



*Jaqueline H. Arroyo
CEO and Founder
Afro-Cuban Alliance, Inc*

What do the dates May, 1912; June, 1921; and January 1923 have in common?

They represent shameful moments in history; massacres of Afro-Cubans and Afro-Americans that historians hid or distorted for decades.

On May, 1912, the Cuban army murdered between 2,000 and 3,000 Afro-Cubans. Because few official records documented the event, Cuban scholars estimates vary on how many thousands of people were killed. Many of those murdered were members of Cuba's first black political party, the Independent Party of Color. *What horrific offense did this organization and these citizens commit to deserve such a response from the Cuban government, you ask?* They openly advocated and protested for justice and equality for Afro-

Cubans through political and electoral involvement. No one was ever held responsible for this event and it was not discussed again for decades after the massacre.

Sad to say that this type of terrorism did not just happen in Cuba; it has happened in other countries and has certainly happened in the United States(US). Two events come to my mind that were similar to the massacre of 1912—Tulsa Race Riots in 1921 and the Rosewood Massacre in 1923. Like in Cuba, these massacres were based on racial hysteria and class struggle, it resulted in the death of individuals and property, the Afro population fought back, no one was ever punished for the crime, and for decades afterwards no one spoke of the event. However, in both of the U.S. cases, decades later, an official record was finally established and the government offered surviving family members minor reparations.

If the old adage “those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it” is true, then we need to bring to light those events that historians have hid or distorted for their own purposes, so that Afro-descendant populations have an accurate picture of their history. Let this *Islas* issue start the process. This issue is dedicated to the memory and bravery of members of the Independent Party of Color and the men and women that fought and died for equality in 1912. May, 2012 marked the 100th anniversary of the Independent Party of Color's protest and subsequent massacre. This *Islas* issue focuses on the many perspectives of this government sanctioned massacre of thousands of women, children, and men.

But we need to continue this dialogue beyond this issue. When our government, our media, and our institutions of higher learning select certain events for remembering and ignore others, we have a responsibility to our children and their children to supply the missing information. In the U.S., one of our African American radio hosts has a daily segment called the “Little-Known Black History Fact.” This segment talks about the successes and injustices in the African American community--past and present. ¹ Let's start our own library of “Little-Known Afro-Descendant History Facts.” If you know of an event that illustrates a success or injustice; share

* Thomas “Tom” Joyner is an American radio host, host of the nationally syndicated The Tom Joyner Morning Show.