income levels. Attended housing court to collect qualitative data to supplement the quantitative data gathered.
- Utilized R studio to analyze the use of differential privacy in Census responses. Done under the supervision of the department head of geography, Dr. Nicholas Nagle.

Department of Plant Sciences

May 2020 – July 2020

- Conducted USDA-funded research on intelligent pesticide sprayers to reduce the amount of pesticide used by nursery growers in Tennessee.
- Scouted for insects at nurseries and farms to see the impact of invasive species at local farms and nurseries.
- Managed a Facebook account promoting the use of intelligent technology to assist nursery growers. Connected with large nursery Facebook groups and advertised extensively on Facebook.
- This was a full-time, 40+ hours a week research job. I gained experience in planning and completing experiments in various conditions.

Department of Sociology

Jan 2021 – May 2021

- Learned about the process of Participatory Action Research through a semester long project taught by Dr. Meghan Conley exploring the multifaceted impacts of detention on undocumented immigrants.
- Wrote interview guides and conducted interviews of immigration attorneys, served as the primary student creating maps for our StoryMap deliverable, and worked with a community organization throughout the entire process.

Department of Forestry

Jan 2021 – May 2021

- Designed greenspaces for “Safety City” in Knoxville, a space for youth to learn safe traffic laws.
- Worked with landscape architect and forestry graduate students to create a list of appropriate trees for Safety City to provide shade.
- Researched the benefits of greenspaces for children under the guidance of Dr. Sharone Jean-Phillipe.

Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications

Sept – Nov 2020

- Constructed maps for the National Peanut Board and the United Soybean Board to examine broadband connection in farms.
- Interviewed National Peanut Board members to get an understanding of broadband connection. Asked questions about price barriers, connection, and assisted farmers in running internet speed tests to get a better understanding of broadband connection.
- Recorded lessons on how to use ArcGIS Online and ArcGIS Pro to teach other project members how to use GIS. Lessons included how to join tables, creating layers, and accessing base maps.

College of Social Work

Jan 2019 – May 2020

- Researched Climate Action plans in East Tennessee to examine how different counties responded to climate change.
- Transcribed interviews to assist in an Urban Rain Garden project in Knoxville.

Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology

June 2019 – Dec 2020

- Conducted research on mosquitos as disease vectors to analyze the La Crosse Encephalitis virus in Knox County. Collected, counted, and raised mosquitos as a part of daily tasks.
- Assisted in MEGABITESS, a program geared towards local teachers and educators in Knox County. This program connected the Entomology and Plant Pathology department and the Geography department to instruct teachers on ways to create interactive experiments for their class. Teachers would utilize Survey123 to record experiment results.

Relevant Work Experience

Beardsley Community Farm, Intern

June 2020-Present

- Helped provide healthy and organically grown produce to food insecure populations in Knoxville. Beardsley produces over ten thousand pounds of food each year and gives it to local organizations.
- Learned about the stages of production in a community farm- from planting to distribution and outreach.
- Helped new volunteers locate farm equipment and gave tours of the farm.

Academic Success Center, University of Tennessee

Sept 2019-Present

Lead Tutor

- Tutored and assisted students in a variety of subjects. Tutoring was mainly done on an individual basis. I saw an increase in grades for many of my students that I regularly tutored.
- Classes tutored include introductory geography courses, quantitative methods in

geography, French (beginner to intermediate), GIS, and algebra.

- Served as the only geography and GIS tutor for the school and was recommended by my professors to become a tutor.
- Led and facilitated trainings to tutors in the program.
- Mentored tutors and served as a liaison to other staff members in the Academic Success Center.
- Presented to classes on campus about important skills such as time management.
- Facilitated over two hundred and fifty individual tutoring sessions.

Honors and Awards

Honor Societies

- Phi Beta Kappa
- Gamma Theta Upsilon

Awards

- Master's Fellow Award
 - The most prestigious award for incoming Master's students at UGA.
- Osborne Summer Fellowship, Summer 2022
 - Summer fellowship for students from underrepresented backgrounds.
- Top Collegiate Scholar for the College of Arts and Sciences, Spring 2022
- Outstanding Graduate Senior Award in Geography, Spring 2022
 - Chosen as the top graduating senior in the Geography Department at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville
- Volunteer of Distinction for GPA, Spring 2022
- Finalist in Student Graduation Speech Competition, Spring 2022
- Gamma Theta Upsilon Excellence in Geography Award, Spring 2021
- Jimmy Walls Performance in Introductory Geology Award, Spring 2021
- First place in the Undergraduate Student Paper category at the 2019 Tennessee Entomological Society Meeting.
- McClung Speaking Contest, Fall 2018 - Received first place at the largest speaking competition in the Southeastern United States.
- Dean's List, seven semesters

Leadership

United Campus Workers – University of Georgia

External Communications Co-Chair

July 2022-Present

- Managed the social media for the largest campus union in Georgia.

- Created social media posts, fliers, and graphics for union events.

Athens Water Festival

Student Volunteer with the Marine Science Department

Sept 2022

- Encouraged active learning by teaching grade school children about marine creatures.
- Supervised children and assisted them in creative art projects about different fish and marine animals.

University of Tennessee's Alliance of Geographers and Sustainers

Co-President

Sept 2020 – May 2022

- Restarted a club to foster a community within the Geography Department. Reached out to faculty members and students to put on events for all those interested in geography and/or sustainability. Organized events such as trivia nights, discussions about undergraduate research, and volunteering at the local community farm.

Progressive Student Alliance

Co-Chair

Oct 2019 – May 2022

- Facilitated executive and general body meetings with a steady membership of over twenty people.
- Canvassed for local and national elections. Encouraged members to door knock, phone/text bank, and go to events for these candidates.
- Hosted teach ins and collaborated with the union on campus to inform the student body of pertinent issues at the university.
- Helped the houseless population of Knoxville by making and distributing hot food.
- Served as the delegate to the “United Students Against Sweatshops” National Convention in Winter 2020 and learned strategies on organizing at a national scale.

Women's Coordinating Council

Programming and Activism Liaison, Knoxville Monologues Coordinator **Oct 2019 – May 2022**

- Organized events targeted towards an intersectional feminist community.
- Served as the coordinator for an annual Monologue event centering individuals' stories of belonging from community members of Knoxville.

Manthan- Indian Association of the University of TN Knoxville

Secretary, Social Media Officer

September 2018 – May 2022

- Managed and organized events on campus for the Indian community of Knoxville.

Workshops

Anti-Racism in Agri-Food Systems

January 2023

- Nominated and attended a two-day workshop organized by University of California-Berkeley Department of Environmental Science, Policy, and Management.
- The workshop centered around building an inclusive and anti-racist curriculum and learning environment through the incorporation of social justice pillars.
- This workshop was a partnership between the University of Georgia-Athens, the University of California-Berkeley, and Spelman College (a historically black college for women).

Southern School for Working Women

August 2022

- Nominated and attended a summer education program for labor and political organizing.
- Collaborated with women from regions across the United States on ways to organize in the South.
- The workshop was held at the Highlander Center in Tennessee, a learning center that trained Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks.

USAS Winter Conference

February 2020

- Nominated to attend the winter conference for United Students Against Sweatshops, a nationwide student advocacy organization.
- Learned from organizers around the country about how to plan political campaigns and events. Also learned strategies of de-escalation and nonviolent means of dissent.