Project Title: CHANGING THE NARRATIVE: BEST PRACTICES FOR WRITING FAIR STORIES ABOUT UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRATION

Abstract:

Undocumented immigration is a polarizing issue in the United States. Rhetoric from our political leaders and talking heads on cable news has demonized this community. Local and national newspapers have historically contributed to this problem by using dehumanizing language as well as harmful metaphors to describe undocumented immigrants in their stories. The purpose of this project is to improve coverage of undocumented immigration by highlighting best sourcing practices from accomplished immigration journalists. I conducted semi-structured interviews with nine experienced immigration journalists who currently or previously worked in border states.

From these interviews, I obtained, among other things, important insights into how to navigate challenges that spring up while reporting on immigration issues as well as best practices for how to find and choose sources for stories about undocumented immigration. This information provides immigration journalists a roadmap for how to both improve their immigration reporting and produce fair immigration stories. My project also offers journalists new to the immigration beat actionable steps they can take to put themselves in the best position to produce quality immigration journalism.