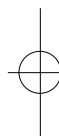
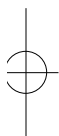
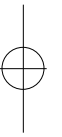

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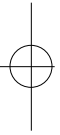




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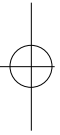
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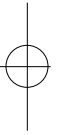


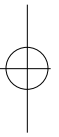
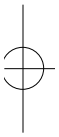
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Dedicated to

*Our Gods,
Our Ancestors,
and
to my mother,
Noble Bell Alexander
(1924–1999)
and
to my granddaughter,
Assata Rose Norment*





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Preface

Thirty years ago, when I began working at the City College of New York at the beginning of the modern Black Studies Movement, many prominent black scholars, historians, literary artists and critics, political scientists, student and community activist organizations were located in and around New York City. At different times, my colleagues at CCNY included Addison Gayle, Jr., Barbara Christian, Charles V. Hamilton, Allen B. Ballard, Dennis Brutus, Toni Cade (Bambara), Wilfred Cartey, Jr., Leonard Jeffries, Audre Lorde, James Emmanuel, Michele Wallace, Eugene Redmond, David Henderson, June Jordan, Larry Neal, Raymond Patterson, Gwendolyn Brooks, Ishmael Reed, Ntozake Shange, Chinua Achebe, and a host of others who contributed to the development, direction, and destiny of African American/Black Studies on the East Coast. From exposure and interaction with them, along with the countless undergraduate and graduate students I have taught in African American Studies, literature and history courses, I began to see the need for this text.

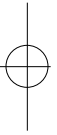
This book has been organized around a sequence of interrelated perspectives and concepts of African American Studies. It seeks to provide a comprehensive account of the most important perspectives of African American Studies and to keep alive the intellectual, cultural, political, and above all, historical constructs of the discipline. If it advocates a “philosophy,” it is the pursuit of academic excellence in the teaching of concepts and content areas of African American Studies, the reaffirmation of commitment to culture, responsibility to community, and to present knowledge about people of African descent in an accurate, critical, and challenging form if it is to play a significant and shaping role in both academia and society.

The African American Studies Reader introduces students to a unique discipline. It presents selections of the many scholars who have made substantial contributions in the development of African American Studies over the past thirty years. It encompasses a wide range of topics and includes every important issue discussed in African American Studies. An invaluable complement to basic books already in the discipline (i.e., *Introduction to Black Studies*, *All the Women are White*, *All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women’s Studies*, *Africana Studies: A Survey of Africa and the African Diaspora*; *Dispatches from the Ivory Tower: Intellectuals Confront the African American Experience*, *Black Studies: Theory, Method, and Cultural Perspectives*), the reader can be used as an introductory text for both undergraduate and graduate courses. This outstanding collection of different perspectives in African American Studies will be of interest to those coming new to the field and to those who are already involved in research, teaching and other aspects of African American Studies. Each essay (appearing in its original form), represents—in its own way—theoretical, political, historical, etc. perspectives for African American Studies and promotes critical dialogue and debate about the discipline, which after thirty years is still emerging.

From the publication of Equiano’s narrative in 1789 to the present moment, African American scholars have struggled mightily in an attempt to make sense of an

unwanted black “question,” “problem,” or “presence” in America and how that very “presence” might thrive seemingly against the wishes of the masses of other “Americans.” I remain steadfastly concerned now more than ever as we have ventured into the 21st century that not only is there a dire, critical need for African American Studies in American education and life, but that without the juxtaposition of the voices in this text to enable readers to hear old and new arguments simultaneously in an effort, finally, to solve the dilemma of exactly what constitutes “African American Studies” and what are the ways by which it can assist the liberation of the people, then we, all of us, will merely continue to “run the dangercourse.”

Nathaniel Norment, Jr.
Philadelphia, PA
2001



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Acknowledgments

I have long noted the need for a collection of readings that would address the issues surrounding the various courses that I taught and so began to amass a bibliography early on that could be used as a resource guide for myself and for my students. Over the years, students, friends, and colleagues have contributed names, articles, books and journals that I might use, as well as the readings that I have spent hours searching for in order to locate just the perfect addendum to a point of view or lesson construct. So it is with deep, deep gratitude that I attempt to acknowledge the many souls who helped to make this book a reality.

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