

# WOLA annual report 2009



Jess Hunter-Bowman

WASHINGTON OFFICE



ON LATIN AMERICA

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# What We Do

The Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) promotes human rights, democracy, and social and economic justice in Latin America and the Caribbean. Founded in 1974, WOLA presses for more just U.S. policies toward Latin America through public education, advocacy, and policy reform proposals. WOLA, whose work is based on close relations with Latin American colleagues, has access to top level U.S. officials and has brought hundreds of their regional partners to Washington to dialogue with policymakers.

- ▶ **WOLA connects with partners in Latin America and the Caribbean**, analyzing regional events, trends and challenges, and acting quickly to ensure that a broad range of voices are heard.

*WOLA's history of listening to Latin American voices leads*

*human rights defenders, democracy activists, and others working for social justice to turn to WOLA with information and on-the-ground perspectives.*

- ▶ **WOLA impacts policy in the U.S. and abroad** by developing key contacts with government officials and multi-lateral organizations.

*WOLA's testimony at congressional hearings, briefings on key issues, informed policy recommendations, and access to key decision-makers help promote dialogue and alternative policy perspectives.*

- ▶ **WOLA shapes public debate** and raises new issues through outreach to the media; sponsorship of public events with scholars, officials, and grassroots activists; and original research, analysis, and commentary by a staff with decades of cumulative experience in Latin America and the Caribbean.

*WOLA's bi-lingual website ([www.wola.org](http://www.wola.org)) and publications, its memos and its delegations to and from the region are important*

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*sources of timely, authoritative information for journalists, scholars, policymakers, and the public.*

- ▶ **WOLA serves as a key resource for civil society organizations** in Latin America and the Caribbean, working with colleagues in the region on coalition-building, networking, research, advocacy,

and participation in policy debates.

*WOLA's commitment to human rights, democracy, and social justice and its collaborative style help to find common ground for action with allies in the region and help our partners gain a greater understanding of U.S. policy.*



## Highlighting WOLA's Partners in the Region

### **Tlachinollan Human Rights Center from Guerrero, Mexico Receives WOLA's 4th Annual Human Rights Award**

Tlachinollan has defended human rights for over 15 years in one of the poorest regions in Mexico: the Montaña and Costa Chica regions of the state of Guerrero, where poverty, discrimination, and abandonment of the indigenous communities are common. A target for Mexico's "dirty war" against left-wing rebels from 1964-1982, Guerrero has now become an important state for drug production as well as transit, to which the government's response has been further militarization.

During its first ten years (1994-2004), Tlachinollan documented 68 cases of human rights violations by the Mexican military involving torture, forced disappearance, and the rape of indigenous women. In 2009 alone, Tlachinollan reported 14 cases of military abuses. In addition to denouncing the dangers of militarization in Guerrero, Tlachinollan is a tireless advocate for indigenous communities' access to education, health services, and basic dignity.

Tlachinollan's staff operates in very difficult conditions and at great personal risk. In February 2009, they were forced to close their offices in Ayutla de los Libres due to threats, intimidation, and persecution of indigenous rights activists, including the murder of two indigenous leaders who collaborated with the Center. WOLA and Tlachinollan work together on drug policy and militarization in the state of Guerrero, and on human rights issues related to U.S. security assistance package under the Mérida Initiative. WOLA has helped to bring justice in several cases of human rights violations where Tlachinollan serves as the legal defense for the victims.

*"... there are dozens of men and women who still cannot find their loved ones, who suffer the damages of torture, who are forced to leave their communities in order to be safe, who are unjustly imprisoned ... who have had to suffer the government's terror through extrajudicial executions. This recognition is in their memory and in the name of their family members and friends who continue to suffer ...*

*... we have more confidence knowing that WOLA, with its prestige, decided that Tlachinollan is one of the organizations that carry out their work with conviction and whose work is important for human rights in the state of Guerrero."*

Abel Barrera,  
Director of Tlachinollan





THOMAS GEARTY



THOMAS GEARTY

## WOLA Delegation led by Congressman McGovern Commemorates 20th Anniversary of Killing of Jesuits in El Salvador

In the early hours before dawn on November 16, 1989, six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper, and her 15-year old daughter were murdered in El Salvador. The Jesuits were widely respected scholars targeted by the military for their human rights advocacy during the brutal decade-long war in El Salvador.

The outcry at their murders prompted the U.S. House of Representatives' leadership to appoint a task force to investigate the killings, led by Rep. Joe Moakley, and staffed by his then aide, Jim McGovern. The killings of the Jesuits and the findings of the Moakley task force led to a re-evaluation of U.S. policy toward El Salvador and accelerated momentum toward a settlement of the war.

On the 20th anniversary of the slayings, WOLA led a delegation to El Salvador chaired by Congressman Jim McGovern to commemorate these events. We witnessed as newly-elected President Mauricio Funes presented a posthumous honor—the nation's highest award—to the six Jesuit martyrs.

Our time there gave us a chance not only to remember the past and the thousands of lives lost but also to look to the present. We talked with people throughout the city of San Salvador—with President Funes, with government officials, and with people doing the work on the ground in some of the poorest neighborhoods in the city. We met with the Central American Coalition for the Prevention of Youth Violence (CCPVJ), with whom WOLA is working to address violence prevention and citizen security in Central America.

During our visit, Congressman McGovern received an Honorary Degree in Human Rights from the Jesuit University of Central America (where the Jesuit priests taught). His words from his acceptance speech resonate with all who care about human rights in Latin America.

*"All of us on this occasion rededicate ourselves to pursuing justice and peace like these martyrs."*

Representative James McGovern  
November 12, 2009

## WOLA Recognized by Washington Post for Excellence in Nonprofit Management

WOLA was named a finalist for the 2009 Washington Post Award for Excellence in Nonprofit Management.

“As nonprofits become more challenged in this economic climate,” says Susan Sanow, Deputy Executive Director at The Center for Nonprofit

Advancement (a sponsor of this award) “it is reassuring to know that good nonprofit management makes a difference ... We are pleased to acknowledge the Washington Office on Latin America as a stellar example that other organizations should follow.”

## WOLA Receives Emilio F. Mignone International Human Rights Award

In honoring WOLA with the prestigious Emilio F. Mignone International Human Rights Award, Argentine Foreign Minister Jorge Taiana recalled how he learned of WOLA from his mother who had visited Washington when he was imprisoned during the period of military dictatorship in his country.



WOLA was chosen for the Mignone Award, he remarked “because of what they have done, for their results, but above all, for their enormous and continuing commitment to the fight for the rights of all in the region.”

“Accountability for human rights abuses is crucial for a functioning democracy,” said Executive Director Joy Olson at the award ceremony in Buenos Aires. “I’ll return to Washington motivated by my experience in Argentina.”



## Highlights of WOLA's Analysis and Advocacy in 2009



AP PHOTO/WILLIAM FERNANDO MARTINEZ

***Development First: A More Humane and Promising Approach to Reducing Cultivation of Crops for Illicit Markets*** surveys the evidence on coca and opium crop reduction efforts over the years and identifies ten lessons to help shape more successful, less harmful policies. The report was first presented at a briefing at the U.S. Capitol and followed by a conference on New Directions in Drug Policy featuring international experts on drug law reform.

***Colombia's Intelligence Agency: Spying on Democracy*** details the unfolding scandal in Colombian presidential intelligence agency, the Administrative Security Department (DAS). This analysis, prepared by WOLA, the U.S. Office on Colombia, and the Latin America Working Group reveals how the DAS spied on opposition politicians, human rights groups, journalists, clergy, unions, and even Colombian Supreme Court justices. The operation went deeper than surveillance, employing a variety of dirty tricks, seeking to “neutralize and restrict” voices critical of the government.



PRENSA LIBRE/GUATEMALA

***Advocates Against Impunity: A Case Study on Human Rights Organizing in Guatemala*** recounts the advocacy campaign that led to the establishment of a pioneering United Nations commission to fight crime and corruption, the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG). WOLA was an integral part of this campaign based on our earlier work, ***Hidden Powers***, which exposed how illegal armed groups and clandestine structures have been deeply entrenched in the Guatemalan state.

***“Examining the Status of U.S. Trade with Cuba and Its Impact on Economic Growth”*** in testimony before a subcommittee of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, WOLA Program Director Geoff Thale describes how the U.S. embargo on Cuba hurts domestic U.S. economic and political interests,



without bringing us any foreign policy benefits. Under current policy, Thale argues, the United States is in no position to play a useful or constructive role in urging Cuba to improve the human rights situation. (April 27, 2009)

***DR-CAFTA and Workers' Rights: Moving from Paper to Practice*** analyzes the compliance of the Dominican Republic and Central American countries with labor rights provisions enacted in the 2005 trade agreement. Based on extensive on the ground research in the region, WOLA finds that labor conditions in the DR-CAFTA countries have not improved and violations continue. Governments are unable or unwilling to reform labor legislation, and judicial systems continue to be inefficient and incapable of enforcing the law.



WALTER ASTRADA

***Daring To Care: Community-Based Responses to Youth Gang Violence in Central America and Central American Immigrant Communities in the United States*** identifies successful anti-gang strategies and programs by highlighting the work of six gang prevention and intervention programs. WOLA finds that the most effective responses to gang violence require a comprehensive approach including: prevention programs that help young people in difficult situations meet their own needs; intervention programs that offer alternatives for those most attracted to gang life; rehabilitation for those who wish to leave gangs; and law enforcement that deters crime and reduces violence.

***Protect and Serve? The Status of Police Reform in Central America*** paints a portrait of the police in Central America today. Beginning with the reforms that emerged from the peace and political transition processes in the region, the report analyzes the current state of police reform, particularly in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, with a lesser focus on Nicaragua.



AP PHOTO/CHRISTÓBAL HERRERA

# Financial Statements

WOLA STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES *for the year ending December 31, 2009*

## Revenue

Grants and contracts	\$3,572,511*
Contributions	\$365,188
Other Income	\$5,391

**Total** **\$3,943,090**

## Expenses

Program Services	\$1,409,293
Management and General	\$114,577
Fundraising	\$237,200
Total Expenses	\$1,761,070
Change in Net Assets	\$1,331,380

**Net Assets at Beginning of Year** **\$1,572,975**

**Net Assets at End of Year** **\$2,904,355**

*\*WOLA received a one-time, final general support grant from the Ford Foundation for use over the next five years.*



WOLA BALANCE SHEET *for the year ending December 31, 2009*

**Assets**

Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$2,360,666
Receivables	\$522,783
Prepaid Expenses	\$53,441
Other Assets	\$247,752
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$3,184,642</b>

**Liabilities and Net Assets**

Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	\$73,931
Deferred Rent	\$16,990
Long-Term Liabilities	
Deferred Rent	\$189,366
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$280,287</b>

**Net Assets**

Unrestricted	\$2,581,448
Temporarily Restricted	\$322,907
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$2,904,355</b>

<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$3,184,642</b>
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# Board of Directors List FOR 2009

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*(September 2009 - December 2009)*  
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and Caribbean Communities

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# Staff List FOR 2009

**Joy Olson**

*Executive Director*

**Geoff Thale**

*Program Director*

**Lori Piccolo**

*Development Director*

**John Walsh**

*Senior Associate for the  
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*Senior Associate for Rights  
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*Senior Associate  
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**Rachel Robb**

*Program Assistant*

**Ashley Morse**

*Program Assistant*

**Colin Smith**

*Program Assistant*

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**Coletta Youngers**

*Senior Fellow*

**Kathy Gille**

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PHOTO BY: THOMAS GEARTY



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