Asian Americans in an Anti-Black World

Where do Asian Americans fit into the U.S. racial order? Are they subordinated comparably to Black people or permitted adjacency to whiteness? The racial reckoning prompted by the police murder of George Floyd and the surge in anti-Asian hate during the COVID-19 pandemic raise these questions with new urgency. *Asian Americans in an Anti-Black World* is a groundbreaking study that will shake up scholarly and popular thinking on these matters. Theoretically innovative and based on rigorous historical research, this provocative book tells us we must consider *both* anti-Blackness and white supremacy – and the articulation of the two forces – in order to understand U.S. racial dynamics. The construction of Asian Americans as not-white *but above all not-Black* has determined their positionality for nearly two centuries. How Asian Americans choose to respond to this status will help to define racial politics in the U.S. in the twenty-first century.

Claire Jean Kim is Professor of Political Science and Asian American Studies at University of California, Irvine. Her writing has appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Nation*, and *Ms. Magazine*. Her two previous books, *Bitter Fruit: The Politics of Black–Korean Conflict* and *Dangerous Crossings: Race, Species and Nature in a Multicultural Age*, have both won best book awards from the American Political Science Association. Kim has been a fellow at the Institute of Advanced Study and the University of California Humanities Research Institute.
Asian Americans in an Anti-Black World

CLAIRE JEAN KIM

University of California, Irvine
For Sam,
heart of my heart
Contents

Acknowledgments page ix

Introduction Better Asians than Blacks 1
Part One Exclusion/Belonging 17
Part Two Ostracism/Initiation 123
Part Three Solidarity/Disavowal 243
Coda Asian Americans and Anti-Blackness 358

References 363
Index 391
Acknowledgments

My sincere appreciation to friends and colleagues for their encouragement and feedback.

Thanks to Michael Dawson, Stephen Lee, Robert Gooding-Williams, Rogers Smith, and Jane Junn for constructive comments on parts of the manuscript.

Special thanks to Reuel Schiller, David Levine, and Vincent Moyer, librarian at Hastings College of Law, for their generous assistance.

Gratitude to Brian Williams, law librarian at University of California, Irvine, whose years of assistance, support, and good cheer made this a better book.

Thank you to my editor at Cambridge University Press, Robert Dreesen, for his commitment to this project.

And love to my family, human and more than human, for keeping me company on the journey.