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Blackness in the White Nation: A History of Afro-Uruguay

George Reid Andrews

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Uruguay is not conventionally thought of as part of the African diaspora, yet during the period of Spanish colonial rule, thousands of enslaved Africans arrived in the country. Afro-Uruguayans played important roles in Uruguay's national life, creating the second-largest black press in Latin America, a racially defined political party, and numerous social and civic organizations.

Afro-Uruguayans were also central participants in the creation of Uruguayan popular culture and the country's principal musical forms, tango and *candombe*. *Candombe*, a style of African-inflected music, is one of the defining features of the nation's culture, embraced equally by white and black citizens.

In *Blackness in the White Nation*, George Reid Andrews offers a comprehensive history of Afro-Uruguayans from the colonial period to the present. Showing how social and political mobilization is intertwined with *candombe*, he traces the development of Afro-Uruguayan racial discourse and argues that *candombe*'s evolution as a central part of the nation's culture has not fundamentally helped the cause of racial equality. Incorporating lively descriptions of his own experiences as a member of a *candombe* drumming and performance group, Andrews consistently connects the struggles of Afro-Uruguayans to the broader issues of race, culture, gender, and politics throughout Latin America and the African diaspora generally.

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