

# WOLA

Advocacy for Human Rights in the Americas

**ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2015**

# WOLA COMMITTED. COURAGEOUS. CONNECTED.



Gimena Sánchez-Garzoli visits the Playa Nayero Humanitarian Zone in Buenaventura, Colombia.



## **2015: WOLA MEETS CHALLENGES AND LEVERAGES OPPORTUNITIES**

In August 2015 WOLA's Geoff Thale stood next to a flagpole in Havana, Cuba as the U.S. flag rose for the first time in more than 50 years. The ceremony marked a milestone in the normalization of relations between the United States and Cuba, an outcome WOLA has worked toward for decades.

Another policy advancement is also happening in Havana, where Cuba hosts the Colombian peace negotiations. WOLA provides counsel and analysis as the parties make their way to a final agreement and begin the hard work of implementation.

In Guatemala—a country that for decades has been synonymous with corruption—a remarkable breakthrough has led to the triumph of justice over impunity. Generals are being held accountable for war crimes, and the president himself was forced to resign on corruption charges. Setting the context for all of this was the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG). WOLA's advocacy was crucial to the formation of the CICIG eight years ago, and was vital to its renewal this year.

WOLA has been a leading advocate during the crisis of Central American migration—documenting the root causes of the violence that forces people to flee for safety—and has exposed deportation policies in both the United States and Mexico that put migrants in danger.

WOLA has met each crisis and opportunity with concrete, practical approaches. Through a combination of timely analysis, decades-long relationships with partners in Latin America, and highly effective communications strategies, WOLA addresses some of the most intractable problems in the hemisphere. WOLA's experts are regular features in news media. WOLA's reports are read by policymakers around the globe, and WOLA staff are routinely called upon for advice by leaders across the region.

I am honored to be a member of the WOLA family. WOLA has been on the leading edge—first defining and then redefining human rights advocacy in the Americas—for over 40 years.

WOLA is grateful to have you as a member of our community. We thank you for your support as together we face the challenges and opportunities of 2016 and beyond.

**Steven Bennett**  
Chair, Board of Directors

# WHO WE ARE



Rep. Jim McGovern (D-MA), staffer Cindy Buhl, and WOLA's Geoff Thale (far right) visit a shelter for at-risk youth in Honduras, which also cares for children returned from Mexico and the United States.

**WOLA** IS A LEADING  
RESEARCH & ADVOCACY  
ORGANIZATION  
**ADVANCING HUMAN  
RIGHTS IN THE AMERICAS.**

# WHAT WE DO



Executive Director Joy Olson speaks to press after WOLA's Board of Directors meeting in Honduras.

**RESEARCH.  
EDUCATE.  
ADVOCATE.**

**WE ENVISION A FUTURE WHERE PUBLIC POLICIES IN THE AMERICAS PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS AND RECOGNIZE HUMAN DIGNITY, AND WHERE JUSTICE OVERCOMES VIOLENCE.**

WOLA tackles problems that transcend borders and that require both domestic and international solutions. Through strategic collaborations, we partner with courageous people working on social change—advocacy organizations, academics, religious leaders, artists, entrepreneurs, and government officials—and together, we advocate for more just societies in the Americas.

# OUR IMPACT

## PREVAILING OVER CORRUPTION AND IMPUNITY

2015 began with uncertainty over whether the mandate of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG)—a unique UN-backed investigative body combating impunity and organized crime—would be renewed. By September, Guatemala’s president and vice president had been arrested for massive corruption, uncovered by the CICIG and the Guatemalan Attorney General’s Office. In the intervening months, as thousands of Guatemalans mobilized for justice and accountability, WOLA collaborated with local civil society advocates to mount a strategic campaign supporting the CICIG. WOLA facilitated the Twitter campaign #CICIGSÍ, which became a trending topic in Guatemala, and WOLA served as a go-to source for analysis on the issue. As WOLA’s Adriana Beltrán described on *PBS NewsHour*: “This is a triumph of hope, of new possibilities created by those who want a different Guatemala.”



The *PBS NewsHour* turns to WOLA’s Adriana Beltrán for expert analysis on the campaign against corruption in Guatemala.

# BUILDING

## MOMENTUM TO END THE TRADE EMBARGO AGAINST CUBA

During 2015 WOLA focused on high-impact education and advocacy aimed at ending the trade embargo and lifting travel restrictions on Cuba. Given the current Republican-controlled Congress, bipartisanship is critical to success. WOLA leveraged our decades of experience on Capitol Hill to build momentum. WOLA's Marc Hanson provided background information and expertise. By the year's end, Rep. Tom Emmer (R-MN) and Rep. Kathy Castor (D-FL) had led a dozen Members of Congress in launching the Cuba Working Group to support a new policy framework for U.S.-Cuba relations. Republicans and Democrats joined together and new bipartisan legislation was introduced to lift the trade embargo and the travel ban.



WOLA's Marc Hanson heads the WOLA Cuba Initiative, a major education and advocacy effort to finally end the embargo on Cuba.

# ADVOCATING

## FOR WOMEN INCARCERATED ON DRUG OFFENSES

Women across the Americas are incarcerated at an alarming rate for minor drug offenses. This year, WOLA Senior Fellow Coletta Youngers, an internationally recognized expert on drug policy reform, embarked on a new effort with partners in the region, including the OAS Inter-American Commission of Women, to provide guidelines for policy change. WOLA researchers also visited women's prisons in San Jose, Costa Rica and Bogota, Colombia and produced a series of photo essays telling the stories of individual women caught in the cycle of poverty and imprisonment. From the United Nations to the U.S. Congress, these stories are impacting the way policymakers view and weigh the costs of unjust laws on women, families, and communities.



At the Buen Pastor prison in Costa Rica, WOLA's photo essays document how harsh sentences for minor drug offenses trap women in a cycle of poverty.

## INVESTIGATING ABUSES AGAINST MIGRANTS

Backed by the U.S. government, Mexico has increased security at its southern border. WOLA's Maureen Meyer and Adam Isacson traveled to Chiapas to investigate the impact on people fleeing violence in Central America. They found a serious humanitarian crisis. The crackdown has not deterred people from coming north. Instead, it has caused migrants to take more dangerous routes, exposing them to additional violence in transit and abuse by authorities. The aggressive new enforcement has not been matched by increased capacity to screen migrants to determine if they have a legitimate claim to asylum, which many do. WOLA's on-the-ground research became a national story, triggering coverage including a *New York Times* editorial that cited WOLA's analysis.



WOLA's Maureen Meyer investigates the impact of the crackdown on migrants at Mexico's southern border.

## SUPPORTING INCLUSIVE PEACE IN COLOMBIA

As peace talks progress with the hope of ending the decades-long war in Colombia, WOLA has been the go-to source of information on the potential impact of the accords. WOLA's Gimena Sánchez-Garzoli has played a central role in supporting the creation of the Afro-Colombian Peace Council (CONPA), which has joined forces with Colombia's 102 indigenous groups to form the Ethnic Commission for Peace and the Defense of Territorial Rights, a unified front of Afro-Colombian and indigenous territorial and traditional authorities created to offer collective proposals for the peace process. In December 2015, in recognition of her work defending the rights of these communities, Gimena was invited to witness the private reconciliation ceremony between the FARC and the survivors of the Bojaya massacre.



WOLA's Gimena Sánchez-Garzoli (far right) brings a delegation of the Afro-Colombian Peace Council to a meeting with Rep. Keith Ellison (D-MN, third from right).



# CHALLENGING MEXICO ON HUMAN RIGHTS

The disappearance of 43 students in Ayotzinapa over a year ago brought world-wide scrutiny to issues of justice and human rights in Mexico. WOLA helped to publicize the findings of the international Group of Experts that disproved the government's account of what happened to the students. WOLA also worked with 82 U.S. Members of Congress who wrote to Secretary of State John Kerry about the "broader pattern of grave human rights violations in the country, including cases of torture, arbitrary detentions, kidnappings, and extrajudicial executions." This year, thanks in part to WOLA's advocacy, the United States withheld millions of aid dollars to Mexico because it had not made progress on human rights. As WOLA's Maureen Meyer told *The Washington Post*: "[it] shows how concerned the U.S. is about the human rights situation in the country."

# OUR IMPACT

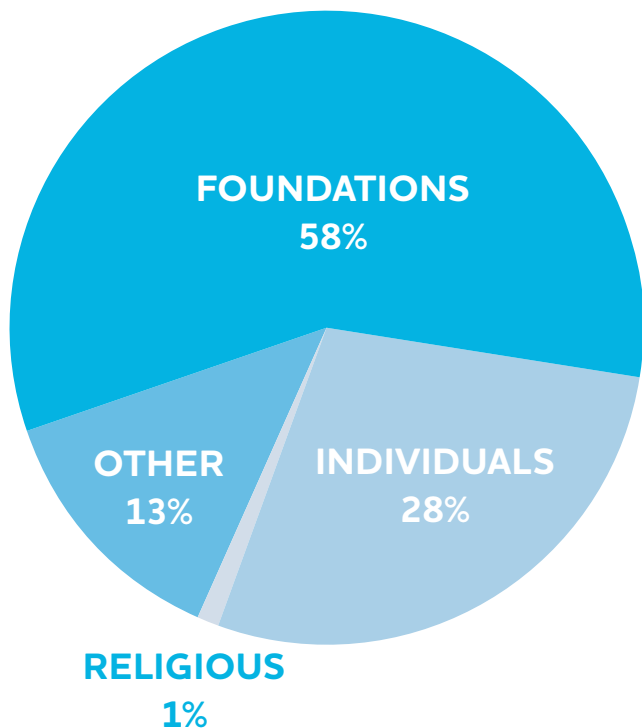


WOLA presses for greater U.S. attention to the human rights situation in Mexico, as the families of the 43 disappeared students from Ayotzinapa call for justice.

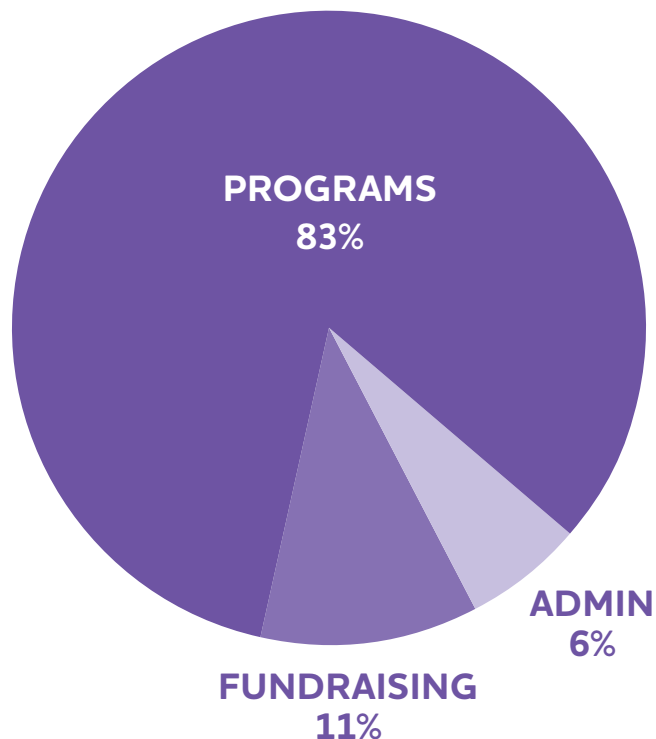
# SMART. STRATEGIC. STRONG.

2015 BUDGET  
\$3.2 MILLION

## INCOME



## EXPENSES



**“THANK YOU...FOR BEING WITH US IN THIS NOBLE CAUSE OF FIGHTING AGAINST OBLIVION AND IMPUNITY, FOR BEING ON THE SIDE OF THE STORIES THAT ARE DENIED BY THOSE WITH POWER.”**

—DANILO RUEDA, *National Director, Justicia y Paz / 2015 WOLA Human Rights Award Recipient*

# RESEARCH & ADVOCACY FUNDED BY PEOPLE LIKE YOU

## VISIONARIES' CIRCLE \$50,000+

The Atlantic Philanthropies  
Central America & Mexico  
Migration Alliance  
The Ford Foundation  
Good Ventures  
The John D. & Catherine T.  
MacArthur Foundation  
The Libra Foundation  
The Moriah Fund  
Open Society Foundations  
Royal Norwegian Ministry  
of Foreign Affairs  
Seattle International  
Foundation

## CHAMPIONS' CIRCLE \$25,000-49,999

Anonymous (2)  
The Christopher Reynolds  
Foundation, Inc.  
The David Bohnett  
Foundation  
Lippincott Foundation  
Bradford Richardson  
Wachs Family Fund

## LEADERS' CIRCLE \$10,000-24,999

ACDI/VOCA  
Anonymous (2)  
The Atlantic Philanthropies  
Director/Employee  
Designated Gift Fund  
Marc & Leonor Blum  
Church World Service  
Sandra Dunsmore  
Foley Hoag LLP  
Louis & Nancy Goodman  
Edgar James &  
Katherine Kinsella  
Cynthia McClintock  
Janice O'Connell  
Paul & Trisha Reichler  
Stewart R. Mott  
Foundation  
Swiss Agency for  
Development &  
Cooperation  
Western Union  
Lee Zeigler

## ADVOCATES' CIRCLE \$5,000-9,999

Alma Angotti & Bill Garcia  
Belden Russonello  
Strategists  
Medea Benjamin  
Steven Bennett &  
Erin Loubier  
David & Judy Bonior  
Joel Campos-Alvis  
Greg Craig  
Pat Davis & Wes Callender  
Joe Eldridge &  
Maria Otero  
William & Carol Gehl  
Gilbert LLP  
Patricia Weiss Fagen  
Lynne & Joseph Horning  
Bill LeoGrande &  
Marty Langelan  
The Marco Consulting Group  
Jack Marco  
Pontifical Mission Societies  
Meg Roggensack  
Samuel Rubin Foundation  
Service Employees  
International Union  
Sisters of Providence -  
Mother Joseph Province  
United Methodist Women  
George Vickers  
Katrin Wachs &  
Ramón Estevanell  
Alexander Wilde &  
Anne Pérotin-Dumon  
George Withers

## ALLIES' CIRCLE \$1,000-4,999

1666 Connecticut  
Avenue, LLC  
AFL-CIO  
Amb. Francisco Altschul &  
Melinda De Lashmutt  
Altschul  
American University  
Washington College of Law  
Anonymous  
Alex Arriaga & Strategy  
for Humanity  
Association of Public &  
Land-grant Universities

Michael Barnes & Joan Pollitt  
James Bass  
Thomas Belden  
George & Leslie Biddle  
Board of Supervisors County  
of Los Angeles  
Botec Analysis  
Janet Breslin Smith &  
Jim Smith  
CBS  
Darryl Chappell  
Chemonics International, Inc.  
Martín Coria  
Gary Cozette & Joseph Lada  
Cuba Travel Services  
Kristina DeMain &  
Zack Shaeffer  
Sarah Dufendach &  
Alan Kadrofske  
Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in America  
Mathea Falco  
Richard Feinberg &  
Diane Gotkin  
John Garrison  
Rachel Garst  
Kathy Gille & Doug Tanner  
Bradley Gillespie & Kay Bailey  
John Gitlitz & Patricia M. Lee  
Robert Kogod Goldman  
Grand Junction Design  
Cathy & Gordon Hanson  
Kevin Healy  
David Holiday  
Edward Hull & Jamie Holland  
Inter-American  
Development Bank  
International Institute  
of Education  
The International Union  
of Bricklayers and Allied  
Craftworkers (BAC)  
Jesuit Digital Network  
Marlene Johnson  
Vic Johnson  
Bill Kamela  
Robert N. Kaplan  
Terry Karl  
Gerald Koster & Sara Koster  
The Kovler Fund  
Linda & Jay Land

Lutheran World Relief  
Maggio + Kattar, PC  
Dana Martin & Leyda Fajardo  
Jacques & Lucy Mejer  
Johanna Mendelson-Forman  
& David Forman  
David & Anne Menotti  
Ethan & Eileen Miller  
Cheryl Morden &  
Reuben Snipper  
Andrew Morehouse &  
Adriana C. Morehouse  
Mark Murray & Joanna Crane  
Missionary Oblates of  
Mary Immaculate  
NAFSA: Association of  
International Educators  
Rachel Neild &  
George McCabe  
Richard Newfarmer &  
Margaret Sarles  
F. Miguel Noyola  
Eric & Joy Olson  
ONE Campaign  
Oxfam America  
Morris Panner  
Partners of the Americas  
Matias Pino  
Population Action  
International (PAI)  
Grant Priest  
Tom Quigley  
Ramsay Merriam Foundation  
Research Triangle Institute  
Lars Schoultz  
Louise Shelley  
Kathryn Sikkink &  
Doug Johnson  
Sisters of Charity  
of Leavenworth  
Colin Smith & James Puzo  
Starwood Hotels & Resorts  
Mary Ann Stein  
Ann Tickner  
United States Conference  
of Catholic Bishops  
United Steelworkers  
Winky Foundation  
Benjamin G. Wisner &  
Sonia R. Kruks  
World Food Program USA  
Peter Zirnite



## THE 10TH ANNUAL **WOLA HUMAN RIGHTS AWARDS** CEREMONY & BENEFIT GALA

On October 28, 2015, WOLA awarded its prestigious Human Rights Awards to two recipients who have shown unwavering dedication to advancing human rights in the Americas: Tim Rieser, Foreign Policy Aide to Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT), and the Colombian human rights organization Justicia y Paz. Over 400 guests, including senior administration officials, Members of Congress, the diplomatic community, human rights activists, and supporters in the international community filled the historic Grand Ballroom at the Mayflower Renaissance Hotel to celebrate the progress made toward peace in Colombia and the normalization of relations between the United States and Cuba.



*Top Photo:*  
Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA) (right) presents the WOLA Human Rights Award to Danilo Rueda (left), National Director for Justicia y Paz.

*Bottom Photo:*  
Guests at the 2015 WOLA Human Rights Awards Ceremony give award recipient Tim Rieser a standing ovation for his over 30 years of service as a congressional staffer fighting for social justice and a rights-respecting U.S. foreign policy.

*Left Photo:*  
From left to right: 2015 WOLA Human Rights Award recipient Tim Rieser; WOLA Executive Director Joy Olson; and Justicia y Paz representatives Liliana Avila, Danilo Rueda, and Cecilia Naranjo.

Photos by Kaz+Zen Photography.



**“PEOPLE WANT TO KNOW WHAT WOLA THINKS BECAUSE WOLA’S EXCEPTIONAL STAFF NOT ONLY HAVE YEARS OF EXPERIENCE, BUT THEY ALSO KNOW HOW TO WORK WITH CONGRESS, WHICH IS A RARE COMBINATION.”**

—TIM RIESER, *Foreign Policy Aide to Senator Patrick Leahy / 2015 WOLA Human Rights Award Recipient*

# ONE OF WASHINGTONIAN MAGAZINE'S “50 GREAT PLACES TO WORK.”

## BOARD OFFICERS

**STEVEN BENNETT**  
Chair of the Board

*Vice President & Chief Operating Officer, The Brookings Institution*

**CYNTHIA MCCLINTOCK**  
Vice Chair of the Board

*Professor of Political Science & International Affairs, The George Washington University*

**ETHAN MILLER**  
Treasurer of the Board

*Vice President of Finance, Nathan Cummings Foundation*

## BOARD MEMBERS

**NANCY BELDEN**  
*Partner, Belden Russonello Strategists LLC*

**LEONOR BLUM**  
*Executive Director, Adelante Latina*

**LÁZARO CÁRDENAS BATEL**  
*Former Governor of Michoacan, Mexico*

**JOEL CAMPOS-ALVIS**  
*Senior Associate, Financial Institution Supervision Group, Federal Reserve Bank of New York*

**DARRYL CHAPPELL**  
*Director, Business Management, Freddie Mac*

**MARTÍN CORIA**  
*Regional Coordinator, Church World Service*

**PATRICIA WEISS FAGEN**  
*Senior Fellow, Institute for International Migration, Georgetown University*

**BILL GARCIA**  
*Director of Legal Project Management, Thompson Hine*

**LOUIS GOODMAN**  
*Professor & Dean Emeritus, School of International Service, American University*

**NEIL JEFFERY**  
*Chief Executive Officer, Water & Sanitation for the Urban Poor*

**MARLENE JOHNSON**  
*Executive Director and CEO, NAFSA: Association of International Educators*

**DIEGO LUNA**  
*Founding Partner/Director/Actor, Canana Films*

**CHERYL MORDEN**  
*Former Deputy Director for Partnership and Resource Mobilization, International Fund for Agricultural Development*

**JANICE O'CONNELL**  
*Executive Vice President, Gephardt Government Affairs*

**SALLY O'NEILL**  
*Former Regional Manager in Latin America, Trócaire*

**JOY OLSON**  
*Executive Director, WOLA*

**PAUL REICHLER**  
*Partner, Foley Hoag LLP*

**JAY SCHWARTZCOFFEY**  
*Vice President of Finance, EarthJustice*

**ROBERT VARENIK**  
*Director of Programs, Open Society Justice Initiative*

**KATTI WACHS**  
*HSE/ABE Instructor, LaGuardia Community College*

**ALEX WILDE**  
*Research Scholar in Residence, Center for Latin American & Latino Studies, American University*

**GEORGE WITHERS**  
*Former U.S. Congressional Staff*

## WOLA STAFF

**JOY OLSON**

*Executive Director*

**GEOFF THALE**

*Program Director*

**KRISTINA DEMAIN**

*Development Director*

**KRISTEL MUCIÑO**

*Communications Director*

**KRYSTAL WUBBEN**

*Finance & Operations Director*

**ADRIANA BELTRÁN**

*Senior Associate for Citizen Security*

**MARC HANSON**

*Senior Associate for Cuba*

**ADAM ISACSON**

*Senior Associate for Regional Security Policy*

**MAUREEN MEYER**

*Senior Associate for Mexico & Migrant Rights*

**GIMENA SÁNCHEZ-GARZOLI**

*Senior Associate for the Andes*

**JOHN WALSH**

*Senior Associate for Drug Policy & the Andes*

**KAY BAILEY**

*Institutional Partnerships Manager*

**KELLY MCLAUGHLIN**

*Donor Engagement Manager*

**SARAH KINOSIAN**

*Program Officer*

**VANIA LOREDO**

*Special Assistant to the Director*

**GEOFF RAMSEY**

*Digital Communications Officer*

**ADAM SCHAFFER**

*Program Officer*

**SEBASTIAN BERNAL**

*Program Assistant*

**LARISSA ONG**

*Operations Assistant*

**HANNAH PLANK SCHWARTZ**

*Development Assistant*

**LOREN RIESENFELD**

*Communications Assistant*

**CAROLYN SCORPIO**

*Program Assistant*

**HANNAH SMITH**

*Program Assistant*

**JO-MARIE BURT**

*Senior Fellow*

**KATHY GILLE**

*Senior Fellow*

**ELIZABETH LEEDS**

*Senior Fellow*

**DAVID SMILDE**

*Senior Fellow*

**COLETTA YOUNGERS**

*Senior Fellow*

## THE SALLY YUDELMAN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

*Shaping the next generation of human rights advocates*

WOLA's Sally Yudelman Internship Program is named after the late chair of WOLA's Board of Directors for her enduring commitment to shape the next generation of human rights advocates. In 2015, her legacy lived on, as the Sally Yudelman Internship Program welcomed 21 qualified, passionate, and diverse students and the Sally Yudelman Intern Alumni Network grew. The program offers one of the most thorough, engaging, and formative human rights experiences in Washington, DC.

**WOLA.ORG** | 1666 CONNECTICUT AVE NW, SUITE 400, WASHINGTON DC 20009 | 202-797-2171

