

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



Finishing *The School of the Americas* finally gives me the opportunity to express my gratitude to everyone who supported or participated in my research, and sitting down to thank them is one of the most enjoyable aspects of the long research and writing process that led to this book. It is not easy to find the right words. I should begin by saying that an enormous number of people—more than I can possibly thank here—identified with the project and aided me because of their own commitment to social justice in the Americas. Meeting them was a very special experience, because they drew me out of the self-absorption and isolation that often afflicts the world of academia and provided inspiration when I most needed it.

Several colleagues read the entire manuscript or portions of it, and their comments have greatly improved the final version. Andy Bickford read and then reread more dyslexic drafts than I care to remember. He was a superb advisor, and the conversations around my kitchen table have not been the same since he and Nia Parsons left for Berkeley and Santiago respectively. Marc Edelman's careful reading of the manuscript and his wide-ranging knowledge of Latin America strengthened the book considerably. There are few scholars who combine Marc's intellectual brilliance and dedication to social justice issues, and I am a better anthropologist for having had him as a friend and critic since our graduate school days at Columbia University. Hanna Lessinger dissected several chapters with her red pen and made them more coherent as a result. She also raised a number of important issues that I would not have addressed without her

advice. Antonio Lauria, Cathy Schneider, Brian Ferguson, Angelique Haugerud, and Patricia Silver offered sound guidance on several chapters and assured me that I was on the right track. Finally, Art Walters told me and anybody who paid attention that I was smart. He also listened to many of the arguments in the book and worried about me when I did not. His love and support have meant a great deal.

This project involved a lot of travel in the United States and Latin America that I could never have done without the generous support of several institutions. A Research and Writing Grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation supported me for a year and a half. It was preceded by a grant from the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation and a University Senate Research Award from American University. Many thanks to these organizations for their generosity. I also had the good fortune to spend a month at the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Center in Bellagio, Italy, as I immersed myself in writing the book. My warmest thanks to the staff and the other fellows for a wonderful experience. Special thanks to Kathleen Cahill for the Shakespeare quote in the prologue.

Dale and Ken Smith of the Magnolia Hall Bed and Breakfast enhanced my trips to southwest Georgia with their incredible hospitality. They went out of their way to accommodate me, especially on my extended visits, and they helped me to better understand social life in the South. Dale and Ken made me feel like a member of their family, and I will not forget their generosity.

Marc Edelman and Joe Eldridge provided me with contacts and guidance before I left the United States for Honduras, and, in Tegucigalpa, Berta Oliva, Letícia Salomón, and Leo Valladares helped to orient my thinking about the military and human rights. I am also indebted to Ritza Romero of the U.S. Military Group for arranging hotel accommodations, setting up interviews with several SOA graduates, and taking me around town.

George Ann Potter opened her home to me in Bolivia and facilitated my travels in the Chapare. She also taught me a lot about the failings of "alternative development," as it is currently defined. Jaime Zambrano and Juan Carlos Coca Morales accompanied me on my first trip to the Chapare, introduced me to peasant leaders and coca growers, and shared their considerable knowledge of the region with me. I really enjoyed their company. The U.S. Military Group in Bolivia, especially Lieutenant Colonels Rand Rodríguez and Oscar Pacello, expedited my interviews with SOA graduates, and I appreciate their time and effort as well.

I am very grateful to Witness of Peace and Gail Phares for organizing a delegation of U.S. human rights activists to visit the Putumayo region of Colombia in January 2002. It was a privilege for me to join this group. I learned more about a war zone and the life-and-death struggles of some incredibly brave Colombians than I thought possible, and I was also encouraged by the U.S. labor and environmental activists who accompanied me. Their commitment to a more humane U.S. Colombia policy offers an incentive to social scientists seeking ways to connect their research to progressive political change. On an earlier trip to Colombia, Pilar Cubillos of the U.S. Military Group scheduled my interviews with SOA graduates, when she had more pressing things to do. I enjoyed meeting her and value her assistance.

Jeremy Bigwood shared declassified documentation that he acquired through the Freedom of Information Act, and he and Linda Panetta provided their photographs for the book. Laura Catrelli, Megan Fuller, and Beatriz Oropeza did an excellent job transcribing hours of taped interviews, and I enjoyed their commentaries about what they heard. Although the bulk of my fieldwork employed the tools of ethnography, I spent a considerable amount of time combing through various archival collections, seeking information about the School of the Americas when it operated in Panama. I would like to thank Kevin Simons and Carlos Osorio of the National Security Archives, Richard Boyland of the National Archives, and the staff of the Washington National Record Center for their help in locating documents.

I wish to sincerely thank all the anti-SOA activists around the country who shared their experiences and information with me. While she was a student at American University, Kate Lowe introduced me to other young activists, shared her organizing experiences with me, and energized my Latin America class. I am especially grateful to Father Roy Bourgeois and Charlie Liteky, who always found time to answer my questions, either in person or over the telephone. Roy's limitless energy and boundless enthusiasm were remarkable, and Charlie's journey from Army chaplain and Congressional Medal of Honor recipient to war resister and anti-SOA activist never ceased to amaze me.

During the year that I spent writing this book, I profited from the opportunity to discuss my ideas with the talented group of young Swedish scholars who organized the Living Beyond Conflict seminar at the University of Uppsala. In particular, I would like to thank Mike Barrett,

Chris Coulter, Staffan Löfving, Sverker Finnström, and Charlotta Widmark for their hospitality and for sharing insights from their own important research with me. Thanks also to Björn Beckman of the International Development Studies seminar and Mona Rosendahl of the Latin American Institute at the University of Stockholm for organizing a very lively discussion of my work at their university.

This book would not have been possible without the participation of the students and staff of the School of the Americas and members of the Colombian, Bolivian, and Honduran armed forces. Thanks to all for talking with me. Colonel Glen Weidner, who is now retired from the U.S. Army, opened the School of the Americas to me, and he initiated my contact with the militaries of Colombia, Honduras, and Bolivia. I value his assistance, and I also appreciate the many hours that he spent answering my questions, when he did not know what I would write. Glen Weidner and the Bolivian major I call Juan Ricardo Pantoja dissolved military stereotypes for me, and they helped me to grasp some of the complex human qualities that characterize the men who serve in the armed forces of the Americas.

Finally, this book is dedicated to the memory of those Latin Americans who were murdered, tortured, and disappeared by the security forces, and to the peasant coca growers of the Andes who fight against incredible odds to live in peace and dignity. My hope is that the book will contribute to building the kind of world that so many of them have struggled to create—a world based on equality, justice, and accountability.