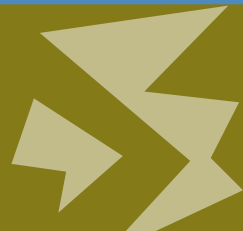




# LATIN AMERICA WORKING GROUP

*Action at Home for Just Policies Abroad*

**ANNUAL REPORT 2008**





*The Madres de Juarez visit Washington, DC to share their daughters' stories with policymakers.*

**T**his year we are celebrating twenty-five years of working together for change in U.S. foreign policy to Latin America.

The Latin America Working Group is the intersection of passionate advocates who care deeply about Latin America—and who also care about the United States and its role in the world. Together, we have worked with our human rights partners in Latin America to call for, demand, and at times—not nearly often enough, but for some great moments—actually create a foreign policy towards the region that reflects our nation's cherished value of justice for all.

In this annual report, we are delighted to share with you some reflections on this history from LAWG partners, staff and friends, as well as program highlights from 2008. Thank you for the amazing privilege of working together for justice.

Abrazos,

*Lisa Haugard*

*Cover: Former LAWG staffer Jennifer Trowbridge and Colombian humanitarian activists snap a quick photo in between meetings on Capitol Hill.*

## 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.

## 2008 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Colombia:** Our coalition efforts forced the Colombian and U.S. governments to pay attention to human rights, putting both the U.S. free trade agreement and some \$110 million in U.S. military aid on hold pending progress on human rights and labor rights. We published with partners *A Compass for a New Colombia Policy* to chart

## PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS\*

AFL-CIO Solidarity Center  
Alliance of Baptists  
American Friends Service Committee  
Catholic Relief Services  
Center for Global Education at Augsburg College  
Center for International Policy  
Christian Peacemaker Teams  
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  
Evangelical Lutheran Church of America,  
Washington Office





Silvia Wilhelm, “Love, Loss, and Longing”

a course for a new U.S. policy towards Colombia that strengthens human rights and promotes peace. We will be using this as the framework for our collective efforts with a new administration and Congress.

- **Mexico:** Our coalition initiatives helped to reduce military aid as the United States launched a new, multiyear counternarcotics aid package to Mexico and to insist upon the inclusion of human rights conditions. We organized with U.S. and Mexican human rights organizations a strategy session in Mexico City to discuss cross-border collaborative efforts to monitor implementation of this aid package, promote human rights and reduce impunity. We published *The Forgotten Border* to shed light on the abuse and exploitation experienced by migrants as they journey northward.
- **Cuba:** We used our publication, *Love, Loss, and Longing: The Impact of U.S. Travel Policies on Cuban-American Families*, as an education and advocacy tool to end the travel ban in book parties across the country; coordinated educational Hill meetings for Cuba policy advocates; brought over 150 activists to Washington, DC, for Cuba Consultation 2008; and developed a plan for definitive policy change in 2009 under a new administration and Congress.

## **TWENTY-FIVE YEARS of Working for a Just U.S. Policy to Latin America**

### **Silva Wilhelm, *Cuban-American founder of Puentes Cubanos:***

Throughout the years LAWG has been my companion every step of the way. LAWG is an organization that truly cares about justice and human rights in Latin America, and I cannot think of an event, written product, or congressional visit where they were not in partnership with us or an important source of information or analysis. We rely on the knowledge and counsel of LAWG to increase our impact on members of Congress.

During my years of close association with LAWG, we have shared hard work, many tears and great laughs. I hope LAWG remains a part of my close circle of allies for many years to come, even if we accomplish our goal of a major shift in U.S. policy towards Cuba.

### **Bill Spencer, *former director of CAWG, predecessor of LAWG:***

I came to DC in the fall of 1987, for the Days of Decision and Countdown 87, the last of the big fights over military aid to the Nicaraguan contras. This was the same time that

Episcopal Church

Fellowship of Reconciliation Task Force on  
Latin America and the Caribbean

Franciscan Mission Service

Friends Committee on National Legislation

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 (MCC)

Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate,  
Justice and Peace Office

National Council of Churches



*The Chicago Religious Leadership Network visits Washington, DC to encourage lawmakers to support human rights and justice in the Americas.*

the Iran-Contra scandal was breaking, so the religious community, the human rights community, decided to put resources into a national coalition to work together.

I found it an honor to work, in Washington and with the local groups, with this community of talented, dedicated and extraordinary people. In those times we were outnumbered and outspent, but there were also times when members of Congress would stand up because they were following their conscience and doing what was right.

**Gary Cozette, *Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America:***

In the mid 1980s, while serving as a Presbyterian lay mission worker in El Salvador doing human rights work, I visited Washington, DC. A vote was scheduled on war funding for El Salvador. A colleague invited me to meet people at CAWG, who secured a lobbying pass for me to be present in the Capitol building by the elevators as senators were making their way to the floor to vote. I had written Illinois members of Congress on many occasions. But I had never met face-to-face with a senator. Sure enough, then Senator Alan Dixon, a military aid proponent, came by on his way to vote. I called out: “Senator Dixon! I’m Gary Cozette, a Presbyterian human rights worker in El Salvador from Chicago, Illinois! Please vote NO on military aid to El Salvador!” He looked at me, stopped a moment, and then he stepped into

the elevator. He voted “yes” to additional aid, changing it to “no” only after the six Jesuit priests were killed in El Salvador. That was my first contact with CAWG, now LAWG. But that seed emerged into a 20-year grassroots partnership of advocacy on Latin America.

**Lael Parish, *former director of NISGUA:***

Of the many memories that I have of working with the LAWG, one that will stay with me my entire life, was the first LAWG meeting I attended after coming back from maternity leave. I was sitting there with all of the groups that worked on Guatemala the day we found out that Bishop Gerardi had been brutally assassinated. It stands out because when we found out the horrendous news, I was actually with many of the organizations that care about the issue and would want to do something about it.

**Kate Doyle, *National Security Archive:***

One time we collaborated intimately with LAWG stands out for me. That was when there was a movement afoot to support the Guatemalan Truth Commission’s request for information from the U.S. government. And what I most remember about LAWG was the way they brought together institutions that were not necessarily used to working

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





*LAWG's executive director Lisa Haugaard accompanies Colombian peace activists at the State Department.*

together, such as human rights institutions, membership-based organizations, and organizations devoted to civil liberties and those devoted to openness. It was the first time that the human rights community and the openness movement sat down and found common ground, and LAWG was instrumental in making that happen. Both because the institution was willing to serve this very patient mediating role and because LAWG staff had the sense of humor and patience it took to bring us together.

**Laurie Freeman, former WOLA associate:**

My favorite memory is seeing members of Congress dancing with LAWG staff during a delegation to Juarez to investigate violence against women. It was after a very ROUGH co-del (congressional delegation) where everyone kept trying to change our agenda. It was emotionally exhausting listening to the families' stories of how they lost their daughters and then were treated like dirt by the authorities. So at the last day, in the bar of the hotel we were staying in just across the border in El Paso, there was a band and a LAWG staff member and a member of Congress were dancing, to get rid of the stress and the creepy vibes from being in Juarez, and to celebrate having pulled off the delegation after months of preparation and almost constant setbacks.



## **Lisa Haugaard, *LAWG* director:**

In 1998 we brought a group of about a dozen coalition members on our first trip to Colombia and went to San José de Guaviare, a remote town carved out from the Amazon jungle where the United States' controversial aerial spraying counternarcotics strategy was being pioneered. The paramilitaries were just beginning to expand their operations and were terrifyingly present. As we arrived at the airport, the local military chief yelled at our host, local community organizer (and later congressman) Pedro Arenas, "Why did you bring them here?" The situation was so tense that our host ensured that we were ferried even from one side of the town square to another in the governor's cars. We listened to hundreds of farmers and indigenous people affected by the spraying campaign as they expressed their anger and frustration. It was an insane place to visit, but it gave us all an advance view of the human rights problems and U.S. counternarcotics policies that would frame our advocacy work for years. I have always valued so much the people who shared their stories with us on these trips and took real risks for the small off-chance that these unknown U.S. citizens could help their quest for justice.

## STITCH

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/Labor Education in the Americas


US Office on Colombia

Voices on the Border

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, back to front)

Tracy Vris (intern)

Christa Schelter

Paulo Gusmao

Travis Wheeler

Lisa Haugaard

Jennifer Johnson

Mavis Anderson

### ***Alison Giffen, former director, U.S. Office on Colombia:***

The highlight of the Colombia work the first years: The energy and urgency of the work. I remember co-facilitating Colombia working group meetings with LAWG in rooms where there were barely enough chairs for the number of people. We would come up with actions and people would actually divide the labor and execute them, with minimal egos and turf battles (that rarely happens in coalition work and is a testament to the way LAWG works). Further, there was a commitment to ensuring Colombian voices were in the debate and in the room whenever possible, whether that was in a conference or a debate over compromises on legislation in Congress. We didn't always win the battles, but there were very few days in retrospect when I felt like we had compromised too much or done too little.

### **Acknowledgments**

Many thanks to the following for their contributions to the LAWGEF's public education work: Ford Foundation, Foundation Open Society Institute (Zug), Christopher Reynolds Foundation, Moriah Fund, General Service Foundation, Arca Foundation, Stewart Mott Charitable Trust, Oblate Charitable Fund, Project Counselling Service, and Oxfam America.

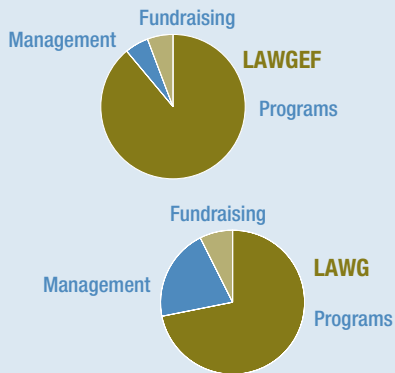
Many thanks to Catholic Relief Services, Lutheran World Relief, United Church of Christ, Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, and many other organizations that have contributed to the LAWG, as well as to the many generous individuals contributing to both organizations.

## Finances

LAWGEF's income of \$416,154 in 2007 came primarily from foundations as well as from individual donors and nongovernmental organizations. Expenditures for 2007 were \$383,601. Contributions to the LAWGEF for education activities are tax-deductible.

LAWG's income of \$74,622 in 2007 came primarily from contributions by coalition partners. Expenditures for 2007 were \$73,700. Contributions to the LAWG are not tax-deductible. Audited financial statements available upon request.

Percent of 2007 Expenses Spent on Programs, Management & Fundraising



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### Latin America Working Group Education Fund

Bill Goodfellow, *President*  
Center for International Policy

Bernice Romero, *Secretary/Treasurer*  
Oxfam International

Rev. Eliezer Valentín-Castañón  
General Commission on Religion and Race,  
United Methodist Church

Adriana Beltrán  
Washington Office on Latin America

Professor Carolyn Gallaher  
American University

Martin Shupack  
Church World Service

Professor Todd Alan Eisenstadt  
American University

Jeanne Lemkau  
Professor Emerita, Wright State University

Winifred Tate  
Colby College

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### Latin America Working Group

Steve Bennett, *President*  
The Brookings Institution

Jolene Smith, *Secretary/Treasurer*  
Free the Slaves

Heather Foote  
Peace/Human Rights Activist

Gary Cozette  
Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America

Melinda St. Louis  
Witness for Peace

Daryl Yoder-Bontrager  
Mennonite Central Committee

Rev. Dr. Stan Hastey  
Alliance of Baptists

Latin America Working Group  
424 C Street NE, Washington, DC 20002  
Tel: 202.546.7010 Fax: 202.543.7647  
Email: [lawg@lawg.org](mailto:lawg@lawg.org)  
[www.lawg.org](http://www.lawg.org)

See our website to:

- sign up for our newsletter, *The Advocate*;
- join our e-mail listservs on Cuba, Colombia, Venezuela, and 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*



*Displaced women wash clothes outside of their new home in Buenaventura, Colombia.*