

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This is a book about how shifting a starting point changes both the stories we tell and how we understand the realities we inhabit. As a result, it seems appropriate that I start my thanks in Pholela, the place from which these stories come and the place that has forever shaped who I am as a scholar and a person. My first and biggest thanks go to Thokozile Nguse, who has been my key interlocutor for more than thirteen years now. I conducted all of the ethnographic research for this book with Thoko, who is equal parts sister, friend, research assistant, and sounding board. Her grace, wisdom, and humility inform all of the research and writing I have conducted, and I thank her not only for helping me understand and know this place, but for teaching me how to be in Pholela and in life more generally. Nonhlanhla Dlamini has been a wonderful friend, guide, and interlocutor from my earliest days in her community. More thanks go to Solani Shezi, Thabisile Dlamini, Lulu Sokhela, and Khanyisile Dlamini for all their companionship and introductions. I also owe a big thanks to Thoko's extended family, who have always given me a home in Pholela, and to the Phoswa family, who have done the same. Fieldwork can be grinding and tiring, but the chance to sit with, chat with, sing with, and marvel at all of my dear *gogos* has always put a smile on my face and reminded me why I do what I do. *Ngiyabonga kakhulu, bonke bagogo bam. Kakhulu.*

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