



LATIN AMERICA WORKING GROUP

*Action at Home for
Just Policies Abroad*

2012
ANNUAL REPORT

WOW! I have always been proud of the way the Latin America Working Group opens doors for Latin American human rights activists to talk to U.S. policymakers and the public. But it's usually for two, three, four activists at a time. In September 2012, we opened doors for 110 Mexican victims of violence and human rights activists.

The Caravan for Peace with Justice and Dignity traveled thousands of miles across the United States, ending in three days in Washington, D.C., jam-packed with events, press, and policymaker meetings we and our partners worked tirelessly to organize.

The brave *caravaneros* spoke out against the human toll of policies that fail to stop drug violence in Mexico, and indeed add to the bloodshed. They spoke about our failure to stop the flow of assault weapons across the U.S. border, the deportation of migrants back into the hands of drug gangs, and the impact of bringing the Mexican military into the streets. They said: *We are not collateral damage of the drug war. Our loved ones have names; they have*

mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters. The United States has a responsibility in the violence that is causing us such pain. You have to rethink the ways your actions or failure to act are contributing to the sorrow we feel.

We were honored to stand with Melchor, whose son, a street artist, was disappeared; with Daniel, who has lost five relatives to violence and whose entire family is in exile; and with Lucia and Alfonso, parents seeking justice after their son, a systems engineer, was disappeared on a highway outside Monterrey.

We were proud to get on board the Caravan—and to work with you, people from across the nation, who are taking a stand for peace with justice and dignity.

Lisa Haugard

Cover: "Where is my son?" Members of the peace caravan march to the White House seeking justice for their murdered or disappeared loved ones.

PHOTO BY JENNY JOHNSON

Who We Are

The 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.



Lisa Haugaard meets with campesino activists on the Caribbean Coast of Colombia to discuss land rights, along with Lutheran World Relief staff.

PHOTO BY ANNALISE ROMOSER, LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS*

- AFL-CIO
- AFL-CIO Solidarity Center
- Alliance of Baptists
- 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
- Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach
- Conference of Major Superiors of Men
- Cuban American Alliance Education Fund



Caravaneros march through D.C. calling for justice for their murdered loved ones and an end to drug war violence.

PHOTO BY CHELSEY CRIM

2012 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Promoting Justice for Mexico & the Borderlands

- Served as lead coordinators for the Washington, D.C. stop of the historic U.S.-Mexico Caravan for Peace with Justice and Dignity. Worked with partners to organize three days full of events for the *caravaneros*—110 victims of violence and human rights activists—to call on the U.S. to take responsibility for failed policies and help stop the horrific violence that is afflicting their families and their country. Events included meetings with policymakers, teach-ins at local universities and a moving closing march.
- Traveled to the northern and southern borders of Mexico to meet with migrant advocates and shelter workers as part of an international verification mission on threats against migrant rights defenders and migrants in Mexico.
- Participated in an unprecedented two-day visit to short-term detention facilities to investigate conditions for migrants and engage with Customs and Border Patrol officials in Arizona, with partners including No More Deaths, Southern Border

Communities Coalition, Women's Refugee Commission, Border Action Network, and the ACLU's Regional Center for Border Rights.

- Organized a delegation of six Mexican migrant rights defenders to present their report documenting abuses in U.S. detention and deportation processes revealed by recently deported migrants and showing how such practices put migrants in harm's way. Co-authored a letter signed by 115 faith and nongovernmental groups calling for President Obama to reduce human rights violations in the border region by conducting a thorough investigation of allegations of excessive use of force by the Border Patrol.
- Motivated over 1,000 activists to send emails to Congress to urge them to sign letter to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton urging her to enforce human rights requirements in law and press for justice for abuses committed by security forces in Mexico.



Leticia, a mother from the caravan seeking justice for her daughter, Ivonne, who has been missing for over a year.

PHOTO BY ASHLEY N. GARCÍA

Disarm Education Fund

Episcopal Church

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

Global Exchange

Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA

Institute for Policy Studies

Jesuit Refugee Service/USA

US Jesuit Conference

Lutheran World Relief Office of Public Policy

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Mennonite Central Committee



Lisa Haugaard meets with members of ASOTRECOL, the Association of Injured Workers and Ex-Workers of General Motors Colombia, outside their tents in front of the U.S. Embassy in Bogotá, Colombia.

PHOTO BY US OFFICE ON COLOMBIA

Colombia: Standing with the Victims of Violence

- Successfully convinced State Department officials to make a priority of addressing threats and attacks against human rights defenders in diplomacy with the Colombian government. Advocated via letters and meetings with high-level State Department officials that murder, rape and torture by Colombian soldiers be tried in civilian courts, and persuaded the State Department and congressional offices to urge the same.
- Carried out a field investigation on whether land was being returned to victims of violence, and published with Lutheran World Relief *Still a Dream: Land Restitution on Colombia's Caribbean Coast*.
- Acted as a juror for Colombia's first national human rights prize in Bogotá.
- Brought families of Colombia's disappeared to meet with policymakers and the public.
- Organized grassroots campaigns of support for land rights leaders at risk, internally displaced persons and refugees, injured GM workers, and other vulnerable sectors in Colombia.

Cuba: Travel for All

- Successfully worked with partners to increase people-to-people delegation travel to Cuba now allowed under Obama Administration revised regulations. Through our website, Cuba policy e-network, blogs and Facebook, we encouraged travel and shared resources for citizen action with returned travelers.
- Expanded new constituencies for travel and advocacy for policy change, such as providing advice and support for CAFE (Cuban Americans for Engagement), young



Members of CAFÉ, Cuban Americans for Engagement, with Rep. Jim McGovern.

PHOTO BY EMILY CHOW

professional Cuban Americans newly engaged in the policy debate; working to plan a charity powerboat rally to Cuba (licensing pending) for the purpose of sharing nautical expertise and experiences between the American and Cuban boating communities; and conducting an on-line survey of travelers to Cuba.

Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate,
Justice and Peace Office

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)

Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

Project Counselling Service

Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and
Human Rights

School of the Americas Watch (SOA Watch)

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas

TransAfrica Forum



Members of Afro-Colombian community councils get ready to take us to the island of Tierra Bomba, Colombia.

PHOTO BY ANNALISE ROMOSER, LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

- Defended people-to-people travel with action alerts and petitions when the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) and the State Department appeared to fail to comply with the administration's policy on licensed travel; more timely issuing of people-to-people licenses has begun.
- Worked with LAWG coalition partners to make possible the visits of Cuban civil society members to share their experiences in a changing Cuban society with policymakers and the public.

Defending Human Rights in Central America

- Participated in an International Verification Mission on the violence against campesino activists in Bajo Aguán, Honduras with press conferences in Tocoa and Tegucigalpa; helped to organize a congressional letter with 94 signatures on stopping the violence.
- Brought Father Ismael Moreno of Radio Progreso to speak before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission in Congress about obstacles to freedom of expression in Honduras.

- Presented reports to Congress with Guatemala Human Rights Commission and other partners on why the Guatemala military aid ban should be maintained.

Monitoring Military Aid

- Organized, with the Center for International Policy and WOLA, and addressed a 200-person conference, “Just the Facts: Security Issues in the Americas Today,” which brought together Latin American and U.S. human rights activists and academics with members of the Defense Department, Southern Command, State Department, and congressional staff.



We've Had Enough: Volunteer interpreter John Plueker assists at peace caravan rally in Freedom Plaza.

PHOTO BY CHELSEY CRIM

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
U.S. Jesuit Conference
US/Labor Education in the Americas Project
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.



LAWG staff: Emily Chow, Mavis Anderson, Jenny Johnson, Ruth Isabel Robles, Lisa Haugaard, and Omar Martinez.

Acknowledgments

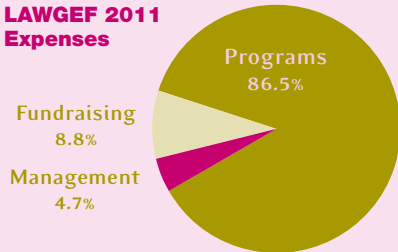
Many thanks to the following for their contributions to the LAWGEF's public education work: Foundation to Promote Open Society, Ford Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Moriah Fund, Christopher Reynolds Foundation, Arca Foundation, Stewart Mott Charitable Trust, Oblate Charitable Fund, Lutheran World Relief, United Church of Christ, and Washington Office on Latin America. Many thanks to ELCA Global Mission, American Jewish World Service, Catholic Relief Services, Presbyterian Church (USA), Church World Service, 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

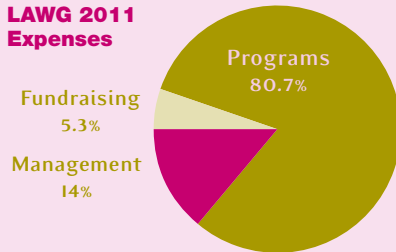
LAWGEF's income of \$475,821 in 2011 came primarily from foundations as well as from individual donors and nongovernmental organizations. Expenditures for 2011 were \$361,798. Income included multi-year grants that carried forward to 2012. Contributions to the LAWGEF for education activities are tax-deductible.

LAWG's income of \$75,504 in 2011 came from contributions by coalition partners, including humanitarian agencies, nongovernmental and faith-based organizations, funders and individual donors. Expenditures for 2011 were \$112,947. Income was supplemented by a multi-year advocacy grant carried over from 2010. Contributions to the LAWG are not tax-deductible.

LAWGEF 2011 Expenses



LAWG 2011 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.

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Melchor, a member of the Mexican peace movement, holds an image of his disappeared son, a street performer from Monterrey who was arrested in 2009 and never seen again.

PHOTO BY CHELSEY CRIM

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