

# HOSTILE TERRAIN 94

JANUARY 12 – MARCH 14, 2026



Chaffey  College

WIGNALL MUSEUM *of*  
CONTEMPORARY ART

This was printed on the occasion  
of the exhibition

***Hostile Terrain 94***

January 12 – March 14, 2026

Wignall Museum of Contemporary Art  
Chaffey College  
5885 Haven Avenue  
Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91737

[www.chaffey.edu/wignall](http://www.chaffey.edu/wignall)



The Wignall Museum of Contemporary Art aims to present diverse, innovative programming that engages contemporary subjects, social issues, and artists' themes. Sometimes exhibitions or programs may contain provocative or otherwise sensitive/mature content for some viewers.

**Cover image: South of Green Valley, Arizona (2009). Photo by Michael Wells.**

If you require disability-related accommodations to participate in exhibitions or event, please contact us ten instructional/business days prior to the event (Rebecca Trawick at [rebecca.trawick@chaffey.edu](mailto:rebecca.trawick@chaffey.edu)).



**Sonoran Desert, Arizona (2018). Photo by Michael Wells.**



## Programming

### Exhibition Walk-Through and Reception

Tuesday, February 10, 2026

1030am–2pm

Join Dr. De León and Michael Wells in a guided walk-through of the exhibition from 1030–1130am. We will have copies of Dr. De León's books, *The Land of Open Graves* and *Soldiers and Kings* available for sale with a book signing from 1130am–1230pm. Enjoy light refreshments, music, and art in community together. Free and open to the public.



Salto de Agua, Chiapas (2018). Photo by Michael Wells.



If you have any questions, please reach out to the museum staff.

Please visit [www.chaffey.edu/wignall](http://www.chaffey.edu/wignall) for more information about all programs.

All programs are free and open to the public.

## HOSTILE TERRAIN 94

 [www.instagram.com/hostileterrain94](https://www.instagram.com/hostileterrain94)

 [www.ht94.org](http://www.ht94.org)

*Hostile Terrain 94* is a participatory exhibition created by the Undocumented Migration Project (UMP), a non-profit organization that focuses on the violent social process of immigration and raises awareness through research, education, and outreach.

In 1994, the United States Border Patrol launched the immigration enforcement strategy known as “Prevention Through Deterrence” (PTD). With heightened security measures at urban points of entry, undocumented migrants were forced to traverse extremely treacherous environments, land dubbed as “Hostile Terrain” by U.S. Border Patrol.

PTD failed to deter border crossers and, instead, millions of people have attempted to migrate through the US- Mexico border since the 1990s. By using this tactic, the U.S. government has attempted to shift the blame onto the harsh environment, weaponizing the land as a natural killing field. As a result of this policy, more than 8,100 people have died on the US- Mexico border largely from dehydration and hyperthermia, while attempting the journey through California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. PTD is still the primary border enforcement strategy being used on the U.S.—Mexico border today.

Migrant death at the border is both systemic and systematic. Policies such as PTD, along with the use of detention centers and obstacles in attaining asylum, have created a system that has traumatized thousands of people in the name of immigration control.

**The Undocumented Migration Project, Inc.**

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# Undocumented Migration Project

 [www.instagram.com/undocumentedmigrationproject](https://www.instagram.com/undocumentedmigrationproject)

 [www.undocumentedmigrationproject.org](http://www.undocumentedmigrationproject.org)

In the mid-1990's, the U.S. immigration enforcement strategy known as Prevention through Deterrence [PTD] was implemented along the southern border. This strategy increased security in unauthorized crossing areas surrounding urban ports of entry in an attempt to shift undocumented migration towards remote border regions such as the Sonoran Desert of Arizona, where security is less intense but crossing conditions (e.g., terrain) are more difficult. Two decades of research has shown that PTD has failed to deter migration, but has succeeded in shaping border crossing into a well-organized and violent social process with a unique set of material culture and technologies.

The Undocumented Migration Project (UMP) Inc. is a 501(c)(3) research, arts, and education collective that seeks to raise awareness about migration issues globally. Started in 2009, the Undocumented Migration Project [UMP] is a long-term anthropological analysis of clandestine border crossings between Latin American and the United States directed by UCLA Anthropology Professor Jason De León. The UMP is a research-arts-education collective that seeks to both raise awareness about migration issues globally while also helping to reunite families with their loved ones who have gone missing crossing the US-Mexico border.

The UMP uses a combination of ethnographic, archaeological, forensic, and visual anthropological approaches to understand various aspects of unauthorized border crossings including the many forms of violence and suffering that characterize the process, the distinct experiences of migrant sub-populations (e.g., women, children, LGBT, non-Mexican nationals), and the evolving material culture associated with crossing.

By combining ethnographic work in Mexico with forensic and archaeological research in Arizona, Mexico, and Honduras, the UMP has improved our knowledge of this highly politicized and poorly understood process and demonstrated how an archaeological approach can provide new insight into a contemporary social

phenomenon. The research being conducted by the UMP is interdisciplinary, a fact reflected by the project's diverse theoretical and methodological approaches, the wide range of venues where this work is being published, and the ethnographic-archaeological field schools that have been running in Arizona and Mexico since 2010.

## The UMP Team

**Austin Shipman** is the Assistant Director of the Undocumented Migration Project, Inc. 501(c)(3) and formalized the organization as a nonprofit in 2018. She led a team in the creation, planning, and implementation of Hostile Terrain 94 with 150 partners across the globe. She has been involved with the Undocumented Migration Project since 2009 and holds a BA in Sociocultural Anthropology from the University of Washington and an MA in Social Sector Leadership and Nonprofit Management from the University of Chicago. In 2023 she was selected as an Obama Foundation Scholar, a rigorous training program convening social impact leaders from the disciplines of business, policy, and social work to equip them with the tools and networks needed to address social change on a systemic level.

**Nicole Smith** is a PhD student in the Department of Anthropology at UCLA with a concentration in archaeology. She holds her BA and MA in Anthropology from the University of Michigan and UCLA, respectively, and has been involved with the Undocumented Migration Project since 2017. Her doctoral research is a comparative project on the materiality of undocumented migration along the US-Mexico border and the so-called Balkan migration route in Italy, Slovenia and Croatia. She is particularly interested in human-environment interactions and how heritage is preserved and/or transformed across borders

**Perla Torres** is the Program Manager for the Undocumented Migration Project and Outreach Coordinator for the Cotsen Institute of Archeology at UCLA. Her dedication to migrant rights started in 2016, when she focused on social services while working as a Case Manager for the Office of Refugee Resettlement working in the reunification of unaccompanied minors in the US-Mexico border. She continued her work as the Children's Protection Specialist for the Guatemalan consulate in the Border Protection team and as The Colibrí Center for Human Rights Family Network Director, helping to identify over 300 remains found in the US-Mexico border. She continues to build solidarity, community, and a movement among families who have experienced loss at the border.

## Dr. Jason De León

 [www.instagram.com/jason.de.leon](https://www.instagram.com/jason.de.leon)

 [www.instagram.com/roberto\\_horry](https://www.instagram.com/roberto_horry)

 [www.jasonpatrickdeleon.com](http://www.jasonpatrickdeleon.com)

Jason De León is Executive Director of the Undocumented Migration Project, Inc. 501(c)(3) and Head Curator of *Hostile Terrain 94*. De León is Director of the Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, Loyd E. Cotsen Endowed Chair of Archaeology, Professor of Anthropology and Chicana/o and Central American Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Since 2009, the UMP has been studying clandestine migration between Latin America and the United States using a combination of ethnographic, visual, archaeological, and forensic approaches to understand this violent social process. De León has published numerous academic articles and his work with the UMP has been featured in a variety of popular media outlets.

He is the author of two award winning books: “The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail” (featuring photos by Michael Wells) and “Soldiers and Kings.” *Soldiers and Kings* won the 2024 National Book Award for Nonfiction. De León is 2017 MacArthur Foundation Fellow.

De León is on the Academic Board for the Institute for Field Research, a nonprofit organization operating over 42 field schools in 25 countries across the globe. Prior to joining the faculty at UCLA, De León taught in the anthropology department at the University of Michigan between 2010 and 2019. He was a lecturer at the University of Washington between 2008 and 2010. He received his Ph.D. in anthropology from Penn State University in 2008 and earned a bachelor’s degree in anthropology at UCLA in 2001. As an undergraduate at UCLA he gained his first experience conducting research in the Central Mexican state of Tlaxcala. His dissertation research focused on the development of early



Lampedusa, Italy (2017). Photo by Jason De León.

political economy and stone tool production among the ancient Olmec of Mesoamerica.

In addition to his scholarly pursuits, De León is an active musician who sang and played guitar with the Long Beach-based hardcore-punk-reggae band Youth in Asia in the mid to late 1990’s and the Americana band The Wilcox Hotel based out of State College, PA between 2005 and 2008. He currently plays bass in The War Pigs and is involved in various musical projects including periodic reunions with The Wilcox Hotel.



# Michael Wells

 [www.instagram.com/regressionarymovements](https://www.instagram.com/regressionarymovements)

 [www.mwellsphoto.com](http://www.mwellsphoto.com)

Michael Wells has served as primary photographer and artistic adviser for the Undocumented Migration Project since its inception in 2009. He has photographed the project's ethnographic and archaeological fieldwork in Arizona, New York, Mexico, Honduras, and Ecuador. A Los Angeles-based photographer, he has created photography projects on post-Katrina New Orleans, the physicality of the US-Mexico border in Arizona and California, and Latino communities in the American South.



Pakal-Ná, Chiapas, Mexico (2016). Photo by Michael Wells.

## Further Reading

Many of these titles are available to view at the Wignall Museum during the exhibition.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera, 5th Edition: The New Mestiza 5th Edition*. Aunt Lute Books, March 2022.

Blitzer, Jonathan. *Everyone Who is Gone is Here: The United States, Central America, and the Making of Crisis*. Penguin Press, January 2024.

Budd, Jenn. *Against the Wall: My Journey from Border Patrol Agent to Immigrant Rights Activist*. Heliotrope Books LLC, June 2022.

Cantú, Francisco (Paco). *When the Line Becomes a River: Dispatches from the Border*. Riverhead Books, February 2019.

De León, Jason. *The Land of Open Graves*. University of California Press, October 2025.

De León, Jason. *Soldiers and Kings, Survival and Hope in the World of Human Smuggling*. Viking, March 2024.

Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne. *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States (ReVisioning History)*. Beacon Press, August 2015.

Luiselli, Valeria. *Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in Forty Questions*. Coffee House Press, April 2017.

Muñoz, Ana. *Borderland Circuitry*. University of California Press, June 2022.

Snyder, Timothy. *On Tyranny*. Crown, February 2017.

Tobar, Hector. *Our Migrant Souls*. Picador Paper, September 2024.

Troncosco, Sergio. *Nepantla Familias: An Anthology of Mexican American Literature on Families In Between Worlds*. Texas A&M University Press, September 2024.

Urrea, Luis Alberto. *The Devil's Highway*. Little Brown, January 2004.

Vargas, Jose Antonio. *Dear America: Notes of an Undocumented Citizen*. Dey Street Books, June 2025.

Villavicencio, Karla Cornejo. *The Undocumented Americans*. One World, June 2021.

Wilson, Michael Steven, and José Antonio Lucero. *What Side Are You On?: A Tohono O'odham Life Across Borders*. The University of North Carolina Press, June 2024.

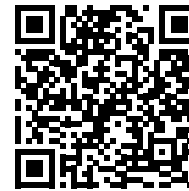
Zamora, Javier. *Solito*. Hogarth, June 2023.

Learn more by visiting the Chaffey College Library Libguide, *Wignall Museum of Contemporary Art: Hostile Terrain 94*.

<https://libguides.chaffey.edu/hostileterrain94>

The Library libguides are accessible online at <https://libguides.chaffey.edu/researchguides>.

Click **Arts, Communication & Design** and all the libguides in this area will appear.



The Chaffey College Library is providing access to Dr. De León's book, [\*The Land of Open Graves\*](#). This ebook can be viewed by all faculty, staff, and students. Faculty who choose to use this book as a required reading would also meet ZTC/OER requirements due to our unlimited-use license.

Visit the library in Spring 2026 in the new LLC building, Rancho Campus! Library hours, workshops, and collections can be found online [www.chaffey.edu/library](http://www.chaffey.edu/library)

## Stay Connected

Follow these global and local organizations on social media to learn more and to get involved. This list was developed by UMP with contributions from the Chaffey College PRISM Center:

Al Otro Lado	@alotrolado_org
CASA Pitzer	@casa_pitzer
Centro Del Inmigrante	@centroinmigrante
CHIRLA	@chirla_org
Detention Watch	@detentionwatch
Families Belong Together	@fams2gether @fronteristxs
The Florence Project	@the_florenceproject
Freedom for Immigrants	@migrantfreedom
Fronteristxs	@fronteristxs
Humane Borders	@humaneborders
Immigrant Defenders Law Center	@immdef_lawcenter
Immigrant Justice Network	@immjusticenetwork
Immigrant Legal Resource Center	@the_ilrc
Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice	@ic4ij
Inland Empire Immigrant Youth Collective	@ie_iyc
Innovation Law Lab	@innovationlawlab
Mijente	@conmijente
National Immigration Law Center	@nilc
No More Deaths/No Más Muertes	@nomoredeaths_ nomasmuertes
Pomona Economic Opportunity Center	@peoc_pomona
Pueblo Sin Fronteras	@pueblosinfronteras
Raices	@raicesaction
San Bernardino Community Service Center, Inc	@sbcscinc
TODEC	@todec1
UndocuScholars LLC	@undocuscholarsllc

## ASK ART USING THE MUSEUM TO MAKE CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

### HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is designed as a resource for viewing the exhibition, facilitating discussions, and creating activities in response to the content presented in the exhibition. It supports further research, curiosity, and investigation of contemporary art, artists, and themes. These materials can be used in the classroom, community-based learning environments, or by individuals who visit the exhibition.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

*Hostile Terrain 94* was designed and curated by anthropologist Dr. Jason De León.

Anthropology—the study of what it means to be human—seeks to understand the full complexity of the human experience. Anthropologists explore our past through archaeology, examine our bodies and genetics through biological anthropology, study how we create meaning and navigate the world through cultural anthropology, and investigate how we communicate through linguistic anthropology. As you move through this exhibition, keep these perspectives in mind and consider the many ways they shape our understanding of humanity.

Migration—the movement of people and cultures—is part of the story of who we are and how we've come to live in different places over time. People move for many reasons: to escape war or persecution, to find safety, or to seek better opportunities in work or education. According to the United Nations, about one in every seven people around the world is a migrant, moving either by choice or out of necessity.

### WHILE VIEWING

When you enter the Wignall Museum, take a few seconds to check in with yourself. How are you feeling today, mentally and emotionally? As you view the exhibition, notice how you feel as you engage with the exhibition.

After spending some time in the exhibition, or after you exit, take a moment to ground yourself. Take a deep breath. Notice your feet on the ground. What emotions are you carrying right now? What moment or story stood out to you most?



# ASK ART

## USING THE MUSEUM TO MAKE CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Unlike most exhibitions at the Wignall Museum, *Hostile Terrain 94* features objects drawn from anthropological research, along with audio and video recordings, and photography collected over years of fieldwork. What is the difference in the way you interpret art objects versus cultural and research-based materials?

What does the construction of borders reveal about how societies define belonging and exclusion?

In what ways might migration lead to the loss of cultural identity and traditions, and how do displaced people work to preserve their heritage in new environments?

If you were the curator of this exhibition, what would you title the exhibition and why?

### ESSAY PROMPTS

Write a well-developed essay in which you compare and contrast two objects in the exhibition. Analyze key elements such as composition, color, materials, and technique. Reference the contributors' biographies and the exhibition description in your analysis.

Explore how migration impacts local, regional, and national economies. Develop an essay on the topic.

Not all migration is voluntary. Many people move to escape violence, persecution, or life-threatening conditions; others are displaced from their homes or coerced through human trafficking and enslavement. Some become entangled in the illicit smuggling economy. In *Soldiers & Kings*, Dr. De León examines the lives and motivations of smugglers—often called coyotes—who are typically portrayed as the villains in migration narratives. After reading the book, has your perspective on this topic changed? Why or why not?

### ACTIVITIES

Select two of the objects from this exhibition and describe in detail the thoughts and emotions their work evoked for you. Consider why the work made you react this way and which aspects of the work you were reacting to.

Create a poem or zine about you or your family's imagined or real immigration journey.

Ask your parents, grandparents, or other elders if they have stories of their ancestor's migration to the United States, or within the U.S. Create a response to their story using whatever media you desire.

After you view *Hostile Terrain 94*, free-write for 5-10 minutes. Reread your writing and identify a word or statement that stands out to you. Create a short poem, a sculpture, a piece of music, a performance, or a drawing in response to the statement.

Explore the objects on display in the exhibition. Many of them may seem ordinary—items you might encounter or use in your everyday life. Choose one object in the gallery to draw and then create a drawing of the same type of object from your own daily surroundings. Compare the two versions carefully. In what ways are they alike or different? Are the differences visible, or do they lie beneath the surface?

### REFLECT & SHARE

View an object (photo, map, physical object, video, or audio piece) presented in the exhibition. What do you think UMP is exploring, visualizing, or illuminating? Organize your observations and thoughts into a social media post on your reaction to the exhibition, with an image from the exhibition. Share your thoughts, but we ask that you are thoughtful about how you express your opinions.

Create a playlist to accompany the exhibition. What would you include and why?

Create a list of the reasons why you might be compelled to leave your home forever. Use that list as the subject for a zine. Visit the library or CCSJ to make a copy of your zine to donate to the Chaffey College Library Zine Collection.

Visit the Reading Library, presented at the Wignall Museum in concert with *Hostile Terrain 94*. Identify a book you'd like to explore further from the library and check out the book from your local library. Read it and reflect.

Tell a friend, classmate, instructor, or family member about *Hostile Terrain 94*. Invite them to view the exhibition with you, in person, or online at [www.chaffey.edu/wignall](http://www.chaffey.edu/wignall).

### Share:

#wignallMOCA  
#whatsupatthewig

# Acknowledgements

Institutional support for the Wignall Museum of Contemporary Art is provided by Chaffey College; the Arts, Communication, and Design Academic and Career Community; the Public Service, Culture, and Society Academic and Career Community; Equity Programs and Student Engagement; the President's Office; and the Chaffey College Foundation.

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# Chaffey College

## Improving lives through education.

Chaffey College improves lives and our communities through education with a steadfast commitment to equity and innovation to empower our diverse students who learn and thrive through excellent career, transfer, and workforce education programs that advance economic and social mobility for all.

## WIGNALL MUSEUM *of* CONTEMPORARY ART

The Wignall Museum of Contemporary Art is a teaching museum and interdisciplinary art space that fosters direct engagement with works of art through exhibitions, collections, education, and community programming.

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

It is our tradition that we acknowledge that Chaffey College is on the ancestral lands of The Kizh and Tongva (Gabrieleño) who remain in the area today. With respect and honor for the lands we gather on and the leaders before us, we would like to take a moment to acknowledge the Gabrieleño-Tongva (GABRIEL-EN-YO TONG—VAH) Peoples, the original stewards of these sacred and unceded homelands. The Tongva people's history, language(s), cultural traditions, and legacy continue to shape this region and we recognize their continuing presence in their homelands.

In the spirit of truth and equity, Chaffey College commits to uplifting the voices of indigenous peoples, and building an inclusive and equitable educational environment, and decolonizing the institution. We also encourage members of the Chaffey College community to learn about the land they reside on and the original caretakers and advocate for culturally responsive action.

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