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This book began many years ago as I was examining two epidemic episodes separated by over one hundred years. While writing an article on British colonial responses to bubonic plague in 1901 Cape Town, an epidemic that led to the first racially segregated urban township in South Africa, I was haunted by the parallels to some of the violent responses occurring in Monrovia, Liberia, in response to the epidemic or Ebola virus disease there. I became fascinated by the similar dynamics occurring at two very different moments. This curiosity led to what would ultimately be this book.

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