



# LATIN AMERICA WORKING GROUP

*Action at Home for Just Policies Abroad*

**ANNUAL REPORT 2010**



*A citizen of San Francisco learns the stories of 40 displaced Colombians during Days of Prayer and Action for Colombia.*

PHOTO BY FELLOWSHIP OF RECONCILIATION.

**W**e are not the only ones who want our country to stand for justice.

So do you, hundreds of thousands of people across the nation who not only care about what happens in the United States, but about what happens around the globe.

That's why we find ways for you to challenge our country's leaders to base our foreign policy towards Latin America on peace, human rights, and justice.

This year we've forged new ways to expand your input into the foreign policy debate. Through social networking—e-alerts, Facebook, Change.org, and our blog—we are reaching new audiences that not only read our message, but also take action to work for change.

But we also believe in using the old-fashioned methods, encouraging you to have face-to-face meetings with your members of Congress and reaching out to you through grassroots workshops and book launches.

And always, we help the victims of human rights abuses and brave human rights defenders from Latin America speak truth to power in our nation's capital.

It's our privilege to help you make your voice heard.

*Lisa Haugard*

*Cover: Paseo de Humanidad (Parade of Humanity), a sculpture on the Nogales, Arizona/Sonora border fence by artists Alberto Morackis and Guadalupe Serrano.*

PHOTO BY BORDERLINKS.

# Who We Are

**O**ne Latin America Working Group serves a coalition of nongovernmental, religious, grassroots and humanitarian agencies. We bring coalition partners together to create advocacy and public education campaigns to encourage U.S. policy towards Latin America and the Caribbean that favors human rights, justice, peace and sustainable development.

The Latin America Working Group (LAWG), a 501(c)4 nonprofit, carries out advocacy and grassroots education. The Latin America Working Group Education Fund (LAWGEF), a 501(c)3 nonprofit, sponsors educational events and produces publications. In the list of this year's activities, lobbying activities were carried out by the LAWG, and educational activities by the LAWGEF.

## PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS\*

AFL-CIO Solidarity Center

Alliance of Baptists

American Friends Service Committee

American Jewish World Service

Catholic Relief Services

Center for Economic and Policy Research

Center for Global Education at Augsburg College

Center for International Policy

Christian Peacemaker Teams

Church of the Brethren

Church World Service

Colombia Human Rights Committee

Conference of Major Superiors of Men

Cuban American Alliance Education Fund

Disarm Education Fund

Episcopal Church





*Haitian men waiting for the support to start working on rebuilding their country after the earthquake.*

PHOTO BY JONATHAN ERNST COURTESY OF LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF.

## 2010 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### Responding to Humanitarian and Human Rights Emergencies

- Mobilized organizations to successfully convince Congress to pass over \$1 billion in reconstruction aid, in addition to relief aid, for Haiti in the wake of the devastating January 2010 earthquake. We helped to convene humanitarian aid agencies and nonprofits in a new Haiti Working Group to advocate for generous assistance and monitor U.S. relief efforts.
- Brought attention to threats against and assassinations of activists, human rights defenders and journalists in Honduras by organizing a high-impact sign-on letter, briefing State Department officials and organizing visits with policymakers and human rights groups for the Honduran Human Rights Platform as they visited Washington to receive the Institute for Policy Studies' Letelier-Moffitt human rights award.

## Promoting Justice for Mexico & the Borderlands

- Made U.S. policymakers begin to recognize that channeling counternarcotics aid through the military is a dangerous business with perilous human rights consequences. Our collective efforts with Mexican and U.S. human rights partners helped ensure no new large-scale military aid and led the State Department to withhold aid pending action, even if still far from enough, in limiting Mexican military courts' jurisdiction over soldiers who commit human rights crimes. Despite political pressure inside the beltway to shovel the funds out the door to help Mexico deal with deadly drug cartel violence, our efforts set policymakers and the White House on notice that human rights concerns cannot simply be set aside.



*More than 200,000 people called for immigration reform now at the March for America in May.*

PHOTO BY VANESSA KRITZER.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,  
Global Mission

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,  
Washington Office

Fellowship of Reconciliation Task Force on  
Latin America and the Caribbean

Free the Slaves

Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA

Human Rights First

Institute for Policy Studies

Jesuit Refugee Service/USA

US Jesuit Conference

Loretto Community Latin American/  
Caribbean Community

Lutheran World Relief Office of Public Policy

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Mennonite Central Committee

Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate,  
Justice and Peace Office



*Shrine created by Deborah McCullough of items found along the migrant trails in Arizona's borderlands.*

PHOTO BY BORDERLINKS.

- Urged our government to prevent the exploitation and deaths of migrants on both sides of our border—a need underscored by the record migrant death toll in the border region and mass-killing of 72 migrants in northern Mexico. We mobilized faith-based, labor and human rights groups and hundreds of grassroots advocates to make their voices heard through emails and faxes to the White House pressing for progress to end the humanitarian crisis on both sides of the border.
- Brought speakers from across Latin America to Ecumenical Advocacy Days to educate church activists about the difficult situations that immigrants, refugees, and displaced people are facing and what we as U.S. citizens can ask our government to do about it.

### **Colombia: Standing with the Victims of Violence**

- Dramatized the plight of Colombia's tens of thousands of disappeared people through a groundbreaking report, *Breaking the Silence*, based on a fact-finding trip to speak with associations of the disappeared, government officials, forensic and human rights experts.

- Our *Far Worse than Watergate* report exposed the evolving wiretapping scandal after our efforts in 2009 had led the Congress to place a ban on U.S. funding for Colombia's intelligence agency. We provided public support for human rights defenders and journalists who were targets and victims of illegal surveillance.



*Rally in front of the White House to make our government literally “face” the displacement crisis in Colombia during Days of Prayer and Action.*

PHOTO BY WITNESS FOR PEACE.

- Helped the mother of a young Soacha man killed by the army, a campesino leader from the San José de Apartadó peace community, an Afro-Colombian leader who was forced to flee from her community's ancestral territories in order to save her

National Council of Churches  
National Security Archive  
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby  
Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA)  
Oxfam America  
Peace Brigades International, USA  
Presbyterian Church (USA)  
Project Counselling Service  
Quixote Center/Quest for Peace  
Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism  
Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights  
School of the Americas Watch (SOA Watch)  
SHARE Foundation  
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas  
Sister Parish  
STITCH



*Miracles for sale in Cuba.*  
PHOTO BY MAVIS ANDERSON.

life, and human rights defenders bringing to trial historic cases of disappearances and assassinations, to speak truth to power by helping with partner organizations to arrange their visits to our nation's capital. Our efforts ensured that Congress pressed the State Department to make human rights more central to U.S. policy.

- Collaborated with our partners to organize the most successful Days of Prayer and Action for Colombia ever. Participation literally doubled with over 43,850 activists from 70 cities across the U.S. and Colombia getting involved, and 110 U.S. and Colombian congregations joining the call for peace through prayer.

### **Cuba: Travel for All**

- Championed legislation that would end the travel ban on Cuba, coordinating a coalition of faith-based groups, human rights organizations, Cuban-American groups, grassroots networks, and individual activists around the country to push for legislation that would end the travel ban on Cuba. We worked side-by-side with folks from the business and agriculture communities to present the broadest possible force for changing U.S. policy.

- Organized an amazingly successful online campaign using *Facebook*, *Change.org*, and *Twitter* that amounted to nearly 30,000 new advocates for the freedom to travel.
- Achieved almost unheard-of numbers of congressional co-sponsors for bills to definitively end the travel ban and facilitate food sales to Cuba. The travel/agricultural sales bill passed the House Committee on Agriculture and was poised to pass the House Committee on Foreign Affairs when the congressional session ended.
- Partnered with our board member Jeanne Lemkau to motivate activists, present Cuba policy forums, and promote her newly-published memoir on Cuba in bookstores, churches and community centers across the nation.
- Coordinated delegations to Washington, DC, and in local districts to educate members of Congress on the benefits of ending the ban on travel to Cuba for ALL U.S. citizens.

TransAfrica Forum  
United Church of Christ  
United Methodist Church,  
    General Board of Church & Society  
United Methodist Church,  
    General Board of Global Ministries  
United Methodist Church, Women's Division  
US-Cuba Cultural Exchange  
US/Labor Education in the Americas  
US Office on Colombia  
Washington Office on Latin America  
Witness for Peace

\* This list includes some of the groups participating. Participation does not imply endorsement of all LAWG/LAWGEF efforts. Decisions to endorse statements and campaigns are made on a case-by-case basis by each participating organization.



## STAFF

(left to right)

*Ben Leiter, Lisa Haugaard, Jennifer Johnson,  
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## Acknowledgments

Many thanks to the following foundations and organizations for their contributions to the LAWGEF's public education work: Foundation to Promote Open Society, Ford Foundation, Christopher Reynolds Foundation, Moriah Fund, General Service Foundation, Arca Foundation, Stewart Mott Charitable Trust, Oblate Charitable Fund, United Church of Christ, and Oxfam America. Many thanks to Atlantic Advocacy Fund, Catholic Relief Services, ELCA Global Mission, Lutheran World Relief, American Jewish World Service, Presbyterian Church (USA), Women's Division of the United Methodist Church, Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, and many other organizations that have contributed to the LAWG, as well as to the many generous individuals contributing to both organizations.

## Finances

LAWGEF's income of \$702,210 in 2009 came primarily from foundations as well as from individual donors and nongovernmental organizations. This includes some two-year income carried over to 2010. Expenditures for 2009 were \$440,551. Contributions to the LAWGEF for education activities are tax-deductible.

LAWG's income of \$76,180 in 2009 came from contributions by coalition partners, including humanitarian agencies, nongovernmental and faith-based organizations, as well as from individual donors. Expenditures for 2009 were \$84,562. Contributions to the LAWG are not tax-deductible.

### LAWGEF 2009 Expenses



### LAWG 2009 Expenses



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See our website to:

- sign up for our newsletter, *The Advocate*;
- join our e-mail listservs on Cuba, Colombia, Mexico and U.S./Mexico border issues, low-volume e-mail alerts that let you know what you can do to call for just U.S. policies;
- order or view on-line our special reports;
- make a contribution.

*Action at Home for Just Policies Abroad*



*Everyone wants the freedom  
to travel to Cuba, even Nene!*

PHOTO BY PAULO GUSMAO