PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The research underlying this book represents my attempt to provide a more comprehensive portrait of the diversity within the black population of the United States and to recenter the importance of structural factors, rather than agentic concerns, in explaining the outcomes of black Americans. From studies of migrants from the Caribbean to the United States during the early twentieth century to research on African immigration of the 2000s, scholars have reported that groups of black immigrants tend to achieve better social and economic outcomes than black Americans. These findings have led some scholars and policymakers to dismiss the importance of racism and discrimination in shaping the outcomes of black Americans; they argue that because black immigrants and black Americans share similar racialized features, factors other than racism must explain the poor social and economic outcomes of black Americans. As a result, the cultural practices of black Americans have been pathologized for several decades.

My analysis in this book of social and economic disparities between black Americans and black immigrants from 1910 to 2014 challenges this view. The project brings new evidence to bear on the importance of selective migration in shaping the outcomes of both black immigrants and black Americans. I also analyze new data and show that the racial context of pre–civil rights America fundamentally shaped the outcomes of black Americans and put black immigrants and black Americans on different trajectories.

The book also highlights the growing demographic importance of black immigration to the United States and reveals the contours of the

vast diversity within America's black population in the twenty-first century. By illustrating the many ways in which the U.S. black population is far from monolithic, the book cautions the research community about the consequences of failing to disaggregate the black population when measuring social and economic disparities. Given America's long and, at times, state-sanctioned history of racial discrimination against blacks, a large body of American social science research has focused on measuring and tracking changes in social and economic disparities between blacks and whites. The goal of these studies is generally to examine whether the country is making progress toward improving the social conditions of black Americans. Although the significant increase in the number of black immigrants has changed the meaning of black-white disparities, researchers tend to aggregate all blacks, regardless of nativity, when measuring changes in a range of social outcomes, from health and marriage to voting and labor market outcomes. This failure to account for black immigration can lead to incorrect estimates of both the social progress made by black Americans and changes in the intensity of racism and discrimination experienced by blacks in the United States. As the black immigrant population grows and becomes more diverse, empirical analyses must account for the effects of immigration on changes in the social outcomes of blacks in the United States. Assuming the homogeneity of the black population of the United States, as many social scientists still do, is an error. To assume homogeneity within the black immigrant population is another error. This book hopes to correct some of these errors.

Throughout the completion of this book, I amassed many debts. Intellectually, I am indebted to William Darity, who taught me to seek out the structural factors that underpin the social conditions of oppressed groups. I am also indebted to the many scholars who have advanced the study of race and immigration and upon whose work I have relied.

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