

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

STRANGE AS it might seem, this book project began in South Africa. During the last years of apartheid I worked for revolutionary change in both an underground and above-ground capacity, for the Charterist Movement in general and the ANC in particular. During this period, I began to see how essential an unflinching paradigmatic analysis is to a movement dedicated to the complete overthrow of an existing order. The neoliberal compromises that the radical elements of the Chartist Movement made with the moderate elements were due, in large part, to our inability or unwillingness to hold the moderates' feet to the fire of a political agenda predicated on an unflinching paradigmatic analysis. Instead, we allowed our energies and points of attention to be displaced by and onto pragmatic considerations. Simply put, we abdicated the power to pose the question—and the power to pose the question is the greatest power of all. Elsewhere, I have written about this unfortunate turn of events (*Incognegro: A Memoir of Exile and Apartheid*), so I'll not rehearse the details here. Suffice it to say, this book germinated in the many political and academic discussions and debates that I was fortunate

enough to be a part of at a historic moment and in a place where the word *revolution* was spoken in earnest, free of qualifiers and irony. For their past and ongoing ideas and interventions, I extend solidarity and appreciation to comrades Amanda Alexander, Franco Barchiesi, Teresa Barnes, Patrick Bond, Ashwin Desai, Nigel Gibson, Steven Greenberg, Allan Horowitz, Bushy Kelebonye (deceased), Tefu Kelebonye, Ulrike Kistner, Kamogelo Lekubu, Andile Mngxitama, Prishani Naidoo, John Shai, and S'bu Zulu.

I returned to the United States in the latter part of 1996 and was fortunate enough to pick up the thread of these debates—but in a U.S. context—with political activists who despite their lengthy incarceration, or maybe because of it, had remained true to a vision of comprehensive change. I am speaking of U.S. political prisoners and political exiles living in Cuba. The political prisoners and exiles who have had the greatest impact on my thinking and, subsequently, on the zeitgeist of this book are Nehanda Abiodun, Mumia Abu Jamal, Sundiata Acoli, Charles Sims Africa, Debbie Sims Africa, Janet Holloway Africa, Merle Africa (deceased), Ramona Africa, Safiya Bakhari-Alston (deceased), Herman Bell, Marilyn Buck, Marshall Eddie Conway, Linda Evans, Ruchell Cinque Magee, Jalil Muntaqim, Sekou Odinga, Mutulu Shakur, and Russell Maroon Shoats. They have given generously of their time by way of correspondence with both me and my students. Their perspectives have strengthened our resolve to imbue our research questions with a level of political integrity that is often looked down upon in the academy. Thank you!

My engagement with and critique of Marxism, White feminism, psychoanalysis, postcolonial studies, and film studies would not have evolved into a book were it not for years of challenging exchanges with provocative intellectuals in these fields. Namely, Stephen Barker, Chris Berry, Julia Bryan-Wilson, Thomas Elsaesser, Harun Farocki, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Renate Holub, Anton Kaes, Steve Martinot, Janet Neary, Joel Olson, Dylan Rodriguez, Mark Sandberg, Donovan Sherman, Kaja Silverman, Charles Sugnet, Gary Whitmer, and Linda Williams.

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What is a Black? A subject? An object? A former slave? A slave? The relational status, or lack thereof, of Black **subjectivity** (subjectivity under erasure) haunts Black studies as a field just as it haunts the *socius*. Since my return from South Africa, I have had the good fortune to be involved in an extended dialogue about our relational status, with Black intellectuals whose work is both formidable and humbling. They include Lindon Barrett (deceased), Jocelyn Burrell, Gregory L. Caldwell, Barbara Christian (deceased), Huey Copeland, Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, Ronald Judy, Sara Kaplan, Kara Keeling, Claude-Rheal Malary, David Marriott, Fred Moten, Matt Richardson, Omar Ricks, Akinyele Umoja, João C. Vargas, and Jaye Austin Williams.

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in struggle, to embody strategic rigidity but remain tactically flexible. Joy showed me how to maintain one's credentials as an academic without sacrificing one's principles as a revolutionary. In a Gramsci reading group, Amanda was alive to bending Gramsci toward the Black position, and she helped me change my research question from "What does it mean to be free?" to "What does it mean to suffer?" Jared taught me that the truth of the paradigm (though not the totality) is not capital and not Oedipus, but anti-Blackness.

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