

*“...As soon as I returned from my years abroad at the University, I set out to investigate Cuban culture and came across the black’s way of life. Without blacks, Cuba would not be Cuba. They could not be ignored. It was necessary to study this integral factor of Cuba, but nobody had studied it, and it seemed as if nobody wanted to study it. For some, blacks were not a worthwhile study. For others, the topic was prone to conflict and unpleasantness. In others still; it evoked shameful guilt and chastened the conscience. At the very least the study of blacks was an arduous task, disposed towards jokes and not well funded. There was abundant literature about slavery and abolition, and a great deal controversy surrounding this tragic theme embedded with hate, myths, politics, conjecture and romanticism. There were also some commissioned writings concerning Aponte, Manzano, Plácido, Maceo and other men of color that had gained national recognition in literature or in the struggle for freedom. Yet, blacks as human beings, their spirituality, their history, their ancestors, their languages, their art, their positive worth and their social possibilities... nothing...*

(Fernando Ortiz, 1942)