

Best Practices for Interns: Research, Writing, and the COHA Philosophy

Starting a Research Project

Talk to a senior analyst about your project idea. One of them will help frame the debate on the issue and get you started and in the right direction. Without this step you may be working on a piece that COHA would not be able to consider publishing.

Research

You should have read widely on the topic you propose investigating. For any essay to be considered for possible publication by COHA, it must be constructed upon a solid knowledge base that is the product of an investment of a significant amount of a study in the leading publications on your subject, including both books as well as articles. You should be able to show some familiarity with a variety of primary sources on the topic. It will never be enough to just reproduce what can be read in the news media. If you have not been to the country you are writing about, you should partner with a researcher who has been there. You must always include source material from the country you are writing about in the language of the country. If you cannot read the language, partner with someone who can.

Writing

Show an outline draft to a senior researcher before you write the piece. After you have written the initial draft of the essay and you have gone through a round of edits by fellow interns, you should submit the piece to a senior researcher. Your writing at this stage may yet undergo significant edits at this step in the process. You will need to be flexible; the senior analyst is not required to explain to you all the changes that have been made to the piece. Remember, while you may be the author of the piece, the work normally represents the work of a broad number of COHA personnel, and editorial changes will be made to best reflect COHA's philosophy as well as writing and research standards of this organization.

Final Approval and Publication

The decision to publish any piece for COHA lies with the Director, and the Director alone.

The COHA Philosophy

COHA is a progressive think tank and therefore not all essays, even those that are well conceived and written, are appropriate for us to publish. For this reason it is important for associates to become familiar with COHA's history and a sampling of our work over the years.

COHA History

COHA has a soul that was forged under the conditions generated by the US-backed military coup against the constitutional and socialist government of

Salvador Allende in Chile in 1973. The historic memory of this and other anti-democratic U.S.-sponsored interventions throughout Latin America in the past informs COHA's progressive stance when it comes to use of its publishing space in favor of regional integration and independence.

COHA Statement of Purpose and Goals

COHA seeks to offer expert analysis of current affairs across the hemisphere, offering policy recommendations and engaging in the ongoing debates on a wide range of issues, from poverty reduction, economic policy, democratization, environmental protection, the struggles for social equality, and beyond. At the center of its mission is the training of interns in the analysis of inter-American affairs.

COHA is committed to exploring the most effective paths for improving the life circumstances of ordinary women and men and their families. The poverty and economic inequalities of Latin America are unacceptable. Addressing these urgent problems remains one of COHA's foremost concerns.

Democracy is the foundation for progress in these critical areas, and COHA stands in solidarity with the grassroots efforts throughout the region to actualize the richest expression of democracy, one that is fully inclusionary, direct, participatory, and transparent.

Much of Latin America remains economically underdeveloped, not realizing the vast potential of the region. There are many sources of this continuing problem, but a principal one was the wrong turn in economic policy in the 1980s and 1990s, the embrace of the free market or neoliberal philosophy of the Washington Consensus. Given the massive failure of these policies, in the 2000s most of Latin America turned away from neoliberalism, but even the progressive nations have continued to focus on raw material production and sales, or neo-extractionism. COHA is committed to working to help articulate new developmental policies that can move Latin America beyond raw material production, and toward the creation of productive systems that maximize human labor power, increasing the economic strength of the region and political self-confidence.

However, economic development can bring potential dangers and costs. Steps must be taken to assure that the benefits of economic growth and development are shared equitably. As the neoliberal experiment should have made abundantly clear, government must play a significant role, mapping out strategies for developing the economies within an increasingly globalized context, and put in place policies that assure income and wealth redistribution.

At the same time, economic development can carry a heavy environmental cost. COHA holds that all stakeholders must be included in weighing the balance between protecting *Pachamama*, mother earth, and the need for economic

development. Without economic development Latin America will always lack the resources to improve the lives of its population, but if development goes forward without sensitivity to protecting our environment, all human life will continue to suffer. We have an obligation to the generations to come to be effective stewards of the environment.

COHA supports the full expression of human identities in sexual orientation and gender. COHA is feminist, and is fully committed to working to advance the recognition of the equal rights of all people.

COHA seeks a change in direction of United States policy toward Latin America and opposes all free trade agreements that do not provide special considerations for developing nations, that are not the result of open and democratic deliberations, and that do not offer authentically open U.S. markets that are presently unfairly advantaged with subsidies and subventions. COHA opposes the irrational, ineffective, and wasteful U.S.-led war on illegal drugs. COHA supports U.S. immigration reform, believing in the rights of people everywhere to go to places where they can work and provide for their families.

COHA's philosophy is to stand in solidarity with those in the hemisphere seeking to end poverty, enrich democracy, promote social equality, and protect our shared environment. We believe that the most progress and the best new ideas

in these areas are being generated at the grassroots level in Latin America. We hope that our efforts will help spread this progress South to North.

Our audience expects original research and analysis that takes a side with those struggling to overcome extreme social and economic inequality, and not with those who seek to fortify oligarchic and trans-national corporate interests. If this does not fit within the parameters of your conceptual horizon, you might want to revisit the goals of this internship. If it does, we will be happy to work with you as you hone your critical writing abilities and put your editorial skills to work.