

## Lisa Sullivan



Lisa Sullivan directs the Latin American office of the School of the Americas Watch and leads its Partnership America Latina (PAL). Sullivan lives and works in Barquisimeto, Venezuela and has lived in different countries of Latin America for the past 32 years.

Raised in Oklahoma and Virginia and educated at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, in the late 1970's, Lisa studied and lived in Mexico, Guatemala and Colombia. She later married and moved to Bolivia to work among the poor as a Maryknoll lay missionary. She raised her three children in the barrios of Cochabamba, Bolivia and Barquisimeto, Venezuela where she worked as a community organizer. She also founded the youth cultural center, Centro Cultural San Juan and the grassroots leadership training center, Centro de Formacion Rutilio Grande.

In 2005 she joined Fr. Roy Bourgeois in launching the Latin America initiative of the School of the Americas Watch. The initiative seeks to engage Latin American countries in efforts to close the School of the America (SOA). This military training school, located in Ft. Benning Georgia and operated by the U.S. Army, has left a devastating trail of torture, disappearances, coups and murders throughout Latin America. Grassroots efforts in the U.S. have put pressure on the U.S. government to close down this school, leading to a name change (now called WHINSEC) and close votes in Congress to shut its doors.

Together, Fr. Roy and Lisa have visited 17 of the Latin American nations that were sending troops to the SOA. They have met with seven presidents (Zelaya, Arias, Morales, Ortega, Chavez, Correa, and Lugo) as well as other national leaders and social movements. As a result of these visits, five countries have announced that they will no longer be sending troops to this school.

Lisa traveled to Honduras, shortly before the June 28<sup>th</sup> coup, to meet with President Manuel Zelaya and ask that he withdraw his troops from the SOA. He agreed to consider the request, but had taken no action when – only weeks later - 200 soldiers under the command of SOA graduates broke into his home and escorted him out of the country at gunpoint. President Obama has joined the entire international community in condemning this coup. Lisa returned to Honduras immediately after the coup, and was witness to the rampant abuse of human rights taking place there.