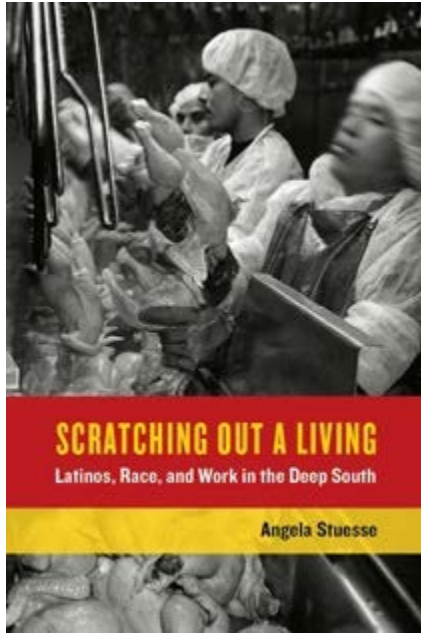


## Undocumented Migration and Public Anthropology: A Conversation with new Faculty Member Angela Stuesse

By Caby Styers

Professor Stuesse is a new faculty member of the Anthropology Department who is broadening the



department's expertise in immigration and racial justice. She received her doctorate in Anthropology at the University of Austin Texas in 2008 and has held academic posts at UCLA, Ohio State, and the University of South Florida. Her most recent book, *Scratching Out a Living: Latinos, Race, and Work in the Deep South* looks at the poultry industry in Mississippi and the changes in the labor force there.

Professor Stuesse was recently interviewed for an article by the *Washington Post*. The article was about a young woman named Daniela Vargas who was seeking to renew her status as a “dreamer” to remain in the US to continue studying. She spoke out at a news conference about her experiences of having her father and brother detained and awaiting deportation. While she was leaving the news conferences, ICE agents arrested her which sparked outrage from immigration activists.

Professor Stuesse has known Vargas since she was 8 years old, as well as her parents. In media accounts, Dr. Stuesse spoke about how this action looks like retaliation and how “dreamers” offer a different narrative from what President Trump has said about the DACA program. Her close connection with Daniela Vargas shows a personal side to these kinds of immigration actions as well as the analysis of an anthropologist.



In an interview with Professor Stuesse, she told us a little more about the situation.

*Caby Styers:* Recently you were featured in an article by the *Washington Post*. What can you tell us about how the *Post* found you and the message you wanted to convey to the reporter and readers?

*Angela Stuesse:* It's been fifteen years since I first began working on the topic of new Latinx immigration to the U.S. South. My work has focused on the integration of these newcomers into local communities and workplaces – how their presence is impacting regional identities, racial hierarchies, workplace relations, and labor organizing.

All these interests, along with my commitment to research in support of social justice, came together earlier this spring when an Argentine family I have been close with since the early days of my research with poultry workers in Mississippi became one of the first immigration casualties of the Trump administration. On February 15, 2017, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) police raided their home as they were leaving for work that morning.



*Immigration and Customs Enforcement office in Washington DC, when United We Dream delivered the 25,000+ signatures demanding her release*

As I was leaving my First Year Seminar on New Latinx Migration here at UNC, I received a frantic phone call from 22-year-old Dany Vargas, who I've known since she was eight years old, telling me that ICE had taken away her family members and was pounding on the door of their home. I advised her to stay hidden in the closet, which she did for the next four hours.

The youngest in her family, Dany took on the responsibility of preparing for

her family members' imminent deportation. Two weeks later, after speaking publicly about her concern for them and for her community, Dany was arrested by ICE as she was leaving a press conference, becoming only the second known case of detention of a DACA recipient under the Trump administration.

CS: How do you see your role as an anthropologist in this increasing controversial and important topic? Are there other ways you have tried to reach the public concerning migration?

AS: I believe the questions of immigration, intergroup relations, and worker justice are some of the most pressing social issues of our time, so in recent years I have been working to bring my expertise to bear on these topics in broader public settings.

In addition to publishing my book, I have also been increasingly writing on the internet – blogs, OpEds, and the like. I have also been participating in public forums whenever possible. Here at UNC, I helped to organize a very successful daylong symposium in February, "Immigration and Refugee Policy in Crisis," which brought together researchers, students, community members, and policymakers to explore what's at stake during this time of transition and was attended by over 200 people.

CS: What is most exciting about joining UNC and what you want to do here?

AS: I'm excited to be at this dynamic institution where students, faculty, and staff across departments are collaborating to better understand and respond to the thorny and delicate social problems of immigrant incorporation, racism, globalization, and intergroup relations. Anthropology's holistic approach to these topics through engaged ethnography helps us to see them in all their complexity and to collaborate with the communities most closely affected by them.

I'm particularly excited to form part of the Race, Difference, and Power concentration in the department, and to be teaching such bright, prepared, and committed students. I also look forward to my roles in shaping the new master's Curriculum in Global Studies, supporting the Graduate Certificate in Participatory Research, and serving on the advisory board of the UNC Latina/o Studies Program.

I'm excited by all the opportunities here at UNC and am delighted to be a part of the Anthropology Department!