First, I must thank God for bringing me this far. Next, I thank my family for supporting me, from CES 110X in the Bronx all the way to the tenure track at the University of Pittsburgh. My grandmother Nene; my mother, Diane Covington, and father, Roger Dixon; my siblings: Tavi, Dana, Nyesha, Brandon, Michelle, Taurean, and Tristan; all my aunts and uncles, especially Sony, Audrey, Danny, Tony, Shirley-Mae, JoAnn, Abby, Duke, and Dionne; all my many cousins, especially Chris and Leisa; my mother-in-law, Teeta, and sister-in-law Dell—indeed, the whole village.

I must thank many people who have contributed to the book’s development: my dissertation committee at the University of Michigan: Elisha Renne, Kelly Askew, Tata Mbala Nkanga, Maxwell Owusu, and Julius Scott. I also thank the Department of Anthropology, especially Laurie Marx, and the Department (then Center) for Afroamerican and African Studies, especially Kevin Gaines, Mamadou Diouf, Devon Adjei, Beth James, and Chuck Phillips. My fellowship at the Institute for the Humanities enabled me to complete the writing of my dissertation. I am grateful to all my colleagues (past and present) in the Department of Africana Studies at the University of Pittsburgh: Brenda, Jerry, Christel, Michael, Oronde, Michele, Cecil, Joseph, Kwame, and Vernell for their support.

There are so many people that impacted and facilitated my research in the Congo: Tata Fu-Kiau Bunseki, may he rest in peace; Professor Kimpianaga Mahaniah—a great resource and support to me both in Luozi and Kinshasa. Ne Nkamu Luyindula—thank you for the Kikongo, drumming, and dance lessons and the late-night debates. In Luozi: Pere Blaise and the Catholic mission; the Luyobisa family (Pa Luyobisa, Ma Suzanne, and the children); the
DMNA church (Dibundu dia Mpeve ya Nlongo mu Afelika); Charles Mayangi Masamba; the members of BDK (Bundu dia Kongo) in Luozi; the Communauté Evangélique du Congo (CEC) churches and mission; Ma Jackie; Reagan, my little brother; Eric and Yannic; Ma Marcelline, my sister; Tata Zam. Ma Muniangui; Ton-Ton Niki Niki; Ma Mambweni; Ma Sylvie; Ma Virginie; Jose Dianzungu and his wife; Papa Leon, everyone who allowed me to interview them—I cannot thank you enough. I just hope my work does justice to what I learned from all of you.

In Kinshasa: Papa Jean Kambayi Bwatshia and Mama Angelique; Mama Annie Meta, may her soul rest in peace. Thank you to the public affairs section of the American Embassy in Kinshasa; Tata Nzuzi and Tata Ndundu, Abbe Ngimbi, Frederick Ngandu. I must thank the staff at the National Archives in Kinshasa; the librarian at CEAPAS (Centre d’Etudes pour l’Action Sociale), and Pere Body at Scholasticat. I had many friends in Kinshasa; within the diasporic community—Jill and Anthony, Aleathea, Patsy and Marco, S.T., Mike, Ray, and any others I forgot here; thank you. In Gombe and other parts of Kinshasa—Christian, Bolene, and everyone else—thank you for the great times and stimulating conversation. Ma Helen, Ma Patricia, Pere Matota, Pere Alain Nkisi, and friends at the Liberian embassy in Congo, thank you.

I would also like to thank the staff at the Tervuren Museum and the African Archives in Belgium, the American Baptist Historical Society, and the Angus Library for all their help. I can’t forget my community of Congo/Central Africa/Africa researchers: Wyatt MacGaffey (thank you for your comments), Ira Dworkin, Nichole Bridges, John Nimis, Ed Davis, Bruce Whitehouse, David Eaton, John Cinnamon, Jeremy Rich, Charles Tshimanga, Bennetta Jules-Rosette, John Janzen, Bob White, Cécile Fromont, John Thornton, Linda Heywood, Alma Gottlieb, Paul Stoller, Mwenda Ntarangwi, Nicole Eggers, T.J. Desch-Obi, Jessica Krug, Jemima Pierre, and anyone I may have forgotten. I also want to thank my Black Performance Theory Community; Thomas DeFrantz, E. Patrick Johnson, Stephanie Batiste, Jennifer Devere Brody, Anita Gonzalez, Jeffrey McCune, and many others. Thank you also, to Biza and Titos Sompa and Bichini bia Congo for giving me the embodied knowledge of Kongo performance.

For funding, I must thank the Institute of International Education (IIE) Fulbright program, Rackham Graduate School, Center for African and AfroAmerican Studies (CAAS) Africa Initiatives, Center for World Performance Studies, Institute for the Humanities, Department of Anthropology, Council of Alumnae Women, Richard D. and Mary Jane Edwards Endowed Publication Fund, International Institute, the Ford Foundation
Fellowship Program, African Studies Program and Global Studies Center at Pitt, and the Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences for funding my project.

I am grateful to my research assistants Siatta Dennis and Loretta Agyemang for their help. I must also thank my friends here in the United States who have supported me throughout my graduate career and after. My writing group members, Patricia Moonsammy, Shanesha Brooks-Tatum, and Menna Demessie; Grace Okrah for all the support and encouragement (keep at it); my cohort and other anthro folks—Xochitl, Britt, Henrike, Sergio, Marisabel, Cecilia, Sonia, Lara, and others. My writing partners in Pittsburgh, especially Renã Robinson. My best friend Chidimma, thank you for everything, Chi! My Ford family: David, Koritha, Aisha, Tyson, Tene, Laurence, and others who have been supportive. The Ford postdoctoral fellowship allowed me to complete my book revisions. In Pittsburgh, I must thank Edda Fields-Black for her guidance and feedback, Alberta Sbragia, Pat Manning, Macrina Lelei, Lara Putnam, Joyce Bell, Waverly Duck, and all my other colleagues—you know who you are. I also want to thank Miriam Angress, associate editor at Duke; the series editors, Jacob K. Olupona, Dianne M. Stewart, and Terrence L. Johnson; my project editor, Susan Albury; and the two anonymous reviewers for their feedback and encouragement.

To ma fille, Leyeti, I love you dearly; you forced me to keep pushing harder. To my baby son Lincoln, welcome to our family. Last but not least, I must thank my husband, Lincoln Ward, for standing by my side through all these years. He often tells me, “you can’t see yourself swimming.” Your encouragement and support mean the world to me. If there is anybody that I did not mention here—thank you all the same.
