## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My academic journey for this book begins with Mario Sifuentez, who was my teaching assistant for my first ethnic studies course at the University of Oregon. He insisted that I become an ethnic studies major, and now we are colleagues at the University of California-Merced. He might be the primary reason I never achieved my dream to become a PE teacher. Thanks, Mario. Fiona Ngô convinced me to stay in her incomprehensible upper-division U.S. empire course. Fiona, I cannot thank you enough for your continued support. Lynn Fujiwara and Steve Morozumi mentored me in the classroom and the Multicultural Center, helping us build a politically conscious and caring community, where the work did not feel like work. Many thanks to Matt Garcia, Adria Imada, Jayna Brown, Shari Huhndorf, and all the faculty in ethnic studies who shared their deep love of literature, history, and film at the margins. Shout out to Mark Padoongpatt, Angie Morrill, Chris Finley, and the other incredible Duck grads who have represented in graduate school and beyond. Haben Woldu, Nadia Hasan, LaTina Lewis, John Joo, and Andrew Munson helped take my mind off school with game nights, student events, organizing, and perfect company.

This book is also not possible without the community of scholars and activists at UC–San Diego's Department of Ethnic Studies. Yến Lê Espiritu provided caring support and incisive feedback that got me across the dissertation finish line. She welcomed so many people into her home for countless holiday parties, Tết celebrations, and writing group sessions. Thank you for your constant support. Denise Ferreira da Silva challenged us all to rethink our understanding of race and modern representation. I still only understand a fraction of what she taught us, but I treasure the writing group meetings that lasted until early morning. Thank

you to Natalia Molina, K. Wayne Yang, Lisa Park, and the wonderful ethnic studies faculty. At different times your courses, encouragement, suggestions, and kindness helped me get through the grind of graduate school.

I'm so grateful for the incredibly supportive friendships I found at UC–San Diego. Thank you to my cohort—Ayako Sahara, Thea Quiray Tagle, Rashné Limke, Eugene Gambol, Angelica Yanez, and Candice Rice—for being generous scholars. Those first two years were especially hard, but they were hard together. We miss you, Candice. Thank you to "The Fist" cohort—Long Bui, Cathi Kozen, Tomoko Furukawa, Angie Morrill, and Ma Vang—for making me and Maile Arvin honorary members and for endless karaoke nights. I'm also grateful for the mentorship from Natchee Barnd, José Fusté, Becky Kinney, Angela Kong, Traci Brynne Voyles, and others as well as friendships with honorary ethnic studies members like Josen Diaz, Joo Ok Kim, and Ryan Moran. Whether it was writing groups, picnics, workshops, or happy hours, you helped me navigate the unforgiving waters of graduate school. Later cohort members such as Christina Carney, Kyung Hee Ha, Marilisa Narvarro, Stevie Ruiz, Lila Sharif, Davorn Sisavath, and Zalvador Zarate infused the program with further friendship and brilliance.

A special thank you to UC-San Diego staff, including Theresa Atkinson, Yolanda Escamilla, Christa Ludeking, JoJo Ruanto-Ramirez, and Edwina Welch, who were vital in helping me and other students earn their degrees and foster community. Thank you to Dylan Rodriguez and Jodi Kim for your support during my short time as a visiting scholar at UC-Riverside. Mariam Lam has offered continual support throughout my academic journey, providing the perfectly timed joke and reminding me to not be too hard on myself. I'm also thankful to Sylvia Nam, Hun Kim, Sarah Grant, Lee Ann Wang, and Brian Chung for their warm friendship and disciplinary insights.

UC-Merced has delivered a home and community that I never could have imagined. Thank you to my exceptional colleagues in the Department of History & Critical Race and Ethnic Studies. To Myles Ali, Susan Amussen, Christina Baker, Kevin Dawson, Sapana Doshi, Sean Malloy, Maria Martin, Muey Saeteurn, Nicosia Shakes, Mario Sifuentez, Sabrina Smith, Tommy Tran, Sholeh Quinn, and Ma Vang, I cherish our friendships and collective humor that brings levity to the serious work we do. I'm humbled to work with you in ways that shine light on our students and does right by the life and legacy of Dr. Romina Ruvalcaba. I offer deep gratitude to our fearless leader, David Rouff. He helped us transform into a department and navigated us through the unprecedented times of COVID. His words of encouragement, acknowledgment of unrecognized labor, and awareness that words have meaning and should come with action are truly appreciated. Thank you to Whitney Pirtle, Meredith Van Natta, and Maria-Elena Young for being coconspirators of "good trouble." My deep thanks to Lorena Alvarado, Nigel Hatton, Mai-Linh Hong, Anneeth Kaur Hundle, Dalia Magaña, Yehuda Sharim, and Ken Yoshida for your warmth, friendship, and scholarly support.

Also, thank you Critical Race and Ethnic Studies undergraduate and graduate students, who have fueled my passion to teach. Special thanks to May Xiong and Nico Lecy, who have helped with copy editing my manuscript. An unexpected obstacle was trying to survive (and write) during a global pandemic. Sora Kim and Thomas Lee, along with Gemma and Esmae, through podding together were a source of support and joy during such difficult times. Thank you to all my other Merced friends for being my community.

Certain people had a direct impact on helping this book come to life. Stephen Novak, head of Columbia University's Archive and Special Collections at the A. C. Long Health Sciences Library, and Linnea Anderson, archivist at the University of Minnesota's Social Welfare History Archives, thank you for helping me navigate my archival research trips. Cathy Hannabach, Rachel Fudge, and Karen Dewart McEwen from Ideas on Fire provided unbelievably detailed feedback on my manuscript. Amy Smith Bell, I appreciate your magnificent copy editing. Maile Arvin, thank you for generously reviewing chapter 5.

Nora Becker and the many people on the University of California Press team and board helped immensely with all of the intricate parts of publishing. Thank you to UC Press for supporting first-generation scholars through its FirstGen Program. A sincere thank you to the two anonymous peer reviewers, a thankless but such an academic community-building need. The Center for Humanities at UC–Merced provided funding to help cover costs of developmental editing and indexing. The Betty Lee Sung Research Grant helped pay for a manuscript review. Meg O'Shea allowed me to use her beautiful and powerful artwork for my book cover. Chloe Rickert, Aimy Li, and Rajani Martinez-Howell have been lifesaving by providing wonderful babysitting care while I worked on evenings and weekends. Lastly, Niels Hooper, I cannot thank you enough for believing in my book and helping it get out into the world.

A vital source of support in the writing of this book has been from the critical adoption studies community. I could not have done this work without the incredible mentorship of Kim Park Nelson, Eleana Kim, and Jennifer Kwon Dobbs. Kim and Eleana gave thoughtful and generous comments on the first draft of my manuscript. Although a case of COVID disrupted what would have been an epic manuscript review workshop in Yosemite, I'm forever thankful for their intellectual guidance. Thank you to Mark Jerng for your early mentorship, which included inviting me as a very junior scholar to an invite-only conference on adoption, making it my first international travel for this work. I'm beyond thankful to Emily Hipchen, Jenny Heijun Wills, Margaret Homans, and Cynthia Callahan for welcoming me onto the executive committee of the Alliance for the Study of Adoption and Culture (ASAC). I appreciate the work of current and past ASAC executive committee members for helping organize research-affirming spaces such as the biennial conference and the *Adoption & Culture* journal.

Thank you to research collaborators Amanda Baden, Alfonso Ferguson, JaeRan Kim, Kimberly McKee, and Elizabeth Raleigh. While collaborative research in the humanities is often undervalued, I learned so much from you all. I'm grateful for the friendships created at adoption conferences. It has been inspiring to learn from Shannon Bae, Lisa Marie Brimmer, Kelly Condit-Shrestha, Kira Donnell, Daniel Drennan ElAwar Grace Shu Gerloff, Shannon Gibney, Steve Kalb, Beth Kopacz, Mette Kim Larsen, Sarah Park Dahlen, and so many other brilliant scholars. Thank you to Kelly Rich and Catherine Nguyen, who brought together a group of critical adoption scholars for a stimulating two-day seminar at Harvard. Special thanks to Lee Herrick. It has been wonderful to build a small but important community of Asian American adoptees in the Central Valley.

My work is indebted to the countless adoptees whom I have met and worked with along the way. I was honored to be involved with the Adoption Museum Project and the Society of Adoptee Professionals of Color in Adoption. The former a brainchild of the visionary Laura Callen and the latter led by Amanda Baden and Susan Branco. These projects elevated the diverse and collective experiences and voices of adoptees and those touched/impacted by adoption. I'm immensely grateful to my Adoptee Camp interlocuters. Working at the camp during the summers of 2006, 2008, and 2010 was such a formative experience, where I had the privilege to meet hundreds of transracial and transnational adoptees across the United States. I'm thankful to the adult adoptees whom I interviewed for their time, insight, and friendship.

Thank you to the Hong Kong adoptees whom I met in 2013 and beyond, especially those who participated in surveys and interviews. My theorization of kinship sprouted from this work. I am deeply grateful to all the adoptees who are doing important work right now, sharing their stories through beautiful memoirs such as Nicole Chung, Susan Harness, Susan Ito, and Angela Tucker; informative podcasts such as Nari Baker and Robyn Joy Park in *Labor of Love*; or through organizations such as Adoption Mosaic with adoptee leaders like Astrid Castro and Shelise Gieseke. There are too many adoptees to list but thank you.

I end by thanking my family. Growing up, my brother, Stefan, and I played long and hard together. If you must have an older brother, he is the kind you want. Jennifer, thank you for always willing to play fight. Ryland and Everett, you remind me of the beauty of growing up. Enid, thank you for being a wonderful aunt to me and the kids. We miss Tim. Eric, thank you for the laughs and regaling us with tales of your RV travels. Grandma and Grandpa Myers, thank you for our walks, beach and fishing adventures, and your profound love. Thank you to Grandma and Grandpa, Frank and Lori Mehay. I cherish the memories of you visiting and us traveling to Michigan and Arizona. To the Canby Crew, who are family through friendship, thank you for helping to create some of the best memories and laughs.

To Ma's family: Vue, Mai Hang, Yen and Pao Yee, Cha Lee and Mai Neng, Kor and Mao, Mai and John, Thomas, Nyaaj Ntsum and Chris, Uncle Chong's family,

and all the cousins—Pao, Xee, James, Connie, Shania, Shinee, Sherry, Chelsea, Alec, Gracelyn, Lily, and Nora, *ua tsaug* for being such beautiful people. I'm grateful for your warmth, love, and of course delicious food. A special thanks to Mai, Thomas, and Nyaaj Nstum for your support during difficult times. I recently had the extreme fortune of connecting with biological first cousins. I truly appreciate Angus, Rebecca, and Jennifer for your heartfelt embrace.

Mom and Dad, from the bottom of my heart, thank you for your unconditional love and support. It has meant the world to me. Thank you for sharing your wisdom through lessons on care, cooking, home repair, raising children, and most important, love. The latter has been the driving force of the work I do. Kia and PaKou, my precocious daughters, you're amazing individuals with wonderous imaginations and talents. Thank you for your love, giggles, support, and reminders to turn off the TV when my sports teams are losing. My last but deepest thanks goes to Ma Vang. Everyone knows how special she is, but they only know the half of it. This book is not possible without your unending love and support. I love you, and thank you.