

Acknowledgments

THIS BOOK HAS BEEN a long time in the making, and it could not have happened without a lot of support along the way. First and foremost, without my parents I doubt I would have come up with the idea for this book. When my father left his home in the small city of Freetown, Sierra Leone, in the late 1940s, he could not have known the trajectory his life would take. Yet in many ways he was coming full circle, retracing the steps his ancestors from Tennessee and Virginia had taken two hundred years before. My “African” father was coming back to his “American” roots. His great-great-grandfather George Erskine had left the United States seeking freedom for his family in Africa. My mother’s story too is born out of the enslavement of Africans in the United States. Her father’s roots in the South (Georgia) and her mother’s in the North (New York and Massachusetts) are part of the larger story of black Americans in the United States. That my mother should also have come full circle by marrying an “African” is testament to the links between African Americans and Africa in the last four hundred years. This book tells part of their story and is dedicated to the memory of my father, Edward Wilmot Blyden III, and in honor of my mother, Amelia Elizabeth Blyden (née Kendrick). It is to these two remarkable individuals that I owe the greatest debt. I have attained much, both personally and professionally, with their love and support.

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AFRICAN AMERICANS AND AFRICA

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