



Advocacy for Human Rights in the Americas



Memorial to victims of sexual violence and their fight for justice in Sepur Zarco Guatemala (photo credit: Sergio Ortiz Borbolla)

2022  
ANNUAL REPORT



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**WOLA** is a leading advocacy and research organization advancing human rights in the Americas

## Our Vision

We envision a future where public policies protect human rights and recognize human dignity, and where justice overcomes violence.

## What We Do

We help to create impact in Washington and throughout the Americas.

**1**

### PARTNER

We partner with courageous people throughout the Americas to identify urgent human rights problems.

**2**

### RESEARCH

We bring decades of expertise to analyze these problems and propose concrete policy solutions.

**3**

### ADVOCATE

We advance human rights by combining cutting-edge communications and advocacy strategies.

**4**

### IMPACT

By changing policies, we create lasting impact for human rights and social justice in the Americas.

## MESSAGE FROM

# The Chair



“WOLA has played an essential role in the fight for human rights across the Americas throughout the decades. From our founding era after the 1973 Chilean coup to confronting new forms of authoritarianism now, WOLA is still on the front lines.”

As we look forward to launching our 50th anniversary celebration in the coming year, we begin to take stock of how WOLA has played an essential role in the fight for human rights across the Americas throughout the decades. From our founding era after the 1973 Chilean coup to confronting new forms of authoritarianism now, WOLA is still on the front lines.

Today, under the leadership of President Carolina Jiménez Sandoval, WOLA continues to innovate with deep research, strategic influence among key policymakers in the United States and throughout the region, and profound connections to courageous civil society partners. This year’s annual report is rich with examples of the strong impact of WOLA’s work.

Throughout 2022, WOLA turned to the emerging challenges of the future that we set out in our strategic plan. You will see woven throughout this report a

new emphasis on addressing four challenges to human rights that cut throughout the region: authoritarianism, migration as a regional phenomenon, the climate crisis, and issues of gender justice.

WOLA’s staff and board of directors held more in-person and hybrid meetings and events in 2022, culminating in our first in-person Human Rights Awards Ceremony and Benefit Gala in three years. There was not a dry eye in the house as our honorees from Guatemala, El Salvador and the U.S. Congress shared their stories of persistence and courage in the face of personal grave human rights abuses.

In addition to carrying out our governance and other board responsibilities, WOLA’s board members participated in our ad hoc program committee and a new communications ad hoc committee that discussed advocacy and outreach strategies, such as the launch of the WOLA

Weekly newsletter. Board members also helped facilitate training to incorporate a greater focus on gender justice, equity, and a culture of inclusion throughout WOLA, and donated generously of their time and resources in many other ways. I am enormously thankful for their commitment and engagement.

We are grateful to Carolina Jiménez for guiding us into new and essential areas with grace and a steady hand. I continue to be wowed by how much WOLA’s amazing staff in programs, development, communications, and operations accomplish.

I offer a special thanks too to our many generous donors who have once again ensured that we ended the year on sound financial footing. WOLA would not be thriving without you.

**Nancy Jane Belden**  
Chair of the Board of Directors

## MESSAGE FROM

# The President

I have been president of WOLA for over a year. Every day, I am more impressed by the quality of our team—the innovative research, the sharp analysis, and the unwavering commitment to justice and human rights I see in each person who works with WOLA.

The year 2022 at WOLA has been everything—intense, challenging, fast-paced, exciting. It has been a year of travel for me. On the ground in El Salvador, Colombia, Brazil, Venezuela, Honduras and Mexico, I have met with partners, working with program staff to ensure that WOLA stays relevant and connected to Latin America. We have had the opportunity to work alongside incredibly courageous people who remind me why our fight for human rights is so crucial.

There have been uplifting moments. When we traveled to Bogotá last year, to mark the 5th anniversary of the peace accords, a woman who was deeply disappointed at the failures to implement the peace spoke of how, on that day, she was “content” because she said, “we are still here dreaming and supported by infinite hope.” Since then, we have witnessed peaceful elections in Colombia, the unveiling of the report of the truth commission, and new reasons to believe in peace.

There have been humbling moments. In Venezuela, we met

families of victims and former political prisoners who struggle for basic rights, people who see in WOLA an organization that supports their cause. It is deeply moving to see the way people put their trust in our work. The stories and pain they shared with us reminded me of human rights defenders, journalists, and activists throughout the region whose lives and freedom are under threat. Such moments strengthen our resolve.

Here in Washington, I have been impressed with the doors that are opened because of the deep respect for WOLA’s integrity, credibility, and expertise. And how, even in an extremely divided political context, WOLA has remarkable impact—testifying before Congress, submitting solid recommendations that are translated into priorities for U.S. foreign policy, providing up-to-date briefings, and ensuring that voices from the region are heard in the halls of power.

This is a time when we face enormous challenges. It no longer makes sense to talk about setbacks to democracy. We are talking about the advance and consolidation of authoritarianism in many countries, especially in Central America, and extremist threats here in the United States.

Even as we are fighting these battles for human rights and justice today, WOLA is looking



“WOLA is prepared to stand with partners in the region working for a more vital democratic future. As we look toward WOLA’s 50th anniversary, we are grateful to all our supporters who stand with us in this fight.”

to the future. The “virus of authoritarianism” that is taking new forms throughout the hemisphere will require new strategies from human rights defenders, new forms of democratic expression, and representation.

WOLA is prepared to stand with partners in the region working for a more vital democratic future. As we look toward WOLA’s 50th anniversary, we are grateful to all our supporters who stand with us in this fight.

**Carolina Jiménez Sandoval**  
President



# Our Impact



## PRESSING FOR PROTECTION FOR MIGRANT RIGHTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ABUSES AT THE BORDER

As the U.S. government continued to stress policies of deterrence rather than access to protections for migrants and asylum seekers, WOLA redoubled efforts to challenge these measures. With hard-hitting analyses such as [Title 42 Must End. Here are 5 Reasons Why](#), WOLA experts pointed to the illegality and the dangerous consequences of expanding expulsions. In multiple trips to both sides of the U.S.-Mexican border, WOLA's Border and Migration team met with migrants, asylum seekers, service providers, and other stakeholders. Director for Mexico Stephanie Brewer's commentary, [Few Ways Forward, No Way Back: Asylum Seekers' Search for Safety at the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez Border](#), and the accompanying video featuring the voices of migrants stranded in Mexico, was released as key decisions on Title 42 were announced.



WOLA's Adam Isacson, Mariakarla Nodarse, and Meyer Meyer record a video at U.S.-Mexico border that describes the changing regional impact of migration. (photo credit: WOLA YouTube)

This year, WOLA launched its [Border Oversight](#) database, a unique tool to systematize reports of human rights violations against migrants and asylum-seekers by U.S. border security agencies. Director for Defense Oversight Adam Isacson's pioneering research on this project, featured at an event, [Abuse, Accountability and Organizational Culture at U.S. Border Law Enforcement Agencies](#), will provide the basis for WOLA and partners to campaign for more accountable and humane border management. As numbers of migrants rise throughout the Americas, and the countries of origin shift, [WOLA's Weekly Border Update](#) provides an invaluable resource to track the rapidly changing conditions at the U.S. southern border, and to unpack the implications of regional-wide trends.

Latin America's historic levels of migration were a central concern at the Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles in June 2022. Vice President for Programs Maureen Meyer worked with colleague organizations to coordinate a series of meetings



with U.S. congressional staff, State Department, and the National Security Council (NSC) in preparation for the Summit and organized an event, [From Deterrence to Integration: Civil Society Voices on Migration Policy Challenges and Good Practices in the Americas](#), which WOLA co-hosted with leading U.S. and regional organizations in Los Angeles. The Summit produced innovative approaches

incorporating some of these perspectives in the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection, signed by 21 governments in the region. WOLA will be working with partner organizations to hold governments to these commitments, especially the United States where current policies fall far short of many of these principles.

## CHALLENGING MILITARIZATION AND THE LACK OF JUSTICE IN MEXICO

As Mexico's southern border faced rising numbers of migrants from throughout Latin America and



WOLA documents dangers at Mexico's southern border in the video *Struggling to Survive: The Situation of Asylum Seekers in Tapachula, Mexico*.

beyond, WOLA's Mexico team and Vice President for Programs Maureen Meyer traveled to Tapachula, Chiapas, the main city in southern Mexico receiving migrants and asylum seekers, where they documented a dangerous

problem facing Mexico is the lack of a reliable system to prevent and punish abuses and crimes by state and non-state actors. As Mexico surpassed the grim milestone of over 100,000 disappeared, Brewer cited WOLA's findings that persistent impunity in the overwhelming majority of cases contributes to more disappearances. She recommended to the commission that U.S. cooperation with Mexico under the Bicentennial Framework focus on improving civilian institutions and the criminal justice system, strengthening accountability, and protecting rights of victims, families, human rights defenders, and journalists, who face high levels of risk. WOLA's ongoing congressional outreach yielded strong human rights language in the final 2023 omnibus appropriations bill.

"system to wear people down." The WOLA report, [Struggling to Survive: The Situation of Asylum Seekers in Tapachula, Mexico](#), and the accompanying video gained wide media attention and helped pressure the Mexican government to seek more flexible (though shifting and often uncoordinated) responses towards asylum seekers.

In June, WOLA's Director for Mexico Stephanie Brewer testified before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission of the U.S. House of Representatives on Human Rights Challenges in Mexico, emphasizing that the central human rights



WOLA's Stephanie Brewer testifies on Human Rights Challenges in Mexico before the bipartisan Tom Lantos Human Rights Committee, co-chaired by Congressmen Jim McGovern (D-MA) and Chris Smith (R-NJ).



WOLA continued to call for justice in the most widely known case of forced disappearances—that of the 43 students of Ayotzinapa. After dozens of additional arrest warrants were issued, including against members of the military, political interference in the investigation resulted in the resignation of the special prosecutor for the case, while the mandate of the independent group of experts from the IACHR ended. WOLA described these troubling developments in a commentary, [Interference from Above Closes Doors to Justice in Ayotzinapa Case](#).

## COUNTERING AUTHORITARIAN TRENDS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

As the region faces what WOLA's Central America Director Ana María Méndez-Dardón has described as “an immense regression of democracy,” WOLA continues to support those who are fighting for justice and human rights, and to inform long term strategies to counter authoritarianism.

In Guatemala, WOLA focused on fighting the evisceration of the justice system and the threats that have exiled dozens of courageous independent judges and anti-corruption advocates. WOLA's analysis leading up to the selection of a new attorney general exposed how, in a process rife with constitutional irregularities, President Giammattei reappointed someone who has used the office



CNN en Español interviews WOLA's Ana María Méndez-Dardón about the case of José Rubén Zamora, a Guatemalan journalist imprisoned for investigating government corruption. (photo credit: CNN en Español Youtube)

The trend of militarization of civilian tasks took a dramatic turn as the Mexican congress approved President Lopez Obrador's bill to transfer control of the national guard to the army. WOLA outlined how such moves undermine democracy in widely publicized commentaries, briefed officials and other stakeholders, and led Mexican and U.S. human rights organizations in an open letter to both governments urging that on-going bilateral cooperation focus on strengthening capable and accountable civilian security and justice institutions.

to prosecute anti-corruption fighters, journalists, and human rights defenders. WOLA joined with partners in producing a series of reports focused on corruption, attacks on human rights defenders and journalists, and the lack of judicial independence. These reports informed a congressional resolution that challenges the U.S. government to strengthen its stance against the systematic undermining of justice in Guatemala.

As concerns about human rights mounted, WOLA President Carolina Jiménez and Central America Director Ana María Méndez-Dardón traveled to El Salvador to meet with civil society groups and independent media. When President Bukele declared a ‘state of exception’ in March and suspended civil rights guaranteed in the constitution, WOLA's outspoken denunciation led to direct attacks on us by Bukele and an orchestrated army of bots on social media. WOLA responded by rallying 70 NGOs from throughout the region in condemning the state of exception and attacks on human rights defenders and [The Washington Post](#) published an op-ed co-authored by WOLA's President Carolina Jiménez. At the same time, WOLA worked behind the scenes to get the U.S. State Department to issue a public statement condemning the state



WOLA President Carolina Jiménez Sandoval and program director Ana María Méndez-Dardón address concerns about human rights and judicial reform with Honduran President Xiomara Castro.

thousands have been imprisoned arbitrarily and how the elimination of transparency over public funds has led to widespread corruption. Throughout the year, WOLA highlighted alternative approaches to stemming gang violence based on working with rather than attempting to repress civil society, and has urged U.S. aid agencies to strengthen civil society ties.

With the inauguration of Xiomara Castro as Honduras' first woman president, the year began with measured hopes that new leadership would reverse the country's long-seated issues of organized crime, widespread corruption, and impunity, and dire conditions for human rights defenders. Former president Juan Orlando Hernández was extradited to the U.S. for drug trafficking charges and WOLA was a go to source for the media, including an interview in CNN in Spanish. Much of WOLA's advocacy has focused on strategizing with Honduran civil society organizations to support the establishment of a U.N. backed anti-impunity commission and an

of exception. As President Bukele extended the state of exception nine times in 2022, WOLA submitted testimony for the record to the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission in Congress detailing the toll it is taking as

independent judicial system within Honduras that could help tackle corruption.

Throughout 2022, WOLA continued to work with partner organizations to focus attention on increasing repression in Nicaragua that has shutdown civic space, led to a growing number of political prisoners, and forced tens of thousands into exile. The Central America team helped arrange meetings in the U.S. Congress for a private delegation of Nicaraguan human rights defenders. In December, WOLA joined in a global call for renewed action from the UN Group of Experts on Human Rights in Nicaragua and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The team leading WOLA's Central America Monitor (CAM), a regional initiative to measure progress and identify trends over time in key areas directly relevant to rule of law and security in the Northern Triangle, met with partner organizations to calibrate new ways to make data more effective amid the worsening situation for rule of law and human rights in the region. This comprehensive data set continues to be a resource for sharp comparative analysis such as WOLA's International Women's Day posting [Little to Celebrate: 5 Facts About Women and Violence in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras](#).



WOLA's Julia Cifuentes and Elizabeth Kennedy meet in Antigua, Guatemala with partners from IUDOP, IUDPAS and the Myrna Mack Foundation to update the Central America Monitor (CAM).



## PUSHING FOR ENGAGEMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN CUBA

With economic conditions in Cuba deteriorating, repression and censorship continuing after the government crackdown on peaceful protests in 2021, and long-term U.S. sanctions straining the island's resources, Mariakarla Nodarse Venancio, who leads WOLA's Cuba program, visited the island early in the year to gain new insights for WOLA's ongoing work. WOLA pressed key human rights concerns in several commentaries, including a critical analysis of [Cuba's proposed penal code](#).

WOLA's analysis [Cuban Migration is Changing: The U.S. Must Take Note](#) underscored how the dire economy and Trump-era restrictions have caused flows of migrants to spike dramatically. The analysis offered key recommendations for increased U.S. engagement to ease Cuba's underlying humanitarian crisis.

Throughout 2022, the Biden administration began to take up these recommendations by reversing some Trump-era policies (including resuming flights beyond Havana as well as facilitating family reunification and remittances) and restoring engagement on select issues, particularly migration.



WOLA's Mariakarla Nodarse joins partners from the Center for Democracy in the Americas (CDA) in hosting a delegation of Havana-based entrepreneurs and academics on how to support Cuba's private sector.

Following the tragic explosion at the nation's largest oil storage facility in August and the deadly hurricane that wiped out the island's power grid in September, the United States took steps to provide some humanitarian relief as called for by WOLA and allies.

WOLA assessed the year's outcomes in a joint commentary with the Center for Democracy in the Americas (CDA), [U.S.-Cuba Relations: The Old, the New, and What Should Come Next](#), and continues to press for a robust policy of engagement that can foster sustainable changes in bilateral relations and on the island.

## RENEWING COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE AND CREDIBLE NEGOTIATIONS IN VENEZUELA



photo credit: WOLA Youtube

WOLA's Director for Venezuela Geoff Ramsey cohosts an event with the Inter-American Dialogue and members of the Grupo Experto para Venezuela (GEV) on Creating a Favorable Environment for Negotiations.

WOLA's Venezuela program has continued to support a peaceful, democratic, and just solution to the country's crisis, and, by the end of 2022, significant advancements occurred on two fronts – the renewal of the UN Fact-Finding Mission on Venezuela (FFM), and the reopening of negotiations between the Maduro government and the opposition.

WOLA joined with a wide coalition of Venezuelan and international organizations in encouraging and supporting the UN Human Rights Council's decision to renew the mandate of the FFM. WOLA promoted

awareness of this group of independent experts' documentation of grave human rights violations and crimes against humanity with analyses such as [The Search for Justice in Venezuela](#) published in *El País*. WOLA also advised Congressional offices on a bill that would require the Biden administration to support the renewal of the mandate of the FFM and worked to ensure the United States would vote to extend the FFM in the United Nations.

WOLA's Venezuela team has long been focused on the need for credible negotiations to restore Venezuela's democratic institutions and the rule of law. Throughout 2022, WOLA played a pivotal role in urging the U.S. administration to pressure the Maduro government to resume talks and to incentivize future agreements. A central piece of WOLA's advocacy continues to be the concern that

the revived negotiations include a robust and secure mechanism for civil society actors to engage in the consultative process and guarantees of justice for victims.



Throughout the year, WOLA deepened ties with Venezuelan civil society

groups as WOLA's President Carolina Jiménez and program director Geoff Ramsey traveled to Venezuela to meet with NGOs, relatives of political prisoners as well as diplomats and others. The Venezuela program also hosted various groups in Washington, including a delegation of the "Con Ellas" platform, consisting of six member organizations seeking to bring attention to the plight of women and girls within Venezuela's humanitarian crisis.



The political and economic crisis in Venezuela has caused the largest mass displacement in the region's history. Geoff Ramsey traveled to states of Tachira and Zulia along the Colombian border where he interviewed migrants, aid organizations, and human rights defenders for a podcast documenting the dangers and dire humanitarian conditions there, as well as the changing political dynamics with the new Colombian government. Podcasts, along with WOLA's blog [Venezuelan Politics and Human Rights](#), continue to be a unique resource for policymakers, journalists, researchers and advocates.

## FOCUSING ON TRUTH AND NEW HOPES FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE IN COLOMBIA

The year in Colombia was marked by the election of a new government of President Gustavo Petro and the first the Afro-Colombian Vice-President Francia Márquez. WOLA's Colombia team, headed by Director Gimena Sánchez-Garzoli, published a stream of analyses laying out what was at stake in the elections and priorities for a new era of U.S.-Colombia relations. WOLA's president Carolina Jiménez authored [Colombia Made History. The](#)

[U.S. Should Join It](#) calling for the United States to provide greater support for implementing the peace accords, a new approach to drug policy, an independent judiciary, and continued humanitarian aid to Venezuelan refugees and migrants.

Colombia's historic truth commission, established under the 2016 peace accords, released its final report in late June and WOLA co-hosted the





WOLA's Director for the Andes Gimena Sánchez convenes a panel of winners of the Colombia's National Human Rights Prize.

international presentation at the U.S. Institute for Peace. WOLA noted that the work of the commission represents a heroic effort to document extensive human rights abuses and shows how addressing structural inequalities needs to center on the experience of victims.

Program Director Gimena Sánchez-Garzoli has for many years played a critical role with partners on the ground fighting for justice and equity for Afro-Colombian and Indigenous populations. In April,

WOLA hosted the first delegation of Colombia's National Human Rights Prize awardees since the pandemic, bringing these concerns anew to U.S. policymakers. As a result, the State Department asked WOLA to submit suggestions for how to revamp the U.S. Racial-Action Plan (CAPREE). By year's end, the U.S. government had stepped forward to become the first international accompanier of the Ethnic Chapter of the Peace Accord, an action that signifies a deeper U.S. commitment to justice as a foundation for peace in Colombia.

## WORKING TO SAFEGUARD THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS IN BRAZIL

As Brazil faced contentious elections, WOLA worked on several fronts to ensure the democratic process would be upheld and that there would be a peaceful transfer of power, despite President Jair Bolsonaro's threats to repudiate the results if he lost. WOLA co-organized a Washington Office on Brazil delegation from a broad range of Brazilian civil society organizations in July who met with U.S. policy makers, stressing the need for the United

States to take proactive steps to guarantee free and fair elections. WOLA also worked with Members of Congress who introduced a bicameral resolution calling on the Biden Administration to "make it unequivocally clear that the costs of subverting a free and fair election will be immediate and severe." For the first round of the Presidential elections in early October, WOLA's President Carolina



WOLA's Carolina Jiménez and program director Gimena Sánchez monitor the first round of Brazil's elections as part of an international human rights mission.

Jiménez and Program Director Gimena Sánchez participated in an international human rights electoral mission with São Paulo's electoral tribunal. Such international pressure contributed to safeguarding the electoral process



An expert from the São Paulo tribunal describes process of election monitoring to international human rights delegation.

and the eventual transfer of power to a duly elected new president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

## DRAWING ON DECADES OF EXPERTISE TO INFORM DRUG POLICY REFORM

As drug policy reform was increasingly on the agenda with newly elected governments in the United States, Colombia and other countries in the region, WOLA's drug policy team's decades of experience was much in demand.

WOLA's comprehensive analysis, *Loosening Drug Prohibition's Lethal Grip on the Americas*, authored by Director for Drug Policy John Walsh, outlined how moving away from a prohibitionist framework can contribute to easing the harms caused by drugs and the drug war. The report assesses how the embrace of harm reduction in the Biden Administration's new national drug strategy, along with state and local innovations around overdose prevention, drug decriminalization, and cannabis legalization, are big steps in the right direction but warned that the prohibitionist core of U.S. policy remains intact and the drug war rages on in the Americas. The analysis laid out the still formidable obstacles to needed reforms—technical, legal, and above all political—and pointed to the role that the people of Latin America and the Caribbean can play in the shift toward more humane and effective drug policies.

Program Director John Walsh also participated in an array of meetings with advocates, academics, and policymakers from the United States, Latin America, Africa, Asia and Europe focused on strategies to ensure that cannabis legalization proceeds in ways that achieve justice and equity, especially by traditional cannabis producers in the Global South in the new legal markets being created in North America and in Europe.

This year, WOLA pioneered work at the intersection of drug policy and the climate crisis. A commentary



Director for Drug Policy John Walsh discusses the evolution of drug policy in an episode of Colombia Acuerdo de Paz, a series of webinars cosponsored by WOLA and regional partners. (photo credit: WOLA YouTube)



co-authored by VP for Communications Josefina Salomón and Director John Walsh, *What's the Carbon Footprint of Drug Prohibition?*, highlighted how drug prohibition itself fuels environmental destruction. In November, Walsh spoke at a session

organized by the Global Commission on Drug Policy in Colombia and emphasized the opportunity for that nation to play a leading role in modernizing the prohibitionist global drug treaty system and in linking drug policy reform with climate action.

WORKING TO SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE WOMEN'S INCARCERATION

In 2022, WOLA continued as a leading advocate exposing harsh prison conditions and fighting for the rights of incarcerated women throughout Latin America. Senior Fellow Coletta Youngers has served as a facilitator to growing networks of formerly incarcerated women and family members of those who are currently deprived of liberty, and she provided expertise and linkages between these women-led coalitions and international organizations. For instance, she offered strategic input on gender sensitive drug policies to the Cooperation Program between Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union on Drug Policies (COPLAND)), stressing that a comprehensive approach to address the disproportionate impact of punitive drug policies on women must include the voices of civil society and women themselves. Youngers is also an expert advisor for a report on women and incarceration to be published by the OAS's Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and ensured that those directly impacted by incarceration were also invited to join the expert sessions. She organized participation in a session at the November biannual meeting of the OAS drug

agency, CICAD, entitled *Gender in Drug Policies: A Civil Society Perspective*.

WOLA published impactful human stories and in-depth analyses giving voice to the lived experiences of formerly incarcerated women and the families of the incarcerated. This included the story of Kenya Cuevas, the founder of Casa de las Muñecas Tiresias based in Mexico City, the first shelter for trans women in Latin America, which has helped dozens coming out of prison. Senior Fellow Coletta Youngers produced an explainer on Colombia's groundbreaking new legislation that promotes alternatives to incarceration with a gender perspective. Other WOLA commentaries include one on how formerly incarcerated women in Argentina are

coming together to create income-generating strategies, and the negative consequences of electronic monitoring for an indigenous woman in Mexico. WOLA's communications team created an animated video to accompany an investigative report produced by RIMUF, a regional network of women-led organizations of family members of people deprived of liberty.



WOLA Senior Fellow Coletta Youngers works with organizations that support formerly incarcerated women, such as Mexico's Asociación Civil Casa de las Muñecas Tiresias, a shelter for trans women founded by Kenya Cuevas (collage design credit - Sergio Ortiz Borbolla)

Our Outreach and Engagement

LAUNCHING THE WOLA WEEKLY

In July 2022, WOLA launched its first ever newsletter offering analysis from WOLA's experts on the latest news in Latin America. Here is a sampling of what you will find in the WOLA Weekly newsletters:



Letter from WOLA President or Staff:

An overview of the most pressing issues in Latin America this week.

What You Need to Know:

Key updates and expert analyses released by WOLA this week.

Join Us This Week:

Upcoming events with WOLA experts.

In Case You Missed It:

Previous events with WOLA experts that are relevant to today's news.

Learn More:

A deeper dive into specific issues with WOLA reports, videos, and more.

WOLA In the News:

Timely quotes by WOLA experts from major news outlets.

Job Openings:

Join the WOLA team!

Support WOLA:

Ways you can engage with WOLA's work.

The WOLA Weekly newsletter goes out to a growing list of over 2,400 subscribers, with an impressive average open rate of about 47%.



# Our Impact by the Numbers

## WOLA'S EXTENSIVE DIGITAL OUTREACH



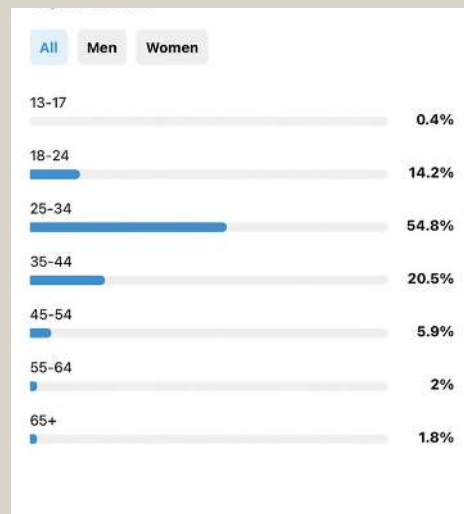
Total Impressions Across all 3 Social Media Platforms Grew to 2.5 million

**6,420**

## WOLA'S VIBRANT INSTAGRAM PRESENCE REACHES YOUNGER AUDIENCES

**followers**  
over 50 percent between the ages of 24-34

### Age Range of our Followers



### Instagram Reach - Stories



### Instagram Reach - Posts



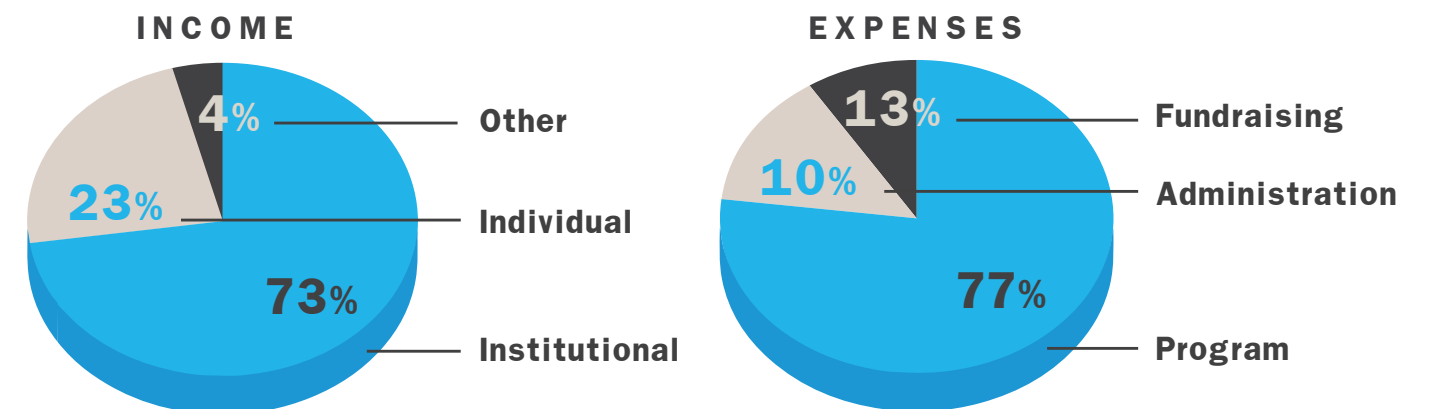
## PRESS IMPACT

WOLA'S EXPERTS ARE A GO-TO SOURCE FOR INFLUENTIAL MEDIA OUTLETS  
963 MENTIONS IN THE PRESS IN 2022 (UP FROM 867 IN 2021)



## FINANCIAL REVIEW 2022

**BUDGET: \$4,013,782**



\*Unaudited figures as of February 2023. Audited figures will be updated on our website.



# Human Rights Awards & Benefit Gala

Gala Emcee Gina Chavez opens the evening in song.  
(photo credit: Lancer Photography)



WOLA's documentary filmed in Sepur Zarco Guatemala tells the story of the women who have fought for decades to bring to justice the paramilitary and military officials responsible for sexual violence against them.  
(photo credit: Sergio Ortiz Borbolla)

## Celebrating Courage and Persistence for Justice and Human Rights

WOLA's 2022 Human Rights Awards Ceremony honored the courage of activists and communities in Central America and in the U.S. Congress who have relentlessly fought for justice and human rights. This was WOLA's first in-person Gala since the global pandemic began. It was a night of celebration, inspiration, and deeply moving witness by our honorees.

WOLA's President Carlina Jiménez Sandoval opened the evening noting the rise and consolidation of authoritarianism in many countries, especially in Central America.

“ Over recent years, we have witnessed a dramatic rollback on human rights, with governments promoting new and dangerous authoritarian approaches gaining ground. What has not changed, however, is the utter resolution of the human rights movement to fight for human rights and justice. ”

- Carolina Jiménez

### Special Emcee – Gina Chavez

Our host for the evening was once again Gina Chavez, an award-winning singer and songwriter, whose own commitment to human rights shines through her music and the work she and her wife have done with young women in El Salvador as the founders of Niñas Arriba. She opened the night with the song Todo Cambia and reminded the audience of the changes that can happen when voices unite in solidarity for justice.

“ the power of voices that will not be silenced ... this is the spirit I see in WOLA. ”

- Gina Chavez

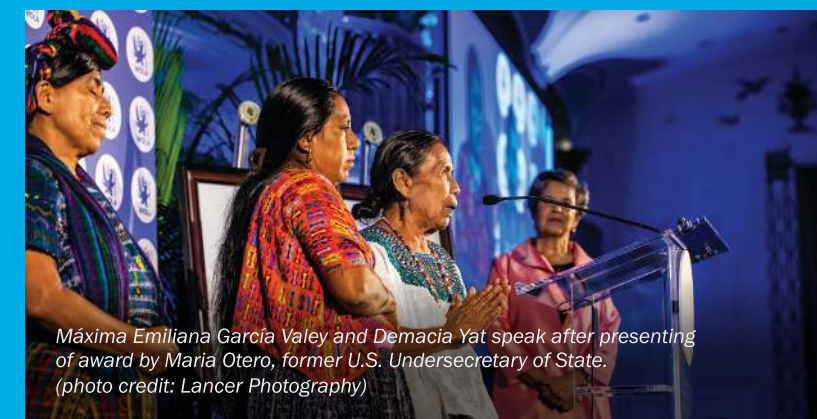
## WOLA'S HUMAN RIGHTS AWARDEES

The Maya Achi women of Rabinal and the Maya Q'eqchi' women of Sepur Zarco have shown undaunted determination to bring to justice the paramilitary and military officials responsible for sexual violence against them during the Guatemalan internal armed conflict in the early 1980s. These women fought endless obstacles for government prosecutors to bring charges and for the courts to hear their cases. In January of this year, they won a victory with conviction of five of the former paramilitaries. Today, they are an inspiration to millions of women and girls around the world who are seeking justice for wartime rape and other forms of gender-based violence. The award was accepted by Máxima Emiliana García Valey and Demacia Yat on behalf of the women in their communities.

“ We achieved justice, but the road has been a very long one and there's still a long way to go. We want to see more justice for all women.

We will continue with our fight until we have all the justice we deserve. ” – Máxima Emiliana García Valey.

“ For me, it was very important to open a path for other women, to provide a space and strength to other women to fight for justice. We are very grateful for this award and for being able to enjoy it while we can. ” – Demecia Yat.



Máxima Emiliana García Valey and Demacia Yat speak after presenting of award by Maria Otero, former U.S. Undersecretary of State.  
(photo credit: Lancer Photography)





David Morales receives award from investigative journalist José Luis Sanz of El Faro. (photo credit: Lancer Photography)

David Morales is Salvadoran human rights lawyer at Cristosal and has been the lead prosecutor representing the victims of the El Mozote massacre, where hundreds of people were killed by a U.S.-trained military force in El Salvador during the early 1980s. His uphill battle for justice continues to this day as he fights the growing attacks on human rights by President Nayib Bukele.

“ I receive it as a personal recognition but also as a recognition of the work of everybody at Cristosal, who have supported relatives of victims of the El Mozote massacre in their long search for justice... I’m very proud to receive this award from WOLA, an organization that has a history of such great solidarity in Central America. ” – David Morales



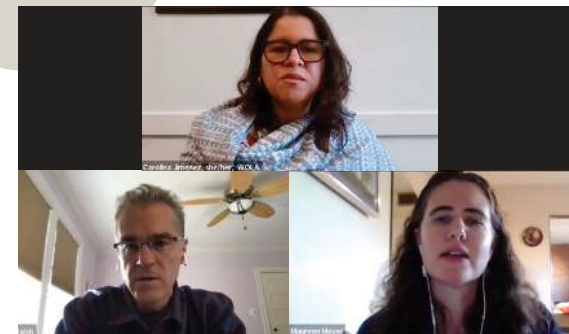
Rep. Joaquín Castro receives award from Carolina Jiménez, in the place of Rep. Jamie Raskin.

Congressman Joaquín Castro (D – TX) has taken a lead in Congress with his unwavering commitment to human rights at the U.S.-Mexico border and in U.S. policy towards Latin America. Castro has worked to promote policies that protect vulnerable migrants at the border and regionally and has consistently uplifted human rights concerns in Mexico, Central America, Colombia, Brazil and elsewhere in Latin America.



“ For years, I’ve worked closely with foreign and domestic leaders to strengthen democracy, promote human rights, and create inclusive economic opportunities across the Americas. I look forward to working with my fellow nominees to uplift the voices of marginalized communities and local organizations and push for equality and justice for all. ” – Congressman Joaquín Castro.

## WOLA Partners’ Council



WOLA's Carolina Jiménez, John Walsh and Maureen Meyer brief the Partners' Council on the impact of the U.S. Mid-Term Elections.

- Biden's First Year of Immigration Policies
- Central America & Authoritarian Trends
- Regional Migration Trends in the Americas
- Midterm Elections in the United States: Changes in Congress and Impact on Human Rights

The WOLA Partners’ Council is a community of people that plays a vital role in championing human rights and democracy in our hemisphere. It is a non-governing membership body whose participants strengthen WOLA’s ability to fulfill its mission through their financial contributions and their strong engagement with our research and advocacy work.

Through the Partners’ Council, members are connected to a vibrant group of leaders and the social changemakers in the Americas. In 2022, WOLA’s experts offered an array of private briefings, memos, and events especially for our Partners’ Council such as:

## WOLA Legacy Society Offers Opportunity for Lasting Impact

The vision of our founders and staff throughout the years has driven the effective advocacy that makes WOLA a trusted authority on Latin America. This year, we launched WOLA’s Legacy Society with a moving testimonial video from Joe Eldridge and Maria Otero, members of WOLA’s founding generation, who spoke about what it meant to them to help ensure that vision for the future.

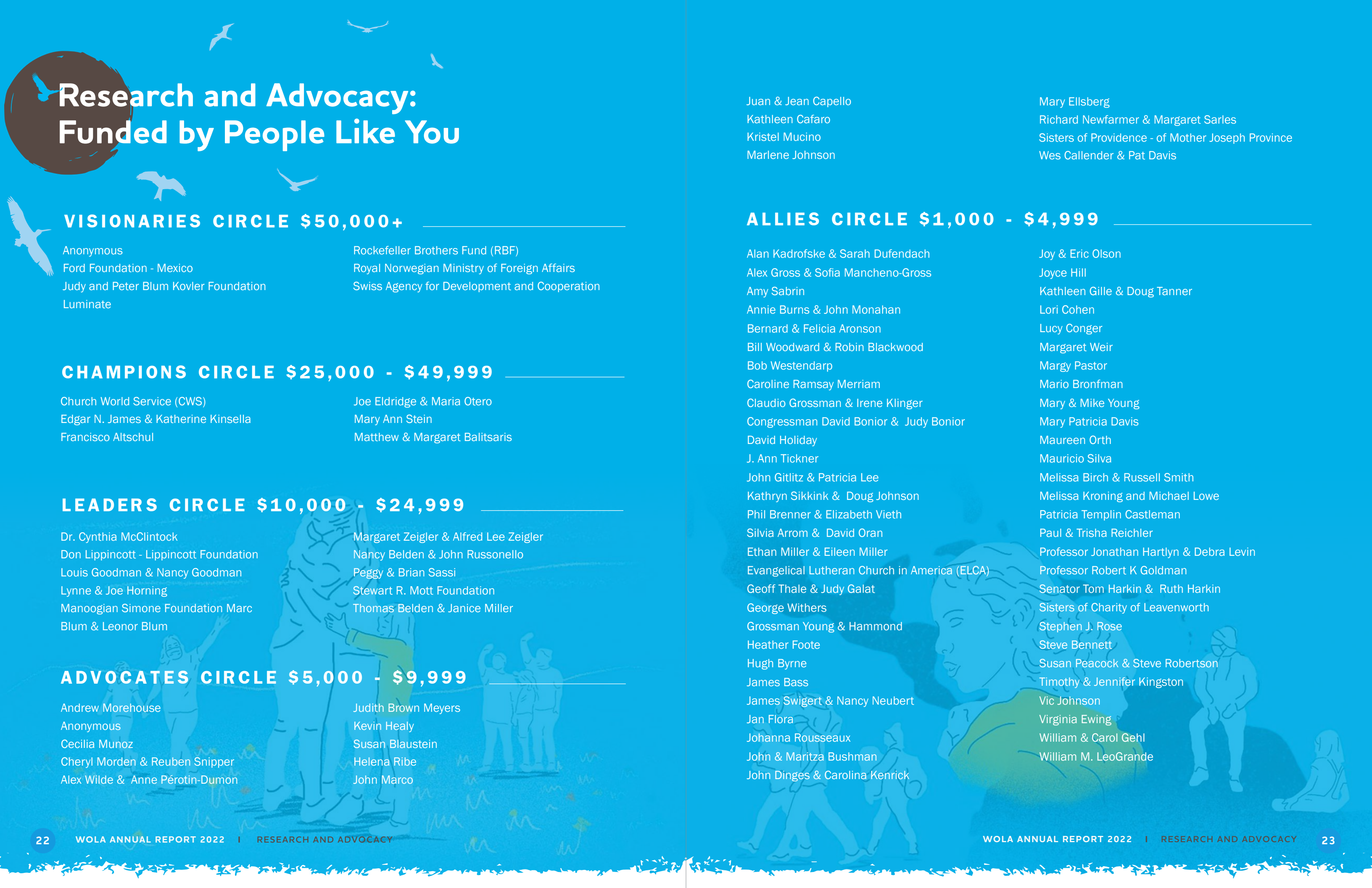


Maria Otero and former WOLA Executive Director Joe Eldridge

“ It is a joy to my heart that we will be able to help WOLA continue its mission in bringing more justice, more human rights to Latin America. ” – Joe Eldridge

As we approach WOLA’s 50 anniversary, the WOLA Legacy Society will offer our generous donors a chance to make a gift through a will or trust or beneficiary donation to ensure that these values carry on for generations to come.





# Research and Advocacy: Funded by People Like You

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In 2022, WOLA's staff begin hybrid in-person and virtual meetings.

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Coletta Youngers  
Kathy Gille  
Jo-Marie Burt  
David Smilde  
William LeoGrande

## The Sally Yudelman Internship Program



WOLA's Sally Yudelman Internship Program is named after the late chair of WOLA's Board of Directors for her enduring commitment to supporting the next generation of human rights advocates. The program gives individuals hands-on, productive experience that will help them find future opportunities in the field of human rights and encourage a lifelong interest in Latin America. WOLA makes our internships more accessible to all by procuring the funds to pay

an hourly wage. We are proud of WOLA's abiding commitment to equity and are grateful to generous donors who make this possible. The program continues to offer one of the most thorough, engaging, and formative human rights experiences in Washington, D.C.



Natalie Chaudhuri

“ It is an incredible experience to be part of an organization whose information is frequently used and referenced by my professors and peers. Few

organizations give students the ability to meet directly with both human rights defenders working in the region and policymakers working in DC. WOLA's community has been welcoming, inspiring, and committed to supporting its interns' trajectories even after our time here. ”



Kate Keelan

“ I loved getting to learn the practice of making change at WOLA, and I continue to appreciate the connections I made with people there. ”



Photo credit: Sergio Ortiz Borbolla

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