

Dr. Ione Dugger Vargus



Dr. Ione Dugger Vargus is a Professor Emerita of Temple University where, in 1978, she broke new ground as the first African-American ever to hold the title of an academic dean in Temple's history. Dr. Vargus served as the Dean of the School of Social Administration (now the School of Social Work), for 13 years. She was then promoted to roles as Acting Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Presidential Fellow.

It was a combination of her graduate studies and experience as a social worker in Chicago and Boston that inspired her lifelong commitment to strengthening families and promoting reunions as a way to enhance identity, self-esteem and family values. Guided by that calling and subsequent research, Dr. Vargus founded the Family Reunion Institute (FRI) at Temple University in 1990; created the African-American Family Reunion Conference; and has since become a nationally acclaimed authority on reunions and their role in sustaining spiritual and cultural vitality in our families and communities.

Dr. Vargus has been interviewed or quoted by nearly 400 national and local publications and has appeared on a variety of radio, television and online shows. For 17 years she, and a skillful team of volunteers, produced national conferences on family reunions, drawing hundreds of attendees from all over the country. She particularly welcomed the attendance of persons from the tourism and hospitality profession and notes that so many now hold their own workshops. This past April, Temple's College of Public Health honored Dr. Vargus for her life's work in an event appropriately titled *Looking Back and Moving Forward*, where her legacy was embraced and honored. It is no wonder that she is widely and affectionately known as "The Mother of Family Reunions".

In January 2020 Temple University announced and held its first annual program series, Dr. Ione D. Vargus Virtual Lecture Series One-on-One, an intimate conversation with Robert W. Bogle, President & CEO of *The Philadelphia Tribune*, and radio personality W. Cody Anderson. This year the event will feature Temple University's President Richard M. Englert and retired professor Dr. Bernard Watson on January 20th, at 7:30 pm, by way of Zoom.

In August of 2020 Dr. Vargus' long-awaited book, *Black Family Reunions: Finding the Rest of Me* was published.

Dr. Vargus continues to work with a volunteer Board of Advisors to fulfill the mission of the Family Reunion Institute to nourish and fortify families of all races, ethnicities and structures with tools and resources that honor their strengths and provide the means to help them thrive. Interested parties are invited to view the FRI website at www.familyreunioninstitute.net.