

LATIN AMERICA WORKING GROUP

Action at Home for Just Policies Abroad

ANNUAL REPORT **2005**





When I think of an image of what we do here at the Latin America Working Group, it's opening doors. Opening doors for Latin American advocates for peace and justice, and Latin American victims of human rights abuses, to tell our State Department and Congress how US policies affect their lives.

Opening doors for our sixty coalition partners by providing training and advice so that they can get their message of justice across more effectively.

Opening doors for you, individual citizens around the country, so that you can tell your members of Congress the changes you would like to see in US policy towards Latin America—and our foreign policy towards the world.

Because Latin American victims and activists have the right to tell our policymakers how the United States can help and harm their lives.

Because you have the right to demand a foreign policy that reflects our shared values of generosity, truth and justice.

It's not the easiest of jobs at the best of times. But we'll keep right on opening doors.

Walk on through.

Lisa Haugaard

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Executive Director

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 US 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.

2005 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Cuba: Freedom to Travel

Organized, with the Center for International Policy's Freedom to Travel Campaign, the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), and a dozen key national Cuban-American and grassroots groups, a massive Cuba Action Day in Washington, DC, to demonstrate

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS*

Alliance of Baptists
American Friends Service Committee
Center for Global Education
Center for International Policy
Church of the Brethren
Church Women United
Church World Service
Colombia Human Rights Committee
Conference of Major Superiors of Men
Cuban American Alliance Education Fund
Disarm Education Fund
Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs
Fellowship of Reconciliation
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Global Rights
Guatemala Human Rights Commission
Institute for Policy Studies
International Labor Rights Fund
Jesuit Refugee Service
Loretto Community
Lutheran World Relief
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Mennonite Central Committee

Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate
NETWORK/A National Catholic Justice Lobby
NISGUA
North American Congress on Latin America
Oxfam America
Peace Brigades International
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Quest for Peace
Religious Task Force on Central America/Mexico
RFK Memorial Center for Human Rights
School of the Americas Watch
Sister Parish
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
United Church of Christ
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church & Society
United Methodist Church, Women's Division
US 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 efforts. Decisions to endorse statements and campaigns are made on a case-by-case basis by each participating organization.

the breadth and depth of support for ending the ban on travel to Cuba. About 700 people attended, including new activists in states across the country; press coverage was wide; and participants delivered our message to over 100 congressional offices on Capitol Hill.

- Coordinated an ecumenical prayer breakfast for more than 150 participants of Cuba Action Day—an inspirational and rousing start to a day of action, media, and focus on a call for the freedom to travel to Cuba.
- Co-led national religious leaders' delegation to Cuba with Witness for Peace and the *Centro Memorial Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Havana) to educate about U.S. policy toward Cuba and to publicize the denial of travel licenses for religious and faith-based organizations.
- Led, with Church World Service and WOLA, an on-going effort to challenge the Treasury Department's denial of religious-exchange travel licenses to Cuba.
- Coordinated educational efforts with the Emergency Coalition to Defend Educational Travel (ECDET) about the prohibition of study abroad in Cuba, giving presentations for ECDET members, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS),

the Association of International Education Administrators (AIEA), Chabot College, Loyola University, and the University of Chicago.

- Served as resource to grassroots organizations around the nation, traveling to educational and organizing meetings in Maryland, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, and California.

Colombia: Insisting upon Human Rights

- Organized pressure on the State Department, working with coalition members and grassroots activists, over San José de Apartadó massacre and other human rights violations which resulted in part of US military aid to Colombia being suspended for seven months. This forced State Department to raise human rights cases at highest level with Colombian government and produced some—by no means adequate—steps forward in two cases of army abuse.
- Created a *Blueprint for a New Colombia Policy* with coalition partners and input from Colombian human rights networks. This positive proposal for a new US policy was featured in a briefing of the House International Relations staff, circulated to the





State Department and AID, distributed to the Congress and editorial boards. Many humanitarian agencies, nongovernmental organizations and churches distributed it to their networks.

- Supported and provided information for a letter from Senators Feingold, Leahy and Dodd to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice signed by 22 senators on human rights issues in Colombia.
- Brought representatives of victims of paramilitary, army and guerrilla violence to speak at a Congressional Human Rights Caucus members' briefing, the State Department, universities, and the United Nations. Arranged a training session on memory, justice, truth and reparations with the International Center for Transitional Justice. The visit was covered by Colombia's main newspaper and TV and the *Washington Post*.
- Visited San José de Apartadó on delegation organized by Fellowship of Reconciliation and met with US and Colombian government officials about the case. Organized congressional briefing for journalist who received threats after covering this case and worked on congressional letter on threats against journalists.

MILLIRET MONCADA PEÑA OF ASFADDES (ASSOCIATION OF RELATIVES OF THE DISAPPEARED IN COLOMBIA) STANDS BEFORE A PHOTO OF HER FATHER.

- Spoke at national Partnering for Peace conference and organized consultation with grassroots organizers on Colombia programs.

Promoting Humane Borders & Justice in Mexico

- Hosted numerous delegations from the US-Mexico border region to focus attention on migrant deaths in the southwest deserts and the need for immigration reform. These delegations of community and church activists from US border areas held congressional briefings and met with more than 150 congressional offices. We briefed the activists and helped organize their visits.
- Released a major report, *Scapegoats of Juarez*, detailing the misuse of justice in prosecuting women's murders in Juárez and Chihuahua, Mexico. The report brings to light cases of possible scapegoats in jail for crimes they did not commit, and provides a review of Mexican government statistics to give a clearer picture of the failure of the judicial system to resolve these crimes.
- Assisted the Witness Project in producing and promoting two videos. *Dual Injustice* focuses attention on the murder of Neyra Azucena Cervantes in Chihuahua, Mexico





and the subsequent scapegoating of her cousin David Meza. *Rights on the Line* tells the story of vigilante justice in Arizona from the perspective of communities that oppose their presence in the state.

- Created the Border Community Alliance for Human Rights with the Border Network for Human Rights (TX), the Border Action Network (AZ) and the American Friends Service Committee, San Diego Office (CA). The Alliance aims to coordinate the work of human rights organizations at the border, and represents the most significant east-to-west organizing to date. LAWG will be coordinating the Alliance's policy work.

Documenting Military Training Programs in the Region & Other Issues

- Provided the most systematic documentation publicly available on US military training and programs in Latin America through our Just the Facts website, <http://ciponline.org/facts>, with Center for International Policy and Washington Office on Latin America. As this goes to press, we're about to launch our new military trends

report; the 2004 report, *Blurring the Lines*, was named one of Project Censored's top 25 most important under-covered news stories of the year.

- Organized the Latin America program for 120 activists from churches around the country as part of Ecumenical Advocacy Days.
- Helped coordinate grassroots and policy groups' pressure on Congress to successfully oppose the lifting of the ban on military aid to Guatemala.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF WASHINGTON OFFICE ON LATIN AMERICA



DISPLACED PEACE COMMUNITY OF SAN JOSÉ DE APARTADÓ IN NEW
COMMUNITY OF LA HOLANDITA, COLOMBIA



STAFF

(left to right)

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Acknowledgments

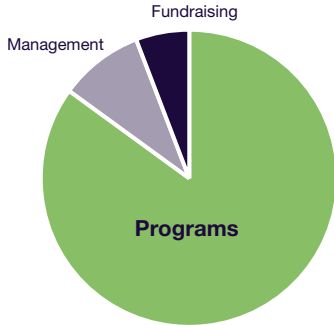
Thanks to the following foundations for their contributions to the LAWGEF's public education work: the Ford Foundation, the Open Society Institute Development Foundation, the Christopher Reynolds Foundation, the Moriah Fund, the General Service Foundation, the Arca Foundation, the Connect US Fund, and the Stewart Mott Charitable Trust. Thanks to the Presbyterian Church (USA), Oxfam America, Catholic Relief Services, Church World Service, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and many other organizations that have contributed to the LAWG, as well as to the many generous individuals contributing to our efforts.



Finances

LAWGEF's income of \$368,473 for 2004 came primarily from foundations as well as from individual donors. LAWG's income of \$72,463 for 2004 came primarily from contributions by coalition members, other nongovernmental and religious organizations, and individual donors. Audited financial statements available upon request.

LAWGEF: Percent of 2004 Expenses Spent on Programs, Management and Fundraising



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See our website to:

- sign up for our bimonthly newsletter, *The Advocate*;
- join our email listservs on Cuba, Colombia, and US/Mexico border issues, low-volume email alerts which let you know what you can do to call for improved US policy;
- order or view on-line our special reports;
- make a contribution.

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