



Upstate New York

# BETWEEN POLIS AND GEOGRAPHY

African American Space in Upstate New York Explored

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It is commonly believed that the African American population in New York State developed as a result of the great migration of African American southerners to the north in search of industrial (factory) jobs in the early twentieth century. In fact, there were a number of African American settlements and urban enclaves throughout the state dating back to the early 1800's. It is the primary reason the upstate region of New York became a center for the underground rail-road, abolition of slavery and the early formation of organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Small cities such as Rochester and Auburn were the locations Frederick Douglas and Harriet Tubman chose to call home.

**BETWEEN POLIS AND GEOGRAPHY:** African American Space in Upstate New York Explored is a studio that will explore the historical and contemporary urban morphology of a number of upstate New York small cities which have a legacy of African American inhabitation. Many of these cities and sites have an African American narrative connected to what is referred to as the Freedom Trail, a series of locations connected to the abolition movements of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The projects will speculate on how the insertion of new civic "minded" spaces can generate new ways to reference a history that is poorly celebrated at best or, at the worse, purposely suppressed and erased. The projects will engage questions of community, monument, memorial and urban infrastructure. The studio will communicate with local community groups, city and state organizations who are invested in the preservation and furthering of this vital American history.