There are moments in history when you just have to stand up for what's right.

That’s what we did with you this year. Stand up against deportations of Central American children, teens, women, and men fleeing violence. Stand up for our nation’s historic role in sheltering refugees. Stand up for justice for the murder of indigenous leader Berta Cáceres and other environmental activists in Honduras, for community leaders facing threats in Colombia, and for the disappeared students in Ayotzinapa, Mexico. Stand up for U.S. support for the peace accords in Colombia to end a war that has killed more than 260,000 people. Stand up to defend the momentous opening of U.S. relations with Cuba. Stand up for the institutions of our democracy. Stand up for tolerance and kindness.

It hasn’t been an easy year. But we are proud to stand up with you.

Cover: World Refugee Day rally in Washington, D.C.
PHOTO BY LILY FOLKERTS.

Lise Haugrud

Emma, Andrea, and former LAWG intern Ellie delivering our #NoBanNoWall petition to Congress.
PHOTO BY ANDREA FERNÁNDEZ APONTE.
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 activities and publishes reports and updates. In the list of this year’s activities, lobbying tasks were carried out by LAWG, and educational tasks by LAWGEF.
Protecting Migrants’ Rights and Human Rights in Central America

- Galvanized support for the extension of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for 250,000 Salvadorans and Hondurans in the United States, documenting dangerous conditions in their homelands, coordinating grassroots alerts and visits to Congress, and organizing support for two congressional letters. Grew support for legislative solutions for TPS beneficiaries. Testified in front of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission of the U.S. Congress and the DC City Council on the need to protect Central Americans receiving TPS.

- Informed and engaged our partners in Central America and Mexico on the administration’s anti-immigrant and anti-refugee executive orders and their harmful impacts on Central American migrants and refugees with webinars and updates.
Conducted a fact-finding visit to Honduras and El Salvador and then launched a series of blogs, “Between a Wall and a Dangerous Place.” The series documents the closing of space for activists and journalists in Honduras, the growing human rights problems caused by both countries’ strategies for fighting crime, and how many Hondurans and Salvadorans continue to be internally displaced and forced to migrate due to violence.

Called for human rights not to be sidelined and for U.S. foreign policy to address root causes of forced migration from Central America, including at the administration’s first high-level event on Central America. We organized a letter to Secretary Tillerson with over 100 organizations from the United States and Latin America and held a civil society side event to highlight our message.

Pushed for justice for the murder of Honduran indigenous activist Berta Cáceres, including by supporting the independent group of experts (GAIPE) working with her organization and family.
Cuba: Pushing to End the Embargo

- Organized a strong grassroots response to the very unfortunate and negative rollback of the previous administration’s historic policy of engagement with Cuba.
- Encouraged constituent outreach in support of important efforts in Congress to end the travel ban and trade embargo against Cuba.
- Informed and motivated citizen diplomats through a lively social media program on Facebook, Twitter, and with our active email network of thousands of Cuba policy advocates.
- Participated in a vibrant network of colleague non-profit organizations, business groups, educational networks, agriculture interests, and activist organizations to make our voices heard in support of engagement and not aggression toward Cuba.
- Brought voices of Cuban Americans and Cuba’s faith community to the Hill and to the administration to protest the rollback by the current administration, and to witness to the benefits to both countries of a policy moving toward normal relations and respectful dialogue.
Colombia: Standing for Peace and Justice with the Victims of Violence

- Ensured the United States supports implementation of the historic peace accords in Colombia, despite the change in U.S. leadership. We met with administration officials, wrote a letter from U.S. civil society groups to Secretary of State Tillerson, conducted a round of meetings to update key members of Congress, met with USAID to ensure focus on peace accord implementation and human rights, and organized constituents to contact their member of Congress.

- Launched a series of quarterly updates on the status of peace accord implementation in Colombia for policymakers and the public, to encourage support for the process while identifying serious problems in implementation and urging solutions.
Pressed the Colombian government and U.S. government to address the escalation of killings of human rights defenders and community leaders, urging investigations, prosecutions and protection.

Organized a public speaking tour by rural peace leader Gerardo Acero with the Colombia Human Rights Committee on building peace in Colombia’s forgotten countryside.

Promoting Justice for Mexico & the Borderlands

Lodged complaints calling for investigations into increasing violations by Customs & Border Protection along the U.S.-Mexico border, including the turn-backs of asylum seeking families and children into dangerous areas along Mexico’s northern border.

Encouraged the U.S. and Mexican governments to respond to the increase in attacks against human rights defenders and journalists in Mexico with serious investigations, prosecutions, and protections.
Built international support to ensure that the horrifying disappearance of the 43 Ayotzinapa students does not remain in impunity three years later and that the Mexican government makes progress in addressing outstanding questions in the case.

Women’s March in Washington, D.C.

PHOTO BY EMMA BUCKHOUT.
Acknowledgments

Many thanks to the following for their contributions to LAWGEF’s public education work: Foundation to Promote Open Society, Ford Foundation, CAMMINA, Moriah Fund, Stewart Mott Charitable Trust, Holthues Trust, Oxfam America, United Church of Christ, AFL-CIO, Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States, Lutheran World Relief, and Washington Office on Latin America.

Many thanks to the following for their contributions to LAWG: Open Society Policy Center, Church World Service, ELCA Global Mission, Mennonite Central Committee, Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Alliance of Baptists, Presbyterian Church USA, and many other organizations that have contributed to LAWG, as well as to the many generous individuals contributing to both organizations.
Finances
LAWGEF’s income of $222,829 in 2016 came from foundations as well as from individual donors and nongovernmental organizations. Expenditures for 2016 were $365,946. Some multiyear grants from 2015 were carried forward to cover 2016 expenses. Contributions to LAWGEF are tax-deductible.

LAWG’s income of $99,856 in 2016 came from contributions by coalition partners, including humanitarian agencies, nongovernmental and faith-based organizations, funders and individual donors. Expenditures for 2016 were $109,134. Contributions to LAWG are not tax-deductible.
Latin America Working Group

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See our website to:

- Sign up for our newsletter, The Advocate, or for the LAWG blog;
- Join our e-mail lists on Cuba, Colombia, Central America, Mexico and the borderlands to learn ways to take action for just U.S. policies;
- Order or view online our special reports;
- Make a contribution.

Daniella and migrant child by a mural inside La 72 migrant shelter in Tenosique, Mexico. PHOTO BY EMMA BUCKHOUT.

Action at Home for Just Policies Abroad

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