

HATE CRIMES AT MACALESTER

On March 25 Adelante put up 40 individually decorated crosses and numerous signs explaining their meaning on the lawn in front of Bateman Plaza. The crosses and signs were part of a larger campaign designed by Adelante to bring the issue of the ongoing femicide in Juarez, Mexico to light on campus. The mission statement, which was posted around the crosses, explained their purpose: *For nearly 20 years, women have been the victims of femicide on the U.S. Mexican Border in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua. The violent murders committed against women are the result of sexual torture. There is currently no system in place to protect these women as the state has not taken any responsibility to account for this violence. **Una Oracion por Juarez** (A Prayer for Juarez) is an initiative of Activist art across the United States and Mexico that works to raise awareness of violence against women in Juarez. As Adelante, we are using protest art to recognize the strength and courage of these women, past and present, to bring a voice to their silenced histories.*

In addition to the mission statement, multiple other signs were displayed making it very clear that these crosses were made to honor the memories of the Women in Juarez. We also had an article in the Mac Weekly where we stated our cause. We organized with Facilities to reserve the lawn, so the school was aware of what we were doing. This was a process that we organized with a great deal of care and intent.

The next day, a Friday, a member of Adelante found that four crosses were taken out of the ground stuck back in upside down. He immediately took them down and tried to place them right-side up but they would not stay up. It took Adelante over an hour the night before to hammer the crosses into the ground. It was not an easy process. A surprising amount of energy was spent in re-arranging the crosses. Incidents continued to occur that weekend. We found broken crosses, crosses whose horizontal beam had removed and thrown across the lawn, and several broken signs. One evening another Adelante member saw a group of students picking up signs and throwing them and later two students kicking and breaking crosses.

Adelante members were incredibly hurt by these actions. At the end of the day, it wasn't about the hours we had spent making and painting the crosses, but the fact that each one represented the women who have been raped and murdered in Juarez. The destruction of individual crosses further violated their voices, stories and bodies. The mothers who now live without their daughters are taking action and raising their voices to tell of the injustice that is occurring in Juarez. These women have placed crosses in the desert in commemoration of their loved ones and as a symbol of their on-going struggle for justice.

We decided to respond proactively by using the space where the crosses had been overturned to further educate the Macalester community. We constructed and displayed new a sign that included information about the hate incidents and spoke to the historical implications of turning a cross upside down (an action with ties to the KKK).

On April 11th we discovered a photo posted on facebook by a

MACALESTER student depicting another student holding a cross with a condom on it and licking the condom. This speaks directly to the fact that hate crimes happen in our community. They are perpetrated by Macalester students against Macalester students. While we have the names of the students who committed this particular hate crime we need to remember that this was only one example of a slew of hate crimes which Adelante experienced over a number of days and which were committed by a number of people.

We have decided to make these incidents known to the wider Macalester community because we, as Adelante, should not stand alone. We are part of this community and need to be supported by you. What happened to the crosses affects everyone on this campus because hate crimes have a campus wide affect. They impact the way we interact with one another by influencing how safe we feel on campus to express ourselves.