

# JOURNEY TO JUSTICE

by Sister JoAnn Sturzl



This was my 11<sup>th</sup> year of rallying at the SOA (School of the Americas) in Columbus, Georgia in order to close the school. It is a terrorist training school that has resulted in the assassination and disappearance of many innocent people in Central and Latin America. In the last two years, we (1400 people) also gathered at the entrance of the Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, Georgia operated by the CCA (Corrections Corporation of America.) This is one of the largest detention centers in our country; with overcrowding, lack of medical care, and spoiled food.

One of the most meaningful aspects of the journey has been the 24 hour bus ride with the Veterans for Peace from Minneapolis. In the past few years, there have been fewer Veterans for Peace and more young people on the bus, which gives me much hope. Some of them are children of immigrants from Central and Latin America. Another significant change that I've observed since my first time at the rally is the attention being given to numerous justice issues in our world today, which I've noticed in the various workshops at the Convention Center, the exhibit tables and the speakers at the rally.

On our way home, we discussed the reality that all of these justice issues are related. One man spoke clearly about his perception that the American "way of life" has a lot to do with the inequities and injustices in the world, which he believes is based on our taking disproportional resources. We are obsessed about our lives being more precious than anyone else's. It's a form of "exceptionalism." It could be helpful to ask ourselves: "How can I use my privileged life to help improve the life of others?"

Many of us in our group experienced a sense of "bitter-sweet" as we departed, because this will be the last big rally there. The decision has been made to have only a small yearly gathering there. The SOA Watch, who have organized it for 25 years, decided (after consultation) to move the rally to the border next year. Part of this decision has to do with the reality that many of the border patrol agents are now being trained at the SOA (militarization of the border.) We, of course, feel very sad about this.

I'm grateful for the prayers and support of my Community during these years that I represented you at the vigil. What stays with me from this years' experience is a desire to become more conscious of the common good and to live with more compassion. I hope to live Gandhi's statement "be the change you want to see in the world."