



LATIN AMERICA WORKING GROUP

*Action at Home for
Just Policies Abroad*

2017

ANNUAL REPORT

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.

Lisa Haugard

Cover: *World Refugee Day rally in Washington, D.C.*

PHOTO BY LILY FOLKERTS.



Emma, Andrea, and former LAWG intern Ellie delivering our #NoBanNoWall petition to Congress.

PHOTO BY ANDREA FERNÁNDEZ APONTE.

WHO WE ARE

The Latin America Working Group serves a coalition of human rights, grassroots, faith-based, labor, immigrant-led, environmental, and humanitarian organizations. 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 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.



Mural along the Suchiate River near the Guatemala-Mexico border in Ciudad Hidalgo, Chiapas, Mexico.

PHOTO BY EMMA BUCKHOUT.

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS*

AFL-CIO

AFL-CIO Solidarity Center

Alianza Americas

Alliance of Baptists

Amazon Watch

American Jewish World Service

Americans for Indian Opportunity

Center for Economic and Policy Research

Center for Global Education at Augsburg College

Center for International Environmental Law

Center for International Policy

Church of the Brethren



Protest in defense of Temporary Protected Status outside of the White House.

PHOTO BY LILY FOLKERTS.

2017 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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.



Lisa and Daniella at archeological ruins outside of San Salvador, El Salvador.
PHOTO BY DANIELLA BURGI-PALOMINO.

Church World Service
Colombia Human Rights Committee
Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach
Cuban American Alliance Education Fund
Disarm Education Fund
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,
Global Mission
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,
Washington Office
Global Exchange
Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA
Institute for Policy Studies
Institute on Race, Equality and Human Rights



Mavis speaking at the 2017 Ecumenical Advocacy Days.
PHOTO BY ANDREA FERNÁNDEZ APONTE.



The Cuban embassy in Washington, D.C.
PHOTO BY ANDREA FERNÁNDEZ APONTE.

Cuba: Pushing to End the Embargo

- Organized a strong grassroots response to the very unfortunate and negative roll-back 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.



Andrea and LAWG intern Julian with U'wa leader Aura Tegría Cristancho.

PHOTO BY ANDREA FERNÁNDEZ APONTE.

International Labor Rights Forum

Jesuit Conference of the United States and Canada

Lutheran World Relief Office of Public Policy

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Mennonite Central Committee

Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate,
Justice and Peace Office

National Security Archive

Oxfam America

Peace Brigades International, USA

Presbyterian Church (USA)

Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

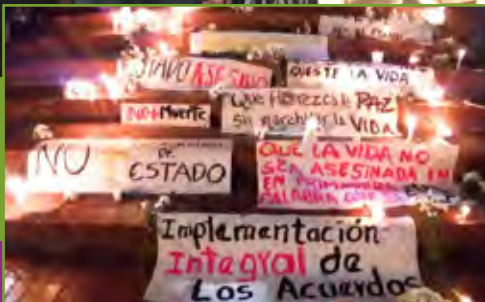


Lisa with Colombian human rights lawyers and Peace Brigades International partner.

PHOTO BY LISA HAUGAARD.

Pro-peace vigil in Colombia.

PHOTO BY MARICELA LONDOÑO/ONIC.



- 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.



Poster of the 43 disappeared Ayotzinapa students at a protest outside the Mexican embassy in Washington, D.C.

PHOTO BY EMMA BUCKHOUT.

Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights

School of the Americas Watch (SOA Watch)

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas

United Church of Christ

United Methodist Church, General Board of Church & Society

US-Cuba Cultural Exchange

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: Mavis Anderson, Andrea Fernández Aponte, Daniella Burgi-Palomino, Lily Folkerts, and Lisa Haugaard.

PHOTO BY LOUIS HEAD.

Acknowledgments

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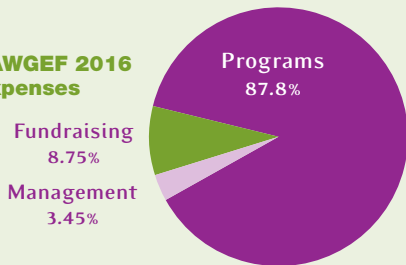
Many thanks to the following for their contributions to LAWG: Open Society Policy Center, Church World Service, ELCA Global Mission, Mennonite Central Committee, Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Alliance of Baptists, Presbyterian Church USA, and many other organizations that have contributed to LAWG, as well as to the many generous individuals contributing to both organizations.

Finances

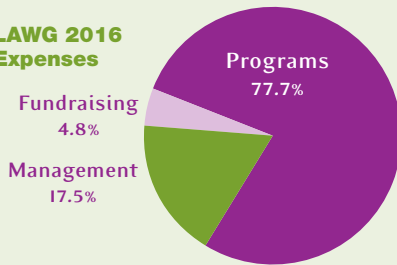
LAWGEF's income of \$222,829 in 2016 came from foundations as well as from individual donors and nongovernmental organizations. Expenditures for 2016 were \$365,946. Some multiyear grants from 2015 were carried forward to cover 2016 expenses. Contributions to LAWGEF are tax-deductible.

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.

LAWGEF 2016 Expenses



LAWG 2016 Expenses



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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.

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