I am deeply grateful to the contributors to this volume for investing their energy and insights to bring this project to life. I had long admired each of them as thinkers, and now I stand in awe of their generosity and diligence as collaborators. I was told earlier in my career by more than one person that edited volumes were not a smart investment of time. I am so glad I did not listen! Habitual stubbornness for the win. Working on this book has been one of the most rewarding experiences and I have no doubt this is because I had the opportunity to work so closely with people who continually blow my mind and put it back together in new ways.

This book would not have been possible without the incredible support of Princeton University’s Department of African American Studies. It is a rare thing, I suspect, to love, respect, and enjoy the company of one’s colleagues. But that is the case here. Anna Arabindan-Kesson, Wendy Belcher, Wallace Best, Eddie Glaude, Reena Goldthree, Joshua Guild, Tera Hunter, Naomi Murakawa, Kinohi Nishikawa, Chika Okeke-Agulu, Imani Perry, Stacey Sinclair, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, Judith Weisenfeld, and Autumn Womack teach me that it is possible, even within old systems, to forge new ways of relating and being together. And it is an open secret that none of our work would be possible without the incomparable staff, past and present, Allison Bland, Elio Lleo, Jana Johnson, April Peters, and Dionne Worthy.

This department exemplifies the idea that technologies are not just “out there” in the world, but they include the everyday social tools that we all employ in our interactions with one another, containing or liberating, tearing each other down or building one another up. I am incredibly fortunate to work with people who choose the latter again and again. The freedom and encouragement I have experienced in this context teach me that it is possible to build new worlds in the midst of old ones.

The seeds of this project were first planted at the “Ferguson Is the Future” symposium at Princeton University in September 2015, which was funded by generous grants from the David A. Gardner ’69 Magic Project in the Council of the Humanities and the Lewis Center for the Arts. The symposium was also cosponsored by the Princeton Department of English, Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies, and Department of African American Studies, Council on Science and Technology, Princeton Public Library, and
Octavia E. Butler Legacy Network. This gathering would not have happened without the collaboration of my extraordinary colleagues Moya Bailey and Ayana A. H. Jamieson, whose ongoing work on black feminist approaches to science, technology, and imagination continue to sharpen my own thinking and commitments. Also essential were Allison Bland and Elio Eleo’s tech savvy, Iyabo Kwayana’s film-making talent, and Ezelle Sanford III, Megan Eardley, and Destiny Crockett’s planning prowess. Last but not least, Dionne Worthy: there are no words that can fully express her programming genius—but anyone who has experienced it knows.

There are also a number of venues where I, along with many of the contributing authors, had the chance to present this work and get feedback that helped us hone our ideas, including panels at the Eastern Sociological Society (2017), Society for the Social Studies of Science (2017), University of Pennsylvania Annenberg School for Communication, UC San Diego Science Studies Program, and Princeton StudioLab “Rethinking Mass Incarceration” Design Challenge series.

I was also very fortunate to receive sabbatical support from the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, and special thanks to Didier Fassin for creating such a wonderful space for scholars engaged in critical work at IAS. My deepest gratitude goes to my writing partners, Keisha-Khan Y. Perry and the late Lee Ann Fujii, who filled this year with so much joy and encouragement. They, along with Reuben and Janice Miller, helped me experience the sweetness of making new, lifelong friends in unlikely places, and reminded me that intellectual work thrives in the soil of friendship.

I also want to express my appreciation for those intellectual kin who have buoyed and grounded me over many years—Catherine Bliss, Dawn Dow, Alondra Nelson, Aaron Panofsky, Anne Pollock, and Tianna Paschel; as well as my graduate and postdoc advisors—Charis Thompson, Sheila Jasanoff, Stefan Timmermans, Loïc Wacquant, and Troy Duster whose early and ongoing support have been crucial to my development.

I also want to extend a very special thanks to students in my “Black to the Future” Seminar (fall 2017), Rachel Adler, Jean Bellamy, Taylor Branch, My Bui, Malachi Byrd, Maia Ezratty, Kenya Holland, Sara Howell, E Jeremijenko-Conley, Stefan Lee, Talya Nevins, Aparna Raghu, Leslie Robinson, Destiny Salter, Rosed Serrano, Max Stahl, Emmanuel Teferi, and Elena Tsemberis, who read an early draft of this book and provided invaluable feedback. The opportunity to work with so many incredible young scholars, including Kessie Alexandre, Kimberly Bain, Megan Blanchard, Chaya Chowder, Colleen Campbell, Janeria Easley, Nyle Fort, Emanuela Kucik, Tala Khanmalek,
Heath Pearson, Briana Payton, and Ezelle Sanford III, has energized and emboldened me over the last few years.

It goes without saying that Duke University Press was an incredible steward of this project! Without the expert guidance of Courtney Berger, Sandra Korn, the amazing editorial staff, and two anonymous reviewers who provided invaluable feedback, this book would not have been possible.

Last but not least, I thank my day ones (as my sons would put it), Malachi and Khalil for their surreality checks, Shawn for infusing the word partner with substance, and my mom, Behin, for always allowing me to walk free.