ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE ANCIENT CHINESE PROVERB tells us that the journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step away from the ancestral home. To edit a 38-chapter book with 37 prominent African, Afro-Caribbean, and African-American scholars represents a real labour of love. This three-year project was supported by the University of Johannesburg (UJ) in South Africa, and implemented through the Institute for Pan-African Thought and Conversation (IPATC) which I direct. The volume seeks to make a substantive contribution to contemporary global transformation debates in an era of “Rhodes Must Fall” and “Black Lives Matter”. It also aims to contribute to transforming fossilised Eurocentric curricula, which have insisted for centuries that “dead white men” continue to occupy the central position in global epistemologies on almost every subject under the sun.

I would like firstly to acknowledge the patience, perseverance, and passion of all the committed scholars of “Global Africa” who contributed to this volume. The many sacrifices they made were clearly not in vain, and this book represents the fruits of their labour. Unfortunately, one of our authors – Nigerian scholar, Abiola Irele – died in Boston in July 2017 before the book was published. His chapter on Senegalese poet-president, Léopold Senghor, in this volume will remain an enduring legacy to his rich scholarship. A deep thinker and fluent writer who was endearingly nicknamed *olohun iyo* (the praise-singer), Irele was undoubtedly the foremost prophet of Négritude to which he devoted his intellectual career for five decades. He shared both Senghor and Martiniquan poet-politician, Aimé Césaire’s love of the French language and culture, but was also deeply immersed in his own traditional African cultures. “Prof” fervently believed that Négritude and Pan-Africanism would be the essential foundations for the reconstruction of a new African identity. The ultimate cultural bridge-builder, he consistently interpreted the francophone world of black poetry and prose for an anglophone audience. The Black Orpheus and last prophet of Négritude finally entered After Africa’s “Dead Poet’s Society” in 2017. This book honours his memory, and that of another much younger author in this book, African-American scholar-theologian, Dr Alease Brown, who sadly joined the ancestors in March 2020.

In true African tradition, it takes a village to pull off such a large collective venture. We would, therefore, like to thank the three external reviewers who took the time to provide substantive and useful comments for revising this volume. I thank Russell Martin for his sharp copy-editing skills, and Christopher Merrett for both his thorough indexing and incisive proof-reading. Jacana Media in South Africa has remained an activist, independent publisher for two decades. I would like to thank its formidable publishing director, Bridget Impey, who consistently came up with creative solutions. Founder, Maggie Davey, was the artistic muse who – along with publicide – ensured that the book cover elegantly reflected the Pan-African red, green, and gold of this griot's tale. Glenda Younge and Aimée Armstrong meticulously ensured that we had a clean text, while Shawn Paikin completed the layout. At Manchester University Press (MUP), we would like to acknowledge the efforts of senior commissioning editor, Jonathan de Peyer, and particularly his successor, Thomas Dark, ably assisted by assistant editor, Lucy Burns, who ensured that this book reaches a wider North American and European audience. Other editions will reach Nigerian and Caribbean readers.

Finally, I would like to thank all of my colleagues at the Institute for Pan-African Thought and Conversation in Johannesburg, who contributed to the success of this project over three long years. They also deserve to share in the credit for the publication of this book. We hope that this volume will be read not just by scholars, but also by members of civil society and the general public across Africa and its Diaspora and beyond. While acknowledging these 36 historical and contemporary figures as members of a “Pan-African Pantheon”, these critical essays of prophets, poets, and philosophers are not hagiographic, but often point out areas where these figures may have fallen short. The volume seeks, above all, to rebuild the bridges of Pan-Africanism by encouraging intellectual dialogue and mutual exchange between Africa and her siblings in the Diaspora, from Bamako to Bahia to Birmingham to Bordeaux, and from the Bahamas to Bridgetown to Baltimore. God bless Africa!

ADEKEYE ADEBAJO,
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