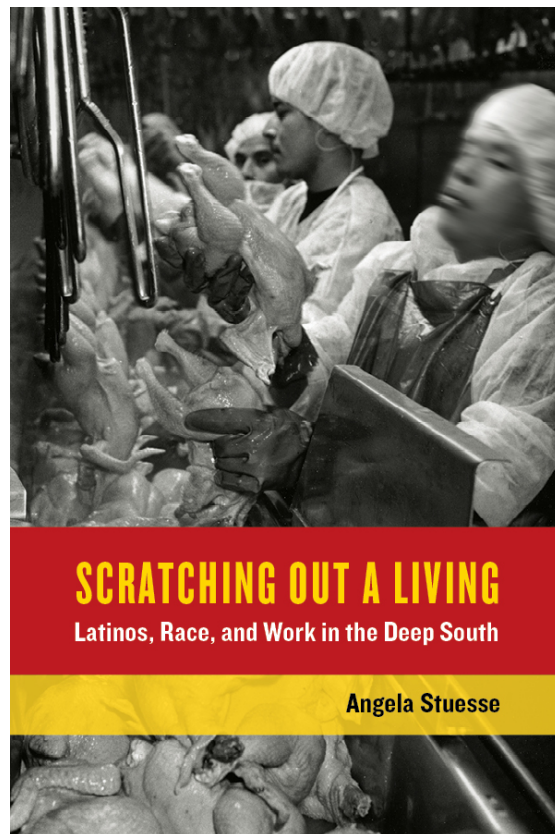


TEACHING GUIDE

for

SCRATCHING OUT A LIVING Latinos, Race, and Work in the Deep South

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

I have created this teaching guide to provide instructors and community groups using *Scratching Out a Living* with resources to aid them in their teaching and reading of the book.

Scratching Out a Living will be of interest to students of migration, labor, race, Latinos in the U.S., intergroup relations, neoliberalism, globalization, agriculture, food, Southern studies, American studies, anthropology, sociology, geography, ethnography, and engaged scholarship.

In addition to questions meant to stimulate synthesis, analysis, and reflection, which can be used in oral discussion or as written assignments, the guide also contains a list of complementary resources—films, art, and interactive websites—and ideas for action.

It is my hope that readers' engagement with the ideas in this book will lead them to explore further the challenges of immigration, race relations, labor exploitation, and community change, and to take action on these issues to make their campus, their city, their country, and our world a better place.

Thanks for reading!



Angela Stuesse

CONTENTS

Discuss the Issues	2
Go Deeper with Additional Resources	7
Take Action to Improve Our World	11

DISCUSS THE ISSUES

CHAPTER ONE

Southern Fried: Globalization and Immigrant Transformations

1. What is the author's main focus in the book? What are the overall themes she is exploring?
2. What do we know about Mississippi's poultry communities and how they have changed over the last twenty years?
3. What is globalization theory? What is neoliberalism? In what ways are these useful analytical tools to describe the changes in Mississippi's poultry region? What are the shortcomings of each?
4. How is the author's approach to fieldwork and her methodology different than in other studies you're familiar with? What are the potential benefits and drawbacks of this approach?

CHAPTER TWO

Dixie Chicken: Racial Segregation, Poultry Integration, and the Making of the "New" South in Central Mississippi

1. In what ways have systems of white supremacy molded social relations and the development of the poultry industry in central Mississippi?
2. How have government policies impacted the development of the poultry industry over time? What is the role of "the state" in this history?
3. Why was Mississippi a prime location for the poultry industry's growth in the 20th century? What qualities of the region are desirable for large corporate processors like Tyson?
4. Why do you think the author chose to include such a detailed history of race and place in the book? In what ways might this past matter in the present?

CHAPTER THREE

The Caged Bird Sings for Freedom: Black Struggles for Civil and Labor Rights

1. How were racial exclusion and white supremacy defended in the poultry region of Mississippi during the mid-20th century? What were some of the tactics used, and what made them effective?

2. How did Civil Rights Movement efforts surrounding school integration, voting rights, and economic justice affect the social and political climate leading up to poultry plant integration?
3. What happened in central Mississippi's chicken plants when African Americans began working on the processing lines, according to Stuesse?
4. Describe the Mississippi Poultry Workers Union's efforts to organize poultry plant workers. Why were they unsuccessful?

CHAPTER FOUR

...To Get to the Other Side: The Hispanic Project and the Rise of the *Nuevo* South

1. What different explanations exist for why the poultry industry began recruiting Latino immigrants to Mississippi? How does Stuesse help us make sense of these competing narratives? Why is she critical of the discourse of "labor shortage?"
2. Who benefitted from the Hispanic Project, and in what ways? Why might the answer to this question be somewhat complicated?
3. Briefly describe the different tactics used to recruit Latino immigrants into Mississippi's poultry industry. How and why have they changed over time, and to what effect?
4. Discuss the relationship between neoliberal globalization, the poultry industry, and its workforce.

CHAPTER FIVE

Pecking Order: Latino Newcomers, Receptions, and Racial Hierarchies

1. How does Stuesse define racism? Why is it important to talk about whiteness when considering the workings of race?
2. In what ways is housing, the actual spaces people occupy, an important terrain for examining how racial categories are being upheld, challenged, and reworked with the growing Latino presence in central Mississippi?
3. What assumptions necessitate the idea of the immigrant work ethic in the context of the Deep South? Why are these problematic? In what ways might people's relationships to the notion of the immigrant work ethic differ based on their own racial identification?
4. How are Latinos fitting into or transforming the racial social hierarchies of Mississippi, according to Stuesse? Do you find her argument convincing? Why or why not?

CHAPTER SIX

A Bone to Pick: Labor Control and the Painful Work of Chicken Processing

1. Discuss the conditions of work on the processing line in a chicken plant. Does anything described in this chapter surprise you?
2. How do corporate chicken processors maintain inhumane working conditions? What social and economic factors support this treatment of workers?
3. Stuesse argues that employers rely on the strategic wielding of difference in order to control the labor force. Explain how race, gender, and other identity markers come into play. What are the implications for the largely Black and Latino workers who spend their days/nights in the chicken plants?
4. What does the author mean when she says the industry relies on a sort of “plantation capitalism with a twist?” Do you think this descriptor is useful? Why or why not?

CHAPTER SEVEN

Sticking Our Necks Out: Challenges to Union and Workers’ Center Organizing

1. Discuss the varying barriers to organizing workers in the poultry industry. Which of these would you address first, and how would you go about it, if you were trying to organize all workers?
2. This chapter presents some of the differing ideologies commonly held by immigrant and African American poultry workers. What are “weapons of the weak?” What is the “bootstrap mentality?” How are these ideas helpful in understanding divergent approaches to work, oppression, and agency?
3. What is the difference between a union and a workers’ center? Give some examples of how the two collaborated in the context of Mississippi’s poultry industry, and discuss the benefits and challenges to this collaboration.
4. Why does the Marxist theory of the working class uniting and rising up against the capitalist factory owners fall short in this context? What other approaches does the author call for?

CHAPTER EIGHT

Walking on Eggshells: Illegality, Employer Sanctions, and Disposable Workers

1. Discuss what you know about the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. What repercussions did it have for employers? For workers? For advocates of worker justice?

2. Stuesse presents several possible reasons for Tyson's actions outlined in this chapter. Why do you think the corporation took such extensive measures to terminate its immigrant workforce in Carthage? How does this chapter complicate the idea of labor shortages?
3. How did the affected workers respond to Tyson's campaign? What can you say about the potential and limitations of collective action in this context? What do you think the workers, their union, or their workers' center should have done? What would you have done?
4. Discuss the "ripple effects" of employer sanctions and corporate union-busting strategy. How are disposable workers created?

CHAPTER NINE

Plucked: Labor Contractors and Immigrant Exclusion

1. What are some characteristics of third-party labor contractors, and why have they proliferated in recent decades? What is their role within a broader system of worker exploitation?
2. Why did TransMundo's workers organize, and what were the results of their efforts? Why was unionization so tricky for them?
3. What is meant by a "triangle of exclusion?" What processes trap workers here?
4. What does Stuesse suggest should be done? What do you think should be done? How can workers' centers and unions work together to protect workers from third-party contractors and corporate employers' profit-making schemes?

CHAPTER TEN

Flying Upwind: Toward a New Southern Solidarity

1. How did new social movement theory and the teachings of Paulo Freire guide the workers' center's efforts? How do workers' centers balance identity politics with class struggle, and why is this important?
2. What types of programming did the Solidarity/Solidaridad initiative hold, and what insights were gained?
3. What do you think of when you hear the term "solidarity?" What does it look like? Feel like?

4. Stuesse cautions us from seeing the problems described in *Scratching Out a Living* as exceptional or unique to the South. Instead, she suggests “we might use Mississippi as a mirror... whose reflections encourage us to take a closer look” at our own lives and at social problems on a larger scale. How do the experiences of Mississippi’s poultry workers reflect broader processes affecting working people in the 21st century? What lessons will you take away from this book?

POSTSCRIPT

Home to Roost: Reflections on Activist Research

1. What is activist research? What makes it different from more traditional ethnographic research?
2. The author writes of promises and pitfalls of activist research. What are they?
3. What do you think of Stuesse’s assessment of her “experiment” in activist research?
4. Discuss how the author’s positionality shaped her experiences in the field. How did it inform her research methods? Her analysis? Her writing?

GO DEEPER WITH ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

WATCH

Globalization, Migration, and Work

Mississippi Chicken

Documentary, 82 min. 2007. Directed by John Fiege, Fiege Films.

www.fiegefilms.com/mississippi-chicken/

Mississippi Chicken is a visually compelling exposé of the hardships and tragedies of undocumented Latin American immigrants in a rural Mississippi poultry town. A personal and emotive voiceover from one of the film's protagonists peels away the interwoven layers of personal and social storylines, stories which are alternately devastating and inspiring and place the characters' experiences in the context of America's deep and troubled history with workers of every nationality who are seeking the American dream.

Morristown: In the Air and Sun

Documentary, 60 min. 2007. Directed by Anne Lewis, Appalshop Films.

www.annelewis.org/Morristown.html

Chronicling nearly a decade of change in Morristown, Tennessee, this film offers a look at globalization and outsourcing from the viewpoints of US workers who have lost jobs to foreign outsourcing and foreign workers who have been forced to migrate to the US to find jobs. The film shows the same economic forces that have sent jobs from Tennessee to Mexico have also driven Mexicans to the US in search of a decent living for their families.

Farmworker Women's Stories

Documentary, 2 videos, 3-9 min. each. 2008, 2010. Leanne Tory-Murphy, Worker Justice Center of New York.

www.wjcny.org/farmworker-womens-stories

The Bandana Project video (3 min.) highlights women's experiences of gender violence and sexual assault in agricultural labor, as well as one effort to raise awareness of these abuses. The Nuestro Camino/Our Journey video (9 min.) features photos accompanied by the voices of six poultry worker and farmworker women sharing their experiences as refugees of the global economy. They describe the places they came from, why they migrated, what they found when they came here, their work experiences, and their hopes for the future.

Fair Food

Food Chains

Documentary, 82 min. 2014. Directed by Sanjay Rawal, Illumine Opportunity Group.

www.foodchainsfilm.com

From Eva Longoria and Eric Schlosser, author of *Fast Food Nation* and a producer of *Food, Inc.*, comes a powerful and shocking exposé about how one small group of workers fought corporate greed to end slavery and abuse in America's fields. Their Fair Food program partners with growers and retailers to improve working conditions for farm laborers in the United States. A must-see film for everyone who shops in a supermarket.

Fair Food: Field to Table

Documentary, 3 videos, 5-7 min. each. California Institute for Rural Studies.

www.fairfoodproject.org/main/

Series of short videos on organizing farmworkers for fair food produced by the California Institute for Rural Studies, which works to increase social justice in rural California for all residents, but especially marginalized populations, building sustainable communities based on a healthy agriculture.

Race and the Struggle for Civil Rights

A Time for Justice

Documentary, 38 min. 1994. Produced by Charles Guggenheim.

www.tolerance.org/kit/america-s-civil-rights-movement-time-justice

In *A Time for Justice*, Academy Award-winning filmmaker Charles Guggenheim captures the spirit of the civil rights movement through historical footage and the voices of those who participated in the struggle. Narrated by Julian Bond and featuring John Lewis, the 38-minute film allows today's generation of students to witness firsthand the movement's most dramatic moments—the bus boycott in Montgomery, the school crisis in Little Rock, the violence in Birmingham and the triumphant 1965 march for voting rights.

Freedom Summer

Documentary, 120 min. 2014. Directed by Stanley Nelson, American Experience.

www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/freedomsummer/

In the hot and deadly summer of 1964, the nation could not turn away from Mississippi. Over 10 memorable weeks known as Freedom Summer, more than 700 student volunteers joined with organizers and local African Americans in a historic effort to shatter the foundations of white supremacy in one of the nation's most segregated states. Working together, they canvassed for voter registration, created Freedom Schools, and established the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. This film highlights the patient and long-term efforts by both outside activists and local citizens in Mississippi to organize communities and register black voters—even in the face of intimidation, physical violence, and death.

EXPLORE

Lives on the Line: The Human Cost of Chicken

Immersive website and report. 2015. Oxfam America.

www.oxfamamerica.org/livesontheline/

How does the chicken you eat get to you? There is growing public awareness of the treatment of animals in our food chain, but sometimes the treatment of workers attracts less public attention. This interactive website is the result of research conducted by Oxfam on poultry workers in the US, and it features stories, photos, and video from these workers—women and men who want you to understand what’s wrong with the industry and how you can help them.

Wages and Working Conditions in Arkansas Poultry Plants

Multimedia website and policy report. 2016. Northwest Arkansas Workers’ Justice Center.

<http://nwawjc.org/poultry-report/>

The Northwest Arkansas Workers’ Justice Center surveyed nearly 500 Arkansas poultry workers about their experiences in the chicken plants. This multimedia website and report shares their findings about poultry in the state Tyson Foods calls home. The site includes statistics, a “workers’ perspectives” section including images of workers alongside their own words, and short videos of interviews with workers, along with an executive summary and the full report.

The Meatrix

Multimedia website and animated short films. 2003, 2006. Free Range Studios.

www.themeatrix.com

The Meatrix website offers information on the issues surrounding factory farming, as well as alternatives to conventionally-raised meat, poultry, dairy, and eggs. A series of short animated films use pop culture and humor to educate viewers about the food they eat and where it comes from. The Meatrix II ½ film shows what happens inside a meat processing facility. The website also features The Meatrix Interactive 360, a tool to help people learn about factory farming, with in depth information on the issues. The Eat Well Guide®, an online directory of sustainable food from farms, stores and restaurants in North America, helps people take action.

Going South, Coming North: Migration and Union Organizing in Morristown, Tennessee

Multimedia digital essay. 2011. Fran Ansely and Anne Lewis, Southern Spaces.

<http://southernspaces.org/2011/going-south-coming-north-migration-and-union-organizing-morristown-tennessee>

This multimedia essay augments the 2007 film Morristown: In the Air and Sun, a documentary about the migration of industrial capital and the arrival of immigrant labor in and around Morristown, Tennessee, by situating the film within the context of workers’ responses to globalization, particularly the effects of NAFTA after 1994. Follow the two-way currents now so evident in many southern towns where industrial plants move south

and migrant labor comes north across the international border. To examine the connections between labor rights and immigrant rights, the essay juxtaposes a local labor union campaign with anti-immigrant legislation across the state and the country using text, still images, and video.

Food Chain Avengers: A Food Justice & Worker Justice Comic Book

Graphic novel from the Food Chain Workers Alliance. \$3.50/book, includes S&H

http://foodchainworkers.org/?page_id=4258

Twenty million people work in the food system in the U.S., joining millions around the world who labor on farms and in meat, poultry and food processing facilities, warehouses, grocery stores and restaurants. The Food Chain Avengers comic book uses examples drawn from real experiences by workers in their respective industries, the five main characters of the story walk us through each of five sectors of the food chain: production, processing, distribution, retail, and food service. While exposing the exploitative nature of the industry vis-à-vis its workers, communities, and the environment, the comic also tells the story of struggle to victory.

Coalition of Immokalee Workers / Fair Food Program

Multimedia website. 2016. Coalition of Immokalee Workers

<http://www.ciw-online.org/resources/>

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) is internationally recognized for its achievements in the fields of social responsibility, human trafficking, and gender-based violence at work. Built on a foundation of farmworker community organizing starting in 1993, and reinforced with the creation of a national consumer network since 2000, CIW's work improving conditions in industrial agriculture has steadily grown over more than twenty years. Explore the website to read about the Fair Food Program and watch several short videos about agricultural working conditions and how workers and consumers are changing them together.

Unsafe at these Speeds

Policy Report. 2013. Southern Poverty Law Center.

www.splcenter.org/20130301/unsafe-these-speeds

Every day in Alabama, thousands of people report to work at vast poultry processing plants. The processing line moves at a punishing speed, and workers often endure debilitating pain in their hands, gnarled fingers, chemical burns, and respiratory problems—tell-tale signs of repetitive motion injuries and other ailments that flourish in these plants. The stories in this report were collected from interviews with 302 Alabama poultry workers, among the most vulnerable in America.

No Relief: Denial of Bathroom Breaks in the Poultry Industry

Policy Report. 2016. Oxfam America.

https://www.oxfamamerica.org/static/media/files/No_Relief.pdf

Chicken is the most popular meat in America, and the poultry industry is booming. But workers say that the thing that offends their dignity most is simple: lack of adequate bathroom breaks, and the suffering that entails, especially for women. This report is part of Oxfam's campaign to advocate for improved conditions for poultry workers.

TAKE ACTION TO IMPROVE OUR WORLD

Demand Fair, Safe Working Conditions for Poultry Workers

www.oxfamamerica.org/livesontheline/

Oxfam America is calling on top poultry companies to publicly commit to core labor rights, including fair compensation, safer workplace conditions, and greater workforce engagement. Demand fair, safe working conditions for poultry workers. [Sign the petition!](#)

Support the Food Chain Workers Alliance

<http://foodchainworkers.org>

Founded in July 2009, the Food Chain Workers Alliance is a coalition of worker-based organizations whose members plant, harvest, process, pack, transport, prepare, serve, and sell food, organizing to improve wages and working conditions for all workers along the food chain.

[Look for members](#) in your area and get involved in their calls to action:

- Alliance for Fair Food (www.allianceforfairfood.org)
 - Learn more about [current campaigns](#) and take action
 - Support the [Fair Food Program](#)
- Brandworkers International (www.brandworkers.org)
- Cincinnati Interfaith Workers Justice Center (www.cworkers.org)
- Comité de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agrícolas (<http://cata-farmworkers.org>)
- Fair World Project (<http://fairworldproject.org>)
- Farmworker Association of Florida (www.floridafarmworkers.org)
- Migrant Justice / Justicia Migrante (<http://migrantjustice.net>)
- Northwest Arkansas Workers' Justice Center (<http://nwawjc.org>)
- Restaurant Opportunities Centers United (<http://rocunited.org>)
- The Street Vendor Project (<http://streetvendor.org>)
- UNITE HERE Food Service Division (<http://unitehere.org/industry/food-service/>)
 - Learn more about [student partnerships](#) with UNITE HERE
- UE Research and Education Fund (<http://www.ueref.org>)
- United Food and Commercial Workers Local 770 (<http://www.ufcw770.org>)

Explore and Support Other Worker, Immigrant, and Racial Justice Organizations

- Mississippi Immigrant Rights Alliance (www.yourmira.org)
- Mississippi Workers Center for Human Rights (<http://msworkers.org>)
- Northwest Arkansas Workers' Justice Center (<http://nwawjc.org>)
- Western North Carolina Workers' Center (www.wncworkerscenter.org)
- Greater Minnesota Worker Center (<http://www.mygmwc.org>)
- Nebraska Appleseed (<https://neappleseed.org>)
- Coalition of Immokalee Workers (www.ciw-online.org)

- Interfaith Worker Justice (www.iwj.org)
 - Learn more about [student internships](#) with IWJ
- Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (www.cbtu.org)
- Southern Poverty Law Center (www.splcenter.org)
- Center for New Community (<http://newcomm.org>)
- CASA of Maryland (<http://wearecasa.org>)
- UCLA Labor Center (www.labor.ucla.edu)
- Welcoming America (www.welcomingamerica.org)
- National Black Worker Center Project (<http://blackworkerproject.com>)

Join the Fight for \$15

<http://fightfor15.org>

Fast food workers are coming together all over the country to fight for \$15 an hour and the right to form a union without retaliation. Too many corporations are making tremendous profits but do not pay employees enough to support our families or cover basic needs like food, health care, rent and transportation. Low-wage jobs are the fastest growing jobs in the nation, and too many of us are forced to rely on public assistance to scrape by. These billion-dollar companies that can afford to pay their employees better. Let's rebuild the middle class and get the economy working again. [Sign the petition!](#) And sign the [Fight for \\$15 Voter Pledge](#).

Foster Intergroup Dialogue in Your Community

www.IntergroupResources.com

Intergroup Resources is an online resource center for supporting intergroup dialogue. It contains materials, activities, lessons learned, and best practices meant to support groups that want to facilitate delicate and sometimes difficult discussions around race, immigration, and community change. This [orientation video](#) can help you get started, and [SPACES](#) (Safe Places for the Advancement of Community and Equity) is available to help groups adapt the site's resources for their own use.

Join or Create a Student Club

- Oxfam Club (www.oxfamamerica.org/take-action/volunteer/campus/clubs/)
- Student/Farmworker Alliance (www.sfalliance.org)
- Student Action with Farmworkers (www.saf-unite.org)
- United Students against Sweatshops (<http://usas.org>)
- Students for a Democratic Society (www.newsds.org)