Arjun:	00:16	Welcome to the fifth episode of Anthropological Airwaves. My name is Arjun Shankar, postdoctoral fellow at the University of Pennsylvania, and lecturer at Hamilton College. I think this episode really captures what this podcast is all about: critical, incisive, ethnographically grounded scholarship by politically aware scholars, grappling with the dilemmas that come with being deeply enmeshed in public debates that have real impacts for extremely vulnerable populations. In this episode you'll hear from Jason De Leon of the University of Michigan and Hillary Dick of Arcadia University, together who situate trump's "Build the Wall" rhetoric within the ongoing discussions regarding illegal immigration in the United States. I think what both want us to really think with, as we enter this episode is, one, how the discourse on illegal immigration is heavily racialized and grounded in a complex historical understanding as to who is a native of the United States. And second, I think what they really want us to see is the connection between their scholarship and these highly charged political public discourses. Indeed, I think Jason is especially direct in his critique of many anthropologists to somehow still see public anthropology. It's about outside of or maybe epiphenomenal to some imagine real or legitimate anthropological project. I think that's what I'd like to go into this episode thinking about as we listened in. And with that I'll pass it to diego risk papers on graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania. Please enjoy.
Diego:	02:06	So I am Diego Arispe-Bazan and I'm here with Jason De Leon, who is a professor at the University of Michigan. Your project, the Undocumented Migrant Project incorporates a bunch of different forms of data collection and knowledge production and presentation from different disciplines and disciplines across the board. So I was wondering how the product looked like from the beginning, from the outset or did that happen later when you were like, well maybe I want to incorporate media stuff, I want to incorporate a team of ethnographers, or?
Jason:	02:38	It's all been pretty organic, you know, I'm always thinking about it in terms of the kind of next product that I want to produce. And so right now, you know, it's funny, I actually tried to do, to move away from it, the immigration stuff, a couple of years ago and was like, okay, I finished with Arizona, I want to do stuff on the cops, I wanted to do a project on forensic scientists. And I started kind of doing that, and then we did a field season in Mexico and I got really interested in smugglers. And so then now that sort of brought me back into the fold. And so, um, you know, all those stuff that I've been doing still kind of falls under the rubric of the undocumented migration project. But I guess the, the questions that I'm interested in asking underneath that

kind of rubric had been evolving. And so now the two big things I'm doing are sort of photo-ethnography of smuggling, [with] Central American smugglers and then kind of getting back to some forensic stuff in Arizona. Um, but looking more now at, um, kind of the more technical parts of forensic science and trying to incorporate that back into this overall kind of anthropological narrative that, that really bridges the gap between forensics and ethnography.

| Jason: | 03:43 | But, so that's kind of where, if I had to pitch a book project or something, it would be more one on the visuality of smuggling and then another one on migrant deaths and Arizona and kind of looking at the ways in which the federal government has neglected this problem and how there's nobody looking for bodies. There's no federal agency actively trying to deal with this humanitarian crisis. So I've sort of come back to that I think partly because of this personal desire to, to try to help, you know, really it's this family of this kid, Jose Tacudi, [whose] story really affected me so much and he's still missing. And so I think that being interested in the forensic stuff is part of that kind of lingering problem of, you know, where is he? And I'm not super optimistic that we're ever going to find him, but I feel like I'm at least in a position where I can do research around that issue. Perhaps we can find somebody. |

| Jason (Talk): | 04:49 | Marisol is one of about 5,600 bodies that have been recovered in the desert and in the southern border since 1998, so one, one of many, many people. What this project is trying to do is offer a counter to the dominant sort of way that Americans think about undocumented migration. Typically, we get our information from some primary media sources, most of which focus on issues of legality and perspectives from law enforcement. And what this project is trying to do is say, okay, what does it look like from the other side? Right? Uh, what, what, what, what, what do the people themselves say about this process and who are the, who are these, these millions of undocumented people? And what are their stories? |

| Diego: | 05:30 | I wanted to know how you saw your work engaging with the new political situation. If you think not much will change or, or where do you see your work going in light of this changes? |

| Jason: | 05:43 | I mean, I feel like I'm asking the same types of questions. I think I'm still being like, maybe I'm just being louder about my sort of criticisms of the ways in which our political system is brutalizing people. It's almost now like, that's been really amplified. If anything, I think it's almost you worried about burnout, like, um, where before I could scream and shout about immigration |

and then people would say maybe, okay cool. But now it's like you can't even, it's inescapable. People are asking me like, well, what about ICE? What about these immigration rights? What about all this stuff? And so it's almost like this external pressure to say, okay, well you're the person who studies. So now tell us about it. What are you going to do about this now? Like man, people who study these particular issues had been saying that for a really long time.

Jason:	06:31	So that's been kind of an interesting moment to see colleagues and friends becoming more political in some ways, but maybe perhaps not seeing the connection between the work that they do and the things that are happening, you know, kind of on the street and we need to get to that point where you're already doing work that could speak to these issues and you just need to be better at now. I think being a more using these platforms, I'm using new platforms to present the knowledge that you were producing about these, about these issues. That's where I think we really need to go. And I hope that in this moment that people will, will start to do that and start to um, you know, we all need to be public anthropologist now. You know, coming out of this discipline where there's a lot of expectations about what you're going to produce.
Jason:	07:21	And, and I'm really trying to fight it now where I want to write books and I want to write books for a much wider audience. And not in a kind of light way or a dumbed down way. But really just in an accessible way and to maintain the rigorousness of the research to maintain the theoretical richness. But uh, without having to use, you know, an entire dictionary of $100 words and especially now, I mean, I felt like two years ago, a year ago, people would say things like, oh, you're a public anthropologist or engaged or all these buzzwords that I don't ever use to describe myself when people would say those things, oh, you're a public anthropologist -- often times, it's a slight. "You're not, you're not really, you know, an academic" kind of thing. And I used to be like, oh, you know, if you're making a distinction between people who do public anthropology, what is the type of anthropology that you do?
Jason:	08:21	Right? What, is there a non-public anthropology? I mean, the non-engaged and I think that increasingly in this political moment now, we can't have these distinctions anymore, but the audience doesn't. I mean that's such a crucial question because I think that's most of the time implicitly our audience that we write for are just other other academics.

Diego:	08:44	What is one idea that you think might be helpful in working through how do we engage with the public?
Jason:	08:51	I think that just on a like nuts and bolts level, I think about the reader as not just this kind of generic kind of audience out there that are interested in anthropology, but that reader who's sitting on a train or a bus or you know, in their room reading this book and how are they engaging with these words and so I think we can learn a lot from just thinking about writing as practice itself.
Diego:	09:22	Well, and I liked that you sort of been saying that anthropologists are the ones that can speak to a lot of these issues. But, I mean, why do you get that sense?
Jason:	09:31	I think we lack the authority, the authoritative confidence that comes the other social sciences perhaps have. I think for me, good ethnography is one that has anxiety ridden because it's so incomplete and you know, and did I screw the story by just even being there doing these sorts of things. So I think we're producing interesting social science research that is important for helping us understand the world, but I think we're questioning what are we doing and we're looking at other people who claim to do ethnography and going, yeah, I don't know. I'm real skeptical. I mean participant observation, okay. That is not same thing as writing an ethnography and just because you went and hung out with people doesn't mean that you're really doing anthropology.
Jason:	10:22	And I think that people who claim to do ethnography in other genres, other disciplines oftentimes don't come with it with the nervousness that we tend to have. And I like that nervousness. Whereas other folks, these kind of authoritative folks in other disciplines don't necessarily have that. And I think that's really off-putting to the general public because like, oh, here are these snooty academics telling me how to think about this sort of stuff... we're touchy-feely, right, as a discipline. And I like that; we we can be scientific, we can collect data in different sorts of ways. We can present it in all sorts of interesting ways. And uh, and I, and I hope that that makes us the best positioned to speak to the things that are happening right now. I mean, one of the things that people asked about, given with with my book at the end, they were like, well, could you make some policy recommendations, you know, could you kind of resolve the story.
Jason:	11:24	And I was like, no, but I struggle with immigration policy. It's so complex. Where do you even start? I would say, well let's go to

Central America and Mexico and see what we can do to help political stability, economic productivity there so people don't have to migrate. I mean, that's an unpopular kind of policy proposal. But that's an important part of the puzzle. And maybe, I mean, I sort of think about this whole idea about the cutting of food programs for, for kids that just happened the last couple of days and people saying, well then the data doesn't show this, that the data is chosen, that these programs don't help kids. And then of course people are saying, no, we have the data that says that these programs actually do help kids here, the numbers here and the charts and that sort of thing. Are those charts really effective or do we also need an anthropologist to come in there and say, let me tell you about, about Jimmy. Melissa, let me tell you about, you know, Mariana and how these programs affect their school experience. It's finding some kind of way to bring that in because I think a lot of times too that those, that the qualitative data can be more impactful. I mean much more than the numbers, but it's, it's, it's, how do you translate that into policy? That's a difficult thing

Diego: 12:50   Something that I was thinking about a lot with this talk about the wall and building a wall and now you know who's going to pay for the wall, which was something that started early last year, this conversation with about building a wall. I think your research makes it clear that there's always been a wall, sometimes through people's homes, and beyond the cost and who's going to pay for it, which is definitely important, it's also the fact that it's this symbol that people attach themselves to. For example, at high schools where you see videos of children yelling at the Hispanic and Latino populations "build the wall." So I guess what I wanted to ask is what you thought. I mean a little bit about this notion of the wall as a symbol.

Jason: 13:29   Well, I went to a Trump rally in Warren, Michigan, February of last year and, and it's just a room full of Michiganders chanting "build a wall" for like almost an hour before he comes out. And of course it's me and a Mexican friend, and I just remember thinking like, build a wall, build a wall. Like that's the more politically correct way to just say I have so many misconceptions and if I can build a wall, it's really about, it's about security, right? It's about protecting America, not about how much I hate people who look differently from me. And I think that we have found kinds of new ways to be racist and to be discriminatory in. We've put this new kind of linguistic veneer on it all lives matter, right? These things that are, in so much racism and horribleness embedded in those things. But you can say them out loud these days. And I think that there's a lot of interesting linguistic work to be done around this kind of, this shift in

		discourse and the way in which it becomes loaded with all this kind of other meanings.
Clip:	14:49	I'm working 12 hours a day, getting six an hour because I'm undocumented. Still. People say that I'm a terrorist. I've been living in constant fear of deportation for 13 years now. I've been here since I was four Americans all I know now, I'm terrified of being sent back to a country. I don't know. I've been feeling depressed because I don't know if my hard work is going to amount to anything. Since I'm undocumented. I hide my undocumented status for my significant other because I don't want him thinking I'll use him to get a green card. I would cry myself to sleep because people thought I was a bad person for not having documents. I'm not a bad person.
News Speaker 1:	15:31	Now. A lot of Americans worried about trump's plans to build the border wall between the US and Mexico.
Donald Trump:	15:37	We've got a border. The southern border is like a piece of Swiss cheese and we'll talk about it. We will build a wall. Yes.
Diego:	15:52	I'm here with Hillary Parsons-Dick Professor at Arcadia University. I wanted to open with a conversation about how your research engages with the issues of immigration.
Hilary:	16:01	One long-term project that started with my dissertation research became as look at how what I call migration discourse talk can be explicitly about the subject of migration, but also I use that as an umbrella term to refer to when people invoke images of personhood or ideas about here and there that are connected to immigration and what I'm really interested in that, is in how talk about migration, and also writing about migration, including policy is a form of participation in the state and critique of the state more than really being about migration itself. [I'm] starting to work on an article right now about, you know, the wall and discourses around the wall like we were talking about, but I'm also very interested in immigration policy and how, you know, the, the discourses that kind of lead up to and enable certain policies.
Diego:	16:57	You mentioned the wall and I wanted to hear more about that.
Hilary:	17:01	Well, so one of the things that strikes me as, as curious about, and I was saying this to my students all semester, was there is actually already a wall that never gets mentioned. Trump's vision of wall, quote unquote, is that it will cover the entire border, but there's already been several -- I mean, we've been

fortifying and militarizing our southern border with Mexico since the 1980s, including several waves of newer and bigger and longer border walls. We've been militarizing our border and profiting off of the degradation of human life along that border for many, many decades now. And so I get a little frustrated that the ways that that can fall out of the conversation and build the was the apotheosis of the worst part of our immigration policy, but it's not new. So if we vote him out of office, that doesn't get rid of the underlying problem, which is that the global economy has created vast income inequality everywhere and immigrants get scapegoated for it violently and then they're being thrown into detention centers that increasingly run by private companies who profit off of having bodies in their centers and also use them as labor.

Hilary: 18:17   So one of the main private correction facility companies in the U. S is the Geo Group and they're being sued right now in Colorado for using people as labor, and some people are getting paid as little as I forget the figures, twenty five cents a day or something like that. And I mean it's very similar what's happening with mass incarceration and private prisons. And I do find it kind of endlessly fascinating. Like why is that so important that the people who are steadfastly sticking to trump, it's because all. Well he was willing to say that real stuff about immigration that no one else will say because they're so PC, like yeah, "we know that all those Mexicans really are rapists and criminals and we need to build that wall."

Diego: 18:58   I mean the wall is interesting too because it coalesces as this a icon that then people latch onto and then all this stuff gets built around it. Discursively and constantly. But I wanted to think a little bit, if you could talk a little bit about that specifically, how you bring them tools of linguistic anthropology to the study of Immigration and immigration policy.

Hilary: 19:21   Right? So think about debates about immigration policy. To me, those really come down to contests over images of personhood, right? So who are, who are migrants, are they dangerous lawbreaking, rapists and criminals, or are they hardworking, taxpaying, potential future citizens, and who gets put into which category often goes hand in hand with processes of racialization. I always put it this way to my students, right? When we talk about undocumented migration, what's the image that comes to your mind? It's probably not the Swedish nanny overstayed or work visa, but she's also an undocumented immigrant. And this is another way though, that Trump's kind of interesting. But up until Trump, the racializing discourses around immigration in the United States, were really, some call

them covert. I think I've called them covert before, but I often hear Jonathan Rosa's voice in my head when I say that because he's always like, well, covert to whom?

Hilary: 20:25 Because they're not covert at all to certain people. Certain people know exactly who's being racialized and how. And usually it's because you're the target of that racializing discourse. So it's not denotationally explicit, the way our immigration policy used to be like, we don't want anyone from Asia to come to the United States, or we went more northern Europeans than Southern Europeans... and then we had a big reform of immigration policy in the 19 sixties and it was supposed to be color-blind and yet we still have this process where certain groups or people are disproportionately affected by immigration restrictions and certain populations of migrants are treated as criminal and dangerous and they tend to be people from Latin America and now increasingly, the Middle East too, of course. So how does that happen? Right? How do immigration policies that don't single out groups of people in their denotational content, nevertheless have the effect over time of singling out groups of people. So you have to look at how both at the sort of genealogical scale, right, of policies across time and then also in the more immediate scale of literal replication of text across contemporary policy. That through those processes we've come to create a conflation between the quote unquote illegal immigrant and this image of the Mexican other is unassimilatable un-American figure. Even in parts of the country, which from 1848, when our southern border moved south, to pretty recently were majority Mexican American population because it had been part of Mexico.

Diego: 22:03 And that's true too with native Americans, right? The story of the Nation of immigrants as opposed to the nation of invaders, for example.And even the term nativism recently has been all about white Americans asserting that there the real Americans, which I think is sort of a perversion of the idea of the. I mean, it makes sense because it's a nativization of a population taking over even the term native to make it about settler colonials asserting themselves as the real citizens and as the real proprietors of land seems devious and gross.

Hilary: 22:38 Yeah, I mean, well, it's certainly rests on a zero-sum game, that there's a limited set of goods and only so many people can get them, and so how do we decide who's in and who's out? So it does have, I think, very gross, base kind of motivation even if that's not people's conscious motivation. Right. And one of the things that interests me is other parts of the United States that in the last 10 years have become suddenly immigrant receiving

areas where here I'm thinking of the case of Hazleton, Pennsylvania, [which] becomes designated a keystone area by the state, which allows them to give companies tax-breaks to kind of create incentives for the development of local industry. They recruit this meat-packing company and they started recruiting immigrant labor. And so there are people in Hazleton still don't have jobs. They gave this tax break to this large company, that then recruited cheaper labor from somewhere else. So they're entitled to be angry about that. The problem is they directed at the immigrants and they're not the cause, or the problem.

Diego:	23:43	And that's something that I also wanted to chat with you and I think it's the running theme of our podcast is how do we make these things approachable or I mean not just linguistic anthropology, but also linguistic anthropology, but how do we make the topics of our research approachable to folks?
Hilary:	23:57	So if you want to affect change in the discourse around immigration, like, okay, let's let's clean out the words that are bad, let's encouraged the press not to use the term illegal immigrant as a value neutral term and it's not a value neutral term. It index is a certain set of political stances where you care more about someone's temporary immigration status. Then about their personhood. It's about historical patterns of end completions between images so that it can become something where we can all say illegal immigrant or those illegals and most people will imagine someone from Mexico.
Arjun:	24:55	Thank you all for listening in with us and I hope you really took away something useful to think about your research and public engagement. And the next episode is probably one I'm most excited about just given my own research pretensions, and it's on multimodal and visual anthropology. We'll be interviewing Carolyn Rouse of Princeton University and Brent Luvaas of Drexel University. So please do tune in then. Thanks.