

[Kathleen's July 9th Testimony](#)

Kathleen Desautels, 64 year old, is a Sister of Providence of St. Mary-of-the-Woods, IN. She was born and raised along with her three brothers and one sister in Indianapolis, IN. She joined the Sisters of Providence after graduating in 1960 from St. Mary-of-the-Woods College, Indiana. She received her M.A. in Religious Studies from La Salle University in Philadelphia, PA. Her ministries over the last 42 years includes elementary teaching, parish director of religious education, campus ministry and theology instructor at St. Mary-of-the-Woods College and chaplain at the Indiana Youth Center, a medium State penitentiary.

For the last 16 years she has been the staff person for her Congregation at the 8th Day Center for Justice in Chicago. 8th Day Center, a 28 year old coalition of women and men religious, focuses its energies on changing the structures that prohibit right relationships between diverse communities and the earth itself. It addresses systemic injustice concerns through education, advocacy, organizing and resistance work.

While at 8th Day Kathleen has focused her efforts of social activism working in coalition with others connecting the issues of economics, human rights, women and environmental issues. She believes in the transforming vision of a world valuing equality, mutuality and cooperation. Such a vision affirms people over property, community over privatism, respect for others regardless of gender, race, sexual orientation, religion or class.

Her experience for the last 20 years as a justice promoter has provided opportunities for her to participate with other human rights advocates to travel and learn first hand of the injustices perpetrated by U.S. political/economic policies. She took a sabbatical from college teaching in 1982 and traveled to Bolivia, in 1984 to Nicaragua during the Contra War, in 1989 to Guatemala and El Salvador shortly after the massacre of the six Jesuits, their housekeeper and her daughter, in 1991 to Iraq and Palestine after the Gulf War, in 1994 to Haiti during the coup, in 1995 to Beijing, China for the 4th World Conference on Women. In 2001 she traveled with others to Colombia, S.A, to commemorate those massacred in 1998 with the help again of U.S. military aid and weapons.

All of these experiences have provided first hand opportunities to learn just how destructive U.S. economic/political/military policy is to people who have been made poor, and the environment itself. In the end it is was has led her each year since 1997 to join with others in the nonviolent resistant movement to ?cross the line? to say no to such destructive policies, and in a symbolic gesture to reclaim the land that houses the School of the Assassins (SOA/WHISC) for more transforming, life-giving activities.

July 9, 2002 Testimony

Your Honor, I'd like to begin with a story from the Aztec people of Mexico.

Our Aztec ancestors tell us that a long time ago there was a great fire in the forests that covered Earth. People and animals started to run, trying to escape from the fire. Our brother owl, Tecolotl, was running away also when he noticed a small bird hurrying back and forth

between the nearest river and the fire. He headed towards this small bird.

He noticed that it was our sister the Quetzal bird running to the river, picking up small drops of water in her beak, then returning to the fire to throw that tiny bit of water on the flame. Owl approached Quetzal bird and yelled at her: "What are you doing sister? Are you stupid? You are not going to achieve anything by doing this. What are you trying to do? You must run for your life!?"

Quetzal bird stopped for a moment and looked at owl, and then answered: "I am doing the best I can with what I have."

It is remembered by our ancestors that a long time ago the forests that covered Earth were saved from a great fire by a small Quetzal bird, an owl, and many other animals and people who got together to put out the flames.?

Your Honor, Earth once again is experiencing a great fire of military madness that promises to annihilate us all. And once again there is a community, this time the SOA Watch, working to put out the flames. The fire of repression by those trained at the SOA/WHISC needs to be extinguished. It is why I'm present today in this courtroom.

Mother Theodore Guerin, the Foundress of my Religious Community of the Sisters of Providence in Indiana, said in the late 1800s to her sisters, "We're not called on to do all the good possible, but only what we can." I believe abolishing for good the SOA/WHISC is "good and possible," if the judiciary, legislative and executive branches of our government had the political and ethical will to do so.

My own spiral of disillusionment with U.S. involvement in Latin America began in earnest in 1980 with the rape and brutal murders of the 4 Churchwomen. This horrific act was bad enough, but when I read Jeanne Kirkpatrick, US Ambassador to the UN call them "communist sympathizers" I was outraged.

Learning years later that 3 out of the 5 accused of these murders were graduates of the SOA added to my disillusionment and determination to join with others to do something to say NO to the U.S. government's complicity in the civil war in Latin America. My first step was to spend part of a sabbatical year with one of my own Sisters of Providence working with people in poverty in Bolivia, S. A. I saw first hand the results of U.S. political and military collusion. My anger and discouragement gnawed at my soul. Marjorie Tuite, OP called it "the burden of knowing."

Since that time I have joined human rights activists who traveled to many of the countries most affected by the terror of SOA graduates. In each country - Bolivia, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, Haiti and Colombia, we have met with people who experienced the repression on a daily basis - labor organizers, progressive church workers, human rights advocates, widows of the disappeared and others. We often had to hold clandestine meetings with the representatives of these groups out of fear of further reprisal to them if they were seen talking to us.

I learned of their brave efforts to challenge the policies that burdened them and their land. We stayed with families who shared graciously of the little they had. We learned of their heavy burden. Time and again those we met and talked with told us to "go back and tell your government leaders to stop selling weapons to their government" tell them to stop fumigating our land that's starving our people because we can't grow anything. Tell them to stop sending money to our corrupt government leaders because it never reaches the poor who need it most. Their courage in the face of the "fire" of repression for speaking with us haunts me to this day. I crossed the line in their names.

If the courts had allowed us, the defendants, to use the "necessity defense" to raise the facts reported by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the UN Commission on Human Rights to argue the reasons justifying our act of nonviolent loyal dissent, I believe these findings would prove that those on trial are not the criminals. The real law-breakers are government policy-makers, financial institutions such as the IMF/WB/WTO, the military and paramilitaries, including SOA graduates - the minions of the global corporate market capitalism. These are the ones guilty of promoting, legislating and insuring policy that fosters economic disparity resulting in some of the most grotesque human rights and environmental abuses ever reported.

As my friend Ed Kinane, a former SOAW-POC, reminds us "there has yet to be a truth commission to investigate the SOA's role in fostering the crimes against humanity of the soldiers it has trained and indoctrinated. The authors of the so-called "torture manuals," and their chain of command, have yet to be indicted, much less prosecuted. No effort has been made to provide reparations to the victims of SOA grads or to their survivors.

SOA/WHISC, through its indoctrination and co-optation of Latin American military, is integral to the Southern Command's overall overt Latin American strategy of fostering "democracy" and market economies. This of course translates into the Southern Command's buying off and subverting the military officer caste in most Latin American countries. This subversion helps insure that Latin America remains a pool of cheap labor and a source of cheap resources and a monopoly market for US corporations.

With or without "reforms," SOA/WHISC continues to provide a site for vetting and recruiting assets for US intelligence agencies. It's no accident that two of the generals active in the recent attempted coup against Venezuela's President Chavez learned about "democracy" at this school of coups.

The mission of the SOA/WHISC would remain the same with or without the "reforms" that are promised. Without a major realignment of US policy toward Latin America, "reform" has little prospect of being anything more than a PR strategy, a fig leaf, more camouflage.

If we the defendants had been allowed our constitutional rights of a jury of our peers, if we had been allowed to use expert witnesses of international law to prove the necessity of our actions, I believe the facts would have found us innocent. The denial of the court of these rights leaves me to wonder why? What is the pressure put on the judiciary system that limits such openness? Why the lack of transparency? What is there to fear?

I believe that if you, Judge Faircloth, had my experience in Latin America and were freed from political pressure of the culture of violence and war of terror-talk that saturates U.S. media, you might have, like the owl in the ancient Aztec story, been convinced of the rightness of our actions.

I'd like to believe that you would join us in re-imagining nonviolent alternatives to war. We would together envision a world of right relationships between peoples and countries and set out to ensure that true justice would flourish.

There is a Native American adage "We see from where we stand." I'd like to believe you would see, as we have, from another point of view. You would see from where the victims of the SOA graduates stand. You would believe, as we do, that the "fire" of terror of the SOA/WHISC needs to be extinguished. I'd like to believe your conversion would urge you to join the 10 thousand that will come to Columbus next November at the annual SOA Watch nonviolent protest to call for the SOA/WHISC's abolishment. I'd like to believe this Judge Faircloth. Help my unbelief.