Unseen Routes: Mapping Black Albany's Past, Present, and Possible Futures
Process Note

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Unseen Routes came together the way memory does—through layers, through returns, through the small, insistent fragments that won't let you go. This project wasn't created in a straight line. It grew in cycles, guided by the BaKongo Cosmogram and shaped through a digital practice that relies as much on intuition and ancestral listening as it does on tools and technique.

I built the film using accessible digital platforms—Canva Pro for visual composition, Audacity for sound, my laptop and phone for gathering textures, images, and atmosphere. The choice was deliberate. Official maps of Albany were produced through systems of power; my map needed to emerge from the tools of everyday life. Using familiar software allowed me to work responsively, layering and re-layering images the way Black memory often operates: nothing is ever singular, and nothing ever fully disappears.

Abstraction became necessary early in the process. A literal map would reinforce the structures that erased Black neighborhoods in the first place. Instead, I worked with opacity, shifting overlays, and collage to create a visual field where histories could coexist without collapsing into a single narrative. Some images are clear; others hover at the edges of perception. This mirrors the lived experience of searching for traces of a community in a city that has reshaped itself to hide them.

Sound played a central role in building the film's emotional and historical environment. I layered low-frequency hums, river sounds, subtle textures, and atmospheric noise to echo the sensation of moving through an archive where much has been lost but something still vibrates beneath the surface. The soundscape is less about representation and more about resonance—it holds what the visual layers can't name.

Throughout the process, the cosmogram served as both structure and method. Each quadrant—Kala, Tukula, Luvemba, Musoni—guided a phase of creation: gathering origins, shaping presence, acknowledging rupture, and imagining emergence. I returned to this cycle repeatedly, editing not for linear continuity but for coherence within a longer, diasporic rhythm.

Finally, this work is rooted in my relationship to Albany itself. I created the film while walking the same streets my family has walked for generations, researching stories that live in the gaps of official archives. Ritual, reflection, and place-based listening shaped every stage of production. *Unseen Routes* is not only a film; it is a process of mapping what remains when erasure is not the end of the story.