

Acknowledgments

This book has been in process since I was in fourth grade, when I wrote short stories and used images from *Essence* magazine to tell a familiar story of what it feels like to be a Black girl in the United States. *Shapeshifters* would have never come to be, however, if it weren't for the overwhelming generosity and fearless honesty of Janice and the other young women at the Fresh Start shelter. I owe this work to all of the young women in Detroit, and particularly the women and girls in the Brown family, who agreed to share their lives with me. I am also grateful to the staff and administration of the Fresh Start shelter. They worked tirelessly with the best intentions to make a space where none had existed for Black girls in Detroit. We loved, soared, failed, and tried our best together.

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