

Guest speaker unravels issues of U.S.-Mexico border and femicide

By Eleanor Coleman & Renee Leach
STAFF WRITERS

In continuation of Hispanic Heritage Month, HUG hosted Macrina Cárdenas Alarcón to speak on Sept. 26. This was a collaborative event with help from the Multicultural Education Department and financial support from women's, gender and sexuality studies, justice & policy studies, and the history department.

Alarcón is a former delegate for the Mexico Solidarity Movement, but is currently on a speaking tour. While at Guilford, she gave two presentations: "Immigration at the U.S.-Mexico Border" and "Femicides in Ciudad Juarez."

IMMIGRATION AT THE U.S.-MEXICO BORDER

The issues concerning the U.S.-Mexico border are front-and-center in our current political atmosphere. Alarcón emphasized that the U.S. needs to take responsibility for the serious afflictions Mexicans are facing as a result of our policies. Together with students, teachers, and those in attendance, she discussed things that can be done to make progress in this complex issue.

George Guo, associate professor of political science, thinks everyone should educate themselves about this chain of events.

"If you know the background, foundation, and theory, you'll be able to interpret the correlations between cause and effect," said Guo. "Everyone needs to understand policies so in the future we can make a wise decision."

Understanding policy and how things have happened helps us understand the answers to the serious questions we face.

Jorge Zeballos, Latino community program coordinator, agrees with this concept, which he calls "understanding the larger context." Understanding the bigger picture allows you

to be in the position where you can make a difference. This is significant because right now the next step is taking responsibility and finding ways to help those who our policies have harmed.

"We have our hands in the mess of the issue we're facing now, we created it," said Zeballos. "(Yet) all I see is immigrant-bashing. It's a toxic environment when it comes to immigration right now."

"What strikes me the most is that we had both hands on Mexico," said senior Hannah Early. "We were in their economy and in their lives and dictating what they needed to do in regards to economic policy. Now we are trying to remove ourselves from that involvement and act like we haven't done anything wrong. Part of the reason people cross the border undocumented is because we created a situation in which they need to do so."

FEMICIDE IN CUIDAD JUAREZ

The Mexican city of Ciudad Juarez, located in the region of Chihuahua, is famous for hosting a myriad of crime. However, female victims in particular are becoming a topic of unique discussion.

"Since 1993, about 30 women have been murdered annually in the Juárez metropolitan area of more than two million people," reports ReVista, Harvard's

Review of Latin America. "Even higher rates of homicide exist among Juárez males: more than 200 men are murdered each year."

Even though the number of females murdered is significantly less than that of males, these victims have garnered special attention — mainly because, until recently, they have hardly received any attention.

The story of these unnoticed victims, among other issues, has encouraged Alarcón's work in the Mexico Solidarity Movement.

"Many women (that are) out alone in public disappear and are later found in fields with signs of being attacked," said Alarcón.

These victims usually show evidence of sexual assault as well.

Women in Ciudad Juarez easily find themselves in vulnerable situations everyday.

"These are where there are free trade zones, there's a lot of factories, there's a lot of low wage jobs," said Assistant Professor of Justice and Policy Studies Sanjay Marwah. "Women are going to work in these factories ... they're single, they don't know anybody, these are urban, highly dense areas, government officials are considered corrupt."

In addition to the heinous nature of these crimes, the lack of attention they receive is also a problem. Mexican officials grant this issue little concern, barely investigating cases if not completely ignoring them.

"This isn't happening in a vacuum," said Alarcón.

Mexico's strong patriarchal culture also makes blaming the victims easy.

"Culturally, the government can almost, in some sense, say, 'We don't have to do anything about it, because these are women that should have known better, should be doing what they're supposed to be doing,'" said Marwah. "Patriarchal societies definitely contribute to femicide."

The Mexico Solidarity Movement takes inspiration from the mother's of victims in Ciudad Juarez, who

work to publicize these events even amid threatening opposition.

"If the mothers hadn't mounted this struggle things would be worse than they are now," said Alarcón.

DOING WHAT YOU CAN WHERE YOU ARE

One of the biggest testaments of progress made is that people like Alarcón are even speaking about these issues.

"We're a group you might call idealists or romantics," said Stuart Schussler, who works with Alarcón and served as translator for the presentation.

Although Guilford is a small institution, the Mexico Solidarity Network believes that these intimate grassroots interactions have large reverberations for change.

Both presentations emphasized the importance of being involved.

"Students need to be involved," said Early. "We as students need to call for those things we see as important and make our voices heard."

However, the vital first step is simply being informed.

"These things are happening in Mexico, but are intimately related to the United States," said Alarcón. "Their lives are connected."



Former delegate for the Mexico Solidarity Movement **Macrina Cárdenas Alarcón** spoke in Bryan Jr. Auditorium on Sept. 26. She discussed the issue of femicide in Mexico and how it relates to the U.S.

EXPLORING SEXUAL ASSAULT

Defining sexual assault: part one of a three part series

By Victor Lopez
STAFF WRITER

Students are beginning to mobilize, questioning whether Guilford College, like other colleges, is facing the nationwide problem of sexual assault in effective ways.

Senior Taylor Starns, president of Guilford's Sexual Assault Awareness, Support and Advocacy, said that she wanted to see more accountability from the college where sexually charged crimes were concerned.

Starns thinks that sexual assault is not clearly outlined or understood on campus, which she thinks is problematic.

Vice President and Dean of Student Affairs Aaron Fetrow told The Guilfordian that his office is eager to help those who need assistance when offended, though many students do not report assault for many reasons, usually because most cases of assault have to do with drugs and alcohol.

Sexual assault means any unwanted touch or advances, not just rape. Consider the following scenario:

You and someone you are attracted to meet up at a party. Later in the night you end up making a sexual advance. You are both drunk, and she or he did not indicate not wanting sex or to be touched sexually, so you think they might be into you. You press on. You might have just sexually assaulted someone.

Fetrow said that students should proactively learn what consent really means and dig a little deeper where sexual health is concerned.

"As soon as you've taken one drink, consumed any drug, you have just lost the right under the law to give legal consent to have sex," said Fetrow.

According to the 2010-2011 Student Handbook: "Students must confirm that mutual consent is given for all sexual acts within a sexual interaction.

"A student can withdraw consent at any time during an encounter. Non-communication is not consent. Consent can only be given when a student is able to freely make an informed choice between two options: yes and no.

"Consent cannot be given if someone is asleep, unconscious, incapacitated, coerced, threatened, intimidated or forced, under the age of 16, or impaired by alcohol/drugs."

Author and Associate Professor of women's, gender, and sexuality studies at California State University Shira Tarrant told The Guilfordian that most students will not read the handbook cover to cover and reporting after the fact only fixes parts of the problem.

"The 100 percent effective solution is prevention," said Tarrant. "It is not a matter of getting people to report after the crime is committed. What needs to happen on campus is a very open conversation about consent and sexual assault."

Tarrant said that having informed conversations about sexual assault and getting the term "bystander intervention" on the table was important.

"Doing this as a collective community will shift the cultural conversation about what is acceptable and unacceptable," said Tarrant.

"This is the institution's responsibility to put these conversations on the table," she added.

Senior Maddie Lambelet agreed with Tarrant, telling The Guilfordian that she loves Guilford and feels that without accountability and openness for sexual safety the institution will suffer.

"By opening the dialogue about sexual assault and date rape we are bringing these issues to the forefront so we can protect people from one another and making mistakes," said Lambelet.

Senior Justin Kirchner said that he is exhausted by the silence behind sexual assault.

"This seems like a subject that is too often swept under the rug," said Kirchner. "Both by the student body and by the college."