I AM ALWAYS astonished by the number of people it takes to bring a single-authored book to publication, and this work is no exception. This project has deep roots; its origins are found in my dissertation, in which I investigated the founding of the National PTA. Therefore, I must begin by acknowledging the guidance of my thesis advisors, Vito Perrone, Sally Schwager, Barbara Beatty, and Linda Eisenmann. These four pushed my thinking about schooling and the influence of women volunteers, and when I felt challenged as a newcomer to history, Vito would always remind me to just tell a story.

My early attempts at writing history involved a focus on biographical analysis, but these investigations took me only so far analytically. As luck would have it, I landed a position as a research assistant during the last two years of my graduate program that has shaped my thinking for this study. Working under the direction of Theda Skocpol and Marshall Ganz of the Civic Engagement Project at Harvard University compelled me to think in terms of networks, civic associations, and the connections that are created between and among historical actors. I am indebted to Theda, Marshall, and the rest of the CEP researchers for helping me strengthen the analysis and giving me the framework within which this study resides. More recently, Abigail Peck sent me additional data from the CEP as I was finalizing the manuscript.

When I finished my dissertation, I knew there was a larger story to be told about the racial policies and practices of the PTA, but uncovering the data and writing that history would take me well beyond my graduate school years. Presenting my emerging ideas at conferences as I continued to search for documentation on the National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers proved to be a process that helped me develop the arguments and findings for this book. During the years I was developing those ideas, I benefited from the wisdom and encouragement of many colleagues, including Jim Anderson,

My writing group pals Alison Cook-Sather, Alice Lesnik, and Kristine Lewis helped at a most critical point in the manuscript, reading first drafts of chapters. Their suggestions and comments sustained me throughout the process, and their being outsiders to history has helped, I hope, make the narrative more accessible to readers in general. Additional projects I worked on during my pre-tenure years connected me with scholars who have come to be mentors and friends. My collaboration with Jane Bernard-Powers, Margaret Smith Crocco, Carole Hahn, and Joseph Watras has, I believe, helped me round out my repertoire of research skills.

A handful of grants supported this research, including a Radcliffe Grant for Graduate Women; a Grant-in-Aid from the Rockefeller Archive Center in Pocantico Hills, New York; and a Research Travel Grant from the Institute for Southern Studies at the University of South Carolina. I also appreciated the help of archivists Chuck Hill at Eastern Kentucky University, Annie Wang at the National PTA, Jason Kneip and Samantha McNeilly at Auburn University at Montgomery, the folks at the Library of Congress, and Ken Rose and the staff at the Rockefeller Archive Center. Several grants from my department at Temple University’s College of Education and two summer research fellowships allowed me the time, freedom, and financing to work on the book and gather the hard-to-find black PTA data. I am especially grateful for the unwavering support of my department chair, Thomas Walker. A research and study leave from Temple University allowed me the time to draft the book manuscript, and several individuals helped me pull things together toward the end. I am indebted to Jim Gilmour for preparing the charts and tables for the book and to Claudia Keenan for her feedback on the complete manuscript. Jackie McCarthy at the National PTA and PJ Norlander and Joy Gilbert at Arcadia Publishing approved the use of photos from their collections. I am appreciative of the expert guidance of Sandy Crooms and the rest of the staff at The Ohio State University Press.

My parents have always been there as a source of support and strength. Losing my father and gaining a son while writing the manuscript has reminded me of the importance of keeping things in perspective and keeping me from thinking the book, as significant as it is to me professionally, was the only thing that mattered. As if that were not enough to remind me, Michael has been at my side, prodding me and encouraging me all the while, giving me the time and space to see this work come to publication. I dedicate this book to him.