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Immigration documentary focuses on ‘military border complex’

As the presidential election draws near, immigration — particularly along the border between the U.S. and Mexico — remains one of the most divisive issues in contemporary American politics. But as the rhetoric ramps up across the country, the human dimensions of immigration often go unnoticed.

Casting a spotlight on immigrants, their families and humanitarian aid workers and educators, “Borderland: The Line Within,” a documentary by award-winning filmmaker Pamela Yates, will screen at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 8 at UC Santa Barbara’s Pollock Theater. After the screening Yates, who also co-founded the not-for-profit media organization Skylight nearly 40 years ago, will join moderator Giovanni Batz for a discussion and audience Q&A. The event is free and open to the public. Ticket reservations are recommended.

Brought to campus as part of the Carsey-Wolf Center’s CWC Docs series, the film ranges widely from the work of Texas-based community organizer Gabriela Castañeda to the monthslong trek of Guatemalan environmental activist Kaxh Mura’l , who flees for his life to the U.S. after confronting a foreign mining company’s exploits of his Indigenous homeland. The coverage is also interspersed with segments about immigration attorney Carlos Spector, a team of tech experts tracking immigration patterns and data from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention centers and volunteers with ARMADILLOS Search and Rescue, who hike the Sonoran Desert to search for and identify the remains of

deceased immigrants.

"The film provides much-needed insight on the military border complex," said Batz, an assistant professor in the Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies. "Of note is the highlighting of migrants as agents of their own political subjectivity, as well as Indigenous migration from Guatemala due to state-sponsored violence."

"For four decades, Yates and Skylight have highlighted human rights abuses and state violence in Guatemala," Batz added. "'Borderland' is an extension of that work, and it's a film that can be used in classrooms to teach on this subject."

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