



## Kamari Clarke University of Toronto Social Sciences Division

### Citation

CLARKE, Kamari Maxine, Faculty of Arts and Science, University of Toronto is an award-winning anthropologist and Distinguished Professor of Transnational Justice and Socio-legal Studies. A prominent Africanist known internationally for pioneering research into the globalization and transnationalism of the Black Atlantic world, and the anthropology of justice, Clarke has authored/co-edited nine books, including the groundbreaking *Fictions of Justice* (Cambridge, 2009) and *Affective Justice* (Duke, 2019), which clarify complexities between African stakeholders and the International Criminal Court.

### Detailed appraisal

Kamari M. Clarke is internationally recognized for generating vital new empirical knowledge, theories, and key innovations within the fields of anthropology and law, the impact of which has transformed understanding of contemporary culture, power and the globalization of legal processes. A Guggenheim Fellow (2021), Clarke is considered the most insightful Africanist of human rights and sociolegal studies of her generation – the scholar who has made the most impressive contribution to the related fields of Africanist anthropology, and the anthropology of the African Diaspora. Across twenty-five years, she explored theoretical and pragmatic questions concerning culture and power and, in the field of law and anthropology, detailed the relationship between new social formations, including the emergence of an International Criminal Court (ICC) and its exclusive indictment of African leaders and rebels for mass atrocity crimes and contemporary problems, examining how we understand these patterns of culpability that facilitate such formations. Holding degrees in political science, anthropology, and law, she brings rich interdisciplinary insights and practices to her socially-engaged scholarship.

Clarke's early-career research developed the field of globalization and transnationalism of the Black Atlantic world. Prior to her interventions, Black Atlantic world scholars explored conceptions of race, identity and belonging in relation to social and cultural conceptions of race in relation to place. Shifting from political science to anthropology, graduate student Clarke developed analytic tools for studying the complex forces of change transforming Africa and its diasporas following the

Cold War, including World Bank structural adjustment policies and increasing forms of privatization and poverty (2010, *Transforming Anthropology*). Her work shed light on understanding the resultant military coups and civil wars, which sparked increasing migration and refugee claims to Europe and the Americas, and the way that these political conditions produced racial difference. Building on these developments, she studied the role of race, inequality, and religion in shaping Black Atlantic worlds. Her first monograph, *Mapping Yorùbá Networks: Power and Agency in the Making of Transnational Communities* (2004), examined the political economy of homeland identification and the transnational construction of ideas like authenticity, ancestry, blackness, and tradition. Reviewed as “extraordinary,” “pioneering,” “erudite,” and “innovative,” the book earned praise for its innovation of multi-sited work on the African diaspora. Julius Adekunle assessed it as “a masterpiece about an intercontinental network of religious beliefs and practices” (*Africa Today*). For Amidu Olalekan Sanni, it represented “a historic tour de force in ethnography” that will “serve as a point of departure for similar studies in the future” (*Modern African Studies*). Clarke also co-edited, with Deborah Thomas, *Globalization and Race: Transformations in the Cultural Production of Blackness* (2006), emphasizing that accurate comprehension of the impacts of globalization requires understanding of how race has constituted, and been constituted by, global transformations.

Clarke next assessed how international legal processes, such as those shaped by international criminal courts, are shaped and contested in sub-Saharan Africa and beyond. Her next book, *Fictions of Justice: The International Criminal Court and the Challenge of Legal Pluralism in Sub-Saharan Africa* (2010), considered the emergent international rule of law movement and its challenges around legal pluralism, analyzing the competing religious and ethnic politics of justice-making in local and transnational contexts. Drawing from UN preparatory commissions for the ICC, NGOs engaged in ICC organizing, and controversies over the legal classification and management of violence, she examined how legal experts, religious conservatives, humanitarian organizations, and human rights organizations struggled to apply universal UN-sanctioned approaches to rights, especially in light of related engagements with political Islamic formations in West Africa. Mapping new terrain in the cultural study of the international rule of law movement established Clarke as an early voice shaping a new field – the anthropology of justice. *Fictions of Justice* was described as “the first serious attempt to engage with the wider anthropological and political dimensions of the ICC’s jurisdiction and power” (*Journal of Law and Society*). In *American Anthropologist*, Niklas Hultán asserted: “the theoretical scope is ambitious, the data are fascinating, and the analysis is incisive,” proclaiming it “a must-read in the anthropology of human rights and humanitarianism.”

Clarke co-edited *Africa and the ICC: Perceptions of Justice* (2016), acquiring funding from the National Science Foundation to study the ICC, the African Court, and the African Union (AU) and later \$1 million+ from Open Society. *Affective Justice: The International Criminal Court and the Pan-Africanist Pushback* (2019), investigated the role of affections and emotions at the interplay of international law and politics, arguing that justice, expressed through liberal legality, needs affectivities to establish legitimacy in particular contexts. Affects emerge as both physical and psychological responses and expressions — visible as “feeling rules or norms” — embedded in particular socio-historical and biopolitical regimes. Clarke argued that understanding these norms

is critical to grasping how international justice is debated and envisioned in the contemporary period. For Caroline Fournet, the study provided “an unprecedented and indispensable theorization of international criminal justice” (*Law & Society Review*). Mark Goodale described *Affective Justice* as a “superb ethnographic and critical study” of the ICC’s place “within African history and politics [which] demands a fundamental reevaluation of the meaning of ‘justice’ against a background of colonial and neocolonial violence, postcolonial critique, and enduring inequalities of international power” (*Opinio Juris*). *Affective Justice* received the Royal Anthropological Institute’s Amaury Talbot Book Prize for African Anthropology (2019) and was a finalist for the Elliot Skinner Book Award.

Clarke instigated transformative changes in anthropology, co-leading a set of public conversations from 2020 to 2022 on Radical humanism and its prospects for anthropological ethics, and co-authoring “Can Anthropology Be Decolonized?” (*Sapiens*, 2023), contemplating the requirements for the discipline to address its colonial and racist roots. In the groundbreaking “Toward a Critically Engaged Ethnographic Practice” (2010, *Current Anthropology*), she urged anthropologists to “use their field knowledge and technical advisory capacities to attend to social inequalities.”

Clarke accepted her own challenge, influencing public policy, facilitating a new era in contemporary and global affairs in Africa that supports rather than leads, that listens rather than dictates. She consults regularly for Global Affairs Canada, participated in the US Department of Defense Africa Briefings (2008), consulted with the US Department of State (2009-11), and served as technical advisor to the AU. As co-founder of the African Court Research Initiative, Clarke generated four major expert papers for use in UN ministerial and AU working group meetings, submitted Amicus briefs before the ICC, and co-edited *The African Court for Human and Peoples’ Rights* (Cambridge, 2019) – widely cited by various jurists of International Law.

Clarke’s latest research interrogates the hegemonic domain of the growth and limits of science and its evidentiary basis through which uses of big data, geo-spatial technologies and digital humanitarian-crisis tracking tools are mobilized for “do-good humanitarian crises.” Using empirical ethnographic data collected in Mexico, Nigeria, and the ICC (the Hague), Clarke tracks how new forms of data and knowledge are extrapolated (through alliances among technical experts, civil society advocates, and ordinary citizens), and transformed into contested bodies of evidence within legal environments, particularly the ICC. As part of this research, she spearheaded, in collaboration with the CLEEN Foundation, the Early Warning Early Response project in four Northern Nigerian States – an innovative community policing initiative that, over a two-year period, led to substantial decreases in violence in sixteen participating communities.