It should go without saying that a book is always a collective effort, rather than a singularly individual one. At the time of writing, this project has been with me for over a quarter of my life; as a result, it has been profoundly shaped by innumerable people, communities, and institutions. My editor at Cornell University Press, Jim Lance, and my developmental editor, Steve Hiatt, have shepherded this book through its many stages with immense care and attention, and cartographer Mike Bechthold created two beautiful illustrations for the manuscript. At UC Berkeley, I am deeply indebted to my dissertation committee—Jake Kosek, Michael Watts, Donald Moore, and Stephen Small—for their unwavering support and guidance over the years. I am also grateful for the way that our mentoring relationships have evolved into deep and meaningful friendships. It is not an exaggeration to say that I would not have finished my PhD if it were not for my powerhouse of a graduate cohort in the geography department, and especially the sisterhood that we still to this day lovingly refer to as the “Georgrababes”—Andrea Marson, Meredith Palmer, Erin Torkelson, and Mollie Van Gordon. Beyond my cohort, Ilaria Giglioli was and continues to be a trusted interlocutor on questions of racial boundary drawing in the Mediterranean. In addition, my many stimulating discussions with Angelo Matteo Caglioti about racial science in Liberal and Fascist Italy through the Center for Science, Technology, Medicine, and Society at UC Berkeley Italy influenced this book in profound ways.

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the years as I navigate junior faculty life. Finally, the Theorizing Race after Race research group at the Science and Justice Research Center has been a fruitful site of transdisciplinary engagement with questions of scientific knowledge production and the reproduction of racisms in the twenty-first century.

All along the way, my community at UC Santa Cruz has continued to grow and expand, even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic during which I am currently writing. Whether through (pre-pandemic) dumpling parties with Amy Mihyang Ginther, A. M. Darke, Muriam Davis, and Nidhi Mahajan, epic Dungeons & Dragons campaigns with micha cardenas, Michael Chemers, Marcia Ochoa, and Elizabeth Swensen, or socially distanced Seabright walks with Lily Balloffet, I have found myself consistently surrounded by brilliant, caring, and politically fierce friends.

This book has been touched by more friends, comrades, and interlocutors in Italy than I could possibly list here—including Stephanie Adams, Angela Hai-sha Adamou, Evelyne Afaawua, Aida Bodian, Marilena Delli, Kwanza Musi Dos Santos, Gail Milissa Grant, Tommy Kuti, Fred Kuwornu, Ruth MacCarthy, Theophilus Marboah, Ark Joseph Ndulue, Medhin Paolos, Tamara Pizzoli, Adama Sanneh, Kibra Sebhat, Rahel Sereke, Ariam Tekle, Selam Tesfai, and Veronica Costanza Ward. I am also grateful for the community of academics and researchers I met over the course of my research in Italy who are dedicated to antiracism and anticolonialism, including Sandra Kyremeh, Barbara Ofosu-Somuah, Igiaba Scego, Mackda Ghebremariam Tesfau’, Candice Whitney, Annalisa Frisina, Gaia Giuliani, Valentina Migliarini, and Pina Piccolo. I am especially proud to be a member of the Black Mediterranean Research Collective, alongside Ida Danewid, Vivian Gerrand, Giulia Grechi, Giuseppe Grimaldi, Christina Lombardi-Diop, Angelica Pesarini, Gabriele Proglio, Timothy Raeymakers, and P. Khalil Saucier. I have also benefited from the mentorship, support, and guidance of many other scholars of Italy and Black Europe, including Jacqueline Nassy Brown, John Gennari, Cristiano Giordano, Stephanie Malia Hom, Heather Merrill, Ann Morning, Olivette Otele, Lorgia García Peña, Laura Ruberto, and Angeline Young. And I could not have carried out the archival portion of my research without Cristina Cilli, head archivist at the Archivio Lombroso at the University of Turin’s Museo di Antropologia Criminale “Cesare Lombroso”; Giacomo Giacobini, scientific director of the Archivio Carlo Giacomini at the Museo di Anatomia Umana “Luigi Ronaldo”; Gianluigi Mangiapane, researcher at the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography at the University of Turin; and Giorgio Manzi and Giovanni Destro Bisol of the Istituto Italiano di Antropologia.

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Words cannot express the love and gratitude I hold for my parents Gigliola and Edward, who have been a rock of support throughout this entire project. They have read every word of this book (or listened to me read it) multiple times; they have been a sounding board for my ideas; and they have buoyed me with encouragement when I was feeling most discouraged and insecure. My partner Ali Esmaili was a source of infinite love, care, and empathy (not to mention, some deliciously decadent Saturday morning breakfasts) throughout the final stages of this book project, and for that I appreciate him immensely. I am also fortunate to have amazingly compassionate friends—including Melissa Henry, Ash Inglenook, Sarah Jimenez, Janina Larenas, Costanza Rampini, and Barbara Snyder—who have been willing to drop everything and swoop in with food, a stiff drink, a long phone call, new music, silly animal GIFs, or a walk when I need them most. And those who know me well would be shocked if I did not mention Claude Debris, my beloved dumpster gremlin. I never could have imagined that a fuzzy little stray kitten found in a compost bin at a marina would become my most fiercely loyal (though stubbornly bitey) comrade.

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Some notes on the text you are about to read: I have used pseudonyms for most names; these instances are marked in endnotes. I used real names (with permission) when writing about individuals who were speaking or acting in their capacity as prominent figures in the public eye. In addition, some of the material in this book has been previously published elsewhere. The introduction and chapter 4 draw from my article “In Search of Black Italia: Notes on Race, Belonging, and Activism in the Black Mediterranean,” which was published in *Transition* 123 in 2017. Chapter 2 draws from my article “Making Italy: Afro-Italian Entrepreneurs and the Racial Boundaries of Citizenship,” published in *Social and Cultural Geography* in 2019.

In 2019, the award-winning Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was awarded the Premio Speciale Afriche (Special Africa Prize) at the BookCity Milano festival. During a question-and-answer session, she turned to the subject of Black Italian representation:

> The story of not just Afro-Italians, but of Afro-Europeans, is invisible. We don’t hear those stories. They exist, right? And by Afro-Europeans I mean people of African descent who were born in European countries, whose lives have been here, who speak the languages. The same people who, I am told, today in this country are not allowed to be citizens until they are 18. I find that ridiculous. . . . Those stories, even I don’t know them; I want to hear them, because I think they haven’t been heard; they’re invisible. We need to hear them.1

Her comments were met with raucous applause, including shouts of “Thank you!” from Black Italians in the audience. But the next day, the Italian-Somali
writer Igiaba Scego responded to Adichie’s remarks by pushing back against the notion that Black Italian stories are hidden:

The story of Afro-Italians is not silent, and this is important to reiterate. . . . There is a history of literature, a plural story, that has not been silent; a story made by immigrants and the children of immigrants, who have fought against the color line that was imposed upon them by an Italian system that is deaf to plurality. What we have to tell Chimamanda and everyone else is that there is an Afro-Italian story and, more broadly, that there is a plural story here of people with immigrant backgrounds. A story that has been forged in trade union struggles against labor exploitation, in the struggles in the piazze for citizenship, in the taking of stands against racist murders (Fermo, Florence, Macerata), in the struggle against colonial amnesia, in the demands by asylum-seekers against an Italian state that does not even remember colonizing those countries. . . . It is our duty to tell our stories, and above all to build bridges with their struggles, because even if it comes in different shades, ultimately we all experience the same discrimination.2

I hope that the stories, accounts, and analyses I share in this book can contribute to the ever-growing chorus of voices helping to narrate the past, present, and future of Black Italy and the struggle for substantive racial justice across Italy, Black Europe, and the Black Mediterranean.