

Amnesty International Group 22 Pasadena/Caltech News

Volume XV Number 4, April 2008

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, April 24, 7:30 PM. *Monthly Meeting* Caltech Y is located off San Pasqual between Hill and Holliston, south side. You will see two curving walls forming a gate to a path-- our building is just beyond. Help us plan future actions on Sudan, the 'War on Terror', death penalty and more.

Tuesday, May 13, 7:30 PM. *Letter writing meeting* at Caltech Athenaeum, corner of Hill and California in Pasadena. This informal gathering is a great way for newcomers to get acquainted with Amnesty!

Sunday, May 18, 6:30 PM. *Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion Group.* Vroman's Book Bookstore, 695 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena. This month we read "Banker to the Poor" by Muhammad Yunus.

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi everyone,

This will be a short column this month as I have been very busy. My mom had a minor heart attack last weekend and was briefly hospitalized in the San Fernando Valley. She is home resting now and doing well. Talk about the healthcare crisis – she was seen quickly in the ER (heart attack type symptoms put you on top of the triage nurses' list!) but had to wait 12 hours for a bed in the stepdown or telemetry unit. Thankfully, she has Medicare and a supplemental policy which should cover this. Thank you all for your good wishes, thoughts, and prayers for her recovery and for my father.

The crisis in Tibet continues as do the protests against the Olympic Torch all over the world. Amnesty does not officially take a position on Tibet's independence or for or against the Olympic Games, but advocates for human rights to be respected in China and Tibet.

For the latest information, see the Amnesty report [http://asiapacific.amnesty.org/apro/aproweb.nsf/pages/Olympics/\\$File/ASA170702008.pdf](http://asiapacific.amnesty.org/apro/aproweb.nsf/pages/Olympics/$File/ASA170702008.pdf)

This just in – the Supreme Court has ruled on the Kentucky lethal injection case – see info in Death Penalty section.

Con cariño,

Kathy aigp22@caltech.edu

ERITREA POC

Group 22 continues to work for our adopted Prisoner of Conscience Estifanos Seyoum. He is a former Eritrea government official who was arrested in September 2001 for peacefully expressing his political opinions.

May 3 is World Press Freedom Day. Pasadena's Congressman Adam Schiff is a founder and co-chair of the Congressional Caucus for Freedom of the Press. He has often expressed support for Reporters Without Borders. This organization selected imprisoned Eritrea journalist Seyoum Tsehaye for its 2007 Journalist of the Year Award. It therefore seems like an opportune time to ask Rep. Schiff to direct attention to the Eritrea prisoners of conscience if he gives a speech to observe World Press Freedom day as he did last year. If you live in Schiff's Congressional District, you can send a message to him through his website, <http://schiff.house.gov>. You can phone his Washington DC office at 202-225-4176 or send a fax to 202-225-5828. His Pasadena office is located at 87 N. Raymond Ave #800, Pasadena CA 91103, phone 626-304-2727, fax 626-304-0572. Remember that you can do free internet faxing at <http://faxzero.com>.

Here is a sample message that you can use as a guide.

Dear Congressman Schiff,

I know that you are a long-time supporter of Reporters Without Borders. You are probably aware that this organization gave its 2007 Journalist of the Year Award to imprisoned Eritrean journalist Seyoum Tsehaye, who was arrested in September 2001 during a general government crackdown on free speech and the independent press.

Do you plan to give a speech to observe World Press Freedom Day as you did last year on May 3? If so, I urge you to mention Seyoum Tsehaye and the deplorable human rights situation in Eritrea.

Amnesty International issued many statements concerning the 11 former government officials and 10 journalists who have been held incommunicado in secret prisons since their arrest in September 2001. Some of them reportedly died while in custody due to ill treatment and denial of medical attention.

Thank you for your attention,
[your name and address]

RIGHTS READERS
Human Rights Book Discussion Group

Keep up with Rights Readers at
<http://rightsreaders.blogspot.com>

Next Rights Readers meeting:

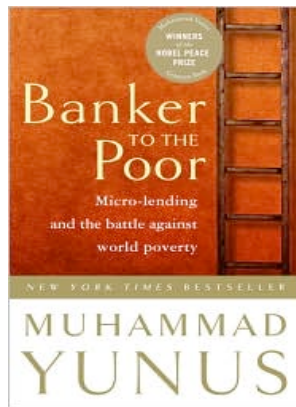
Sunday, May 18, 6:30 PM

Vroman's Bookstore

**695 E. Colorado Boulevard
in Pasadena**

"Banker to the Poor"

By Muhammad Yunus



From the Publisher

This autobiography of the world-renowned, visionary economist who came up with a simple but revolutionary solution to end world poverty—micro-credit—has become the classic text for a growing movement.

In 1983 Muhammad Yunus established Grameen, a bank devoted to providing the poorest of Bangladesh with miniscule loans. He aimed to help the poor by supporting the spark of personal initiative and enterprise by which they could lift themselves out of poverty forever. It was an idea born on a day in 1976 when he loaned \$27 from his own pocket to forty-two people living in a tiny village. They were stool makers who only needed enough credit to purchase the raw materials for their trade. Yunus's loan helped them break the cycle of poverty and changed their lives forever. His solution to world poverty, founded on the belief that credit is a fundamental human right, is brilliantly simple: loan poor people money on terms that are suitable to them, teach them a few sound financial principles, and they will help themselves.

Yunus's theories work. Grameen Bank has provided 3.8 billion dollars to 2.4 million families in rural Bangladesh. Today, more than 250 institutions in nearly 100 countries operate micro-credit programs based on the Grameen methodology, placing Grameen at the forefront of a burgeoning world movement toward eradicating poverty through micro-lending.

About the Author:

Muhammad Yunus was born in 1940 in Chittagong, a seaport in Bangladesh. The third of fourteen children, five of whom died in infancy, he was educated at Dhaka University and was awarded a Fulbright scholarship to study economics at Vanderbilt University. In 1972 he became the head of the economics department at Chittagong University. He is the founder and managing director of the Grameen Bank. In 2006 Yunus and the bank were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for (in the words of the Nobel Committee) "their efforts to create economic and social development from below."

DEATH PENALTY

FINALITY OVER FAIRNESS – THE CASE OF TROY DAVIS

Update: On Monday, March 17, 2008, the Georgia Supreme Court decided 4-3 to deny a new trial for Troy Anthony Davis, despite significant concerns regarding his innocence. Today's stunning decision by the Georgia Supreme Court to let Mr. Davis' death sentence stand means that the state of Georgia might soon execute a man who may well be innocent. Please take action today by calling on the Georgia Board of Pardon and Paroles to commute the death sentence for Troy Anthony Davis.

Background

Restrictions on Federal appeals have prevented Troy Anthony Davis from having a hearing in federal court on the reliability of the witness testimony used against him, despite the fact that most of the witnesses have since recanted, many alleging they were pressured or coerced by police. Troy Davis remains on Georgia death row, and may be scheduled for execution in the near future. Troy Davis was sentenced to death for the murder of Police Officer Mark Allen MacPhail at a Burger King in Savannah, Georgia; a murder he maintains he did not commit. There was no physical evidence against him and the weapon used in the crime was never found. The case against him consisted entirely of witness testimony which contained inconsistencies even at

the time of the trial. Since then, all but two of the state's non-police witnesses from the trial have recanted or contradicted their testimony. Many of these witnesses have stated in sworn affidavits that they were pressured or coerced by police into testifying or signing statements against Troy Davis.

One of the two witnesses who has not recanted his testimony is Sylvester "Red" Coles – the principle alternative suspect, according to the defense, against whom there is new evidence implicating him as the gunman. Nine individuals have signed affidavits implicating Sylvester Coles.

» **TAKE ACTION!** Send a letter to the Georgia Board of Pardon and Paroles

Georgia State Board of Pardons & Paroles
2 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, SE
Suite 458, Balcony Level, East Tower
Atlanta, GA 30334

You can also fax your message to: 404-651-8502.

Nebraska Update:

A bill to abolish the death penalty in Nebraska, LB 1063, was defeated in the Senate on Tuesday, March 25th. Thank you to all who wrote your representatives on this important legislation. Please stay tuned for future efforts to end capital punishment in the state.

source: Amnesty International USA website
<http://www.amnestyusa.org/Our-Priorities/Death-Penalty/page.do?id=1011005&n1=3&n2=28>

SUPREME COURT RULING UPDATE REGARDING LETHAL INJECTION

Supreme Court Allows Lethal Injection for Execution

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Filed at 10:24 a.m. ET

WASHINGTON (AP) -- The Supreme Court upheld Kentucky's use of lethal injection executions Wednesday.

The justices, by a 7-2 vote, turned back a constitutional challenge to the procedures in place in Kentucky, which uses three drugs to sedate, paralyze and kill inmates.

"We ... agree that petitioners have not carried their burden of showing that the risk of pain from maladministration of a concededly humane lethal injection protocol, and the failure to adopt untried and untested alternatives, constitute cruel

and unusual punishment," Chief Justice John Roberts said in an opinion that garnered only three votes. Four other justices, however, agreed with the outcome. Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and David Souter dissented.

Executions have been on hold since September, when the court agreed to hear the Kentucky case. There was no immediate indication when they would resume.

The argument against the three-drug protocol is that if the initial anesthetic does not take hold, the other two drugs can cause excruciating pain. One of those drugs, a paralytic, would render the prisoner unable to express his discomfort.

The case before the court came from Kentucky, where two death row inmates did not ask to be spared execution or death by injection. Instead, they wanted the court to order a switch to a single drug, a barbiturate, that causes no pain and can be given in a large enough dose to cause death.

At the very least, they said, the state should be required to impose tighter controls on the three-drug process to ensure that the anesthetic is given properly.

Kentucky has had only one execution by lethal injection and it did not present any obvious problems, both sides in the case agreed.

But executions elsewhere, in Florida and Ohio, took much longer than usual, with strong indications that the prisoners suffered severe pain in the process. Workers had trouble inserting the IV lines that are used to deliver the drugs.

ETHIOPIA: TWO PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE FREED AMNESTY PRESS RELEASE

March, 28 2008

Amnesty International today welcomed the release of human rights activists Daniel Bekele and Netsanet Demissie, who had been detained in Ethiopia since November 2005, but said the two prisoners of conscience should be compensated for the time they spent in prison. The two men were released today, having received a presidential pardon after they signed a letter "acknowledging mistakes" committed in relation to the 2005 elections. It is not yet clear if the pardon is unconditional.

"These two men did not commit any acts for which they need to seek pardon," said Erwin van der Borgh, Director of Amnesty International's Africa Programme.

"They were prisoners of conscience, detained and convicted solely for their peaceful work as human rights defenders. They should have their

convictions unconditionally pardoned, and should receive compensation for the period they were unfairly imprisoned.”

Daniel Bekele is the policy manager of ActionAid in Ethiopia. Netsanet Demissie is the founder and director of the Organization for Social Justice in Ethiopia. Both are prominent human rights lawyers.

Both men chose to enter a defence, unlike other co-accused, during a trial that ran for over two years. In December 2007, they were convicted by a majority verdict of the Ethiopian Federal High Court of provoking and preparing “outrages against the Constitution” and were sentenced to 30 months imprisonment.

According to Amnesty International, the prosecution failed to present evidence that either Daniel Bekele or Netsanet Demissie incited violence and the judges convicted them on the basis of the testimonies of two witnesses whose credibility was doubtful and strongly contested by the defence. The Ethiopian government barred representatives from Amnesty International from observing the trial in July 2007.

source:

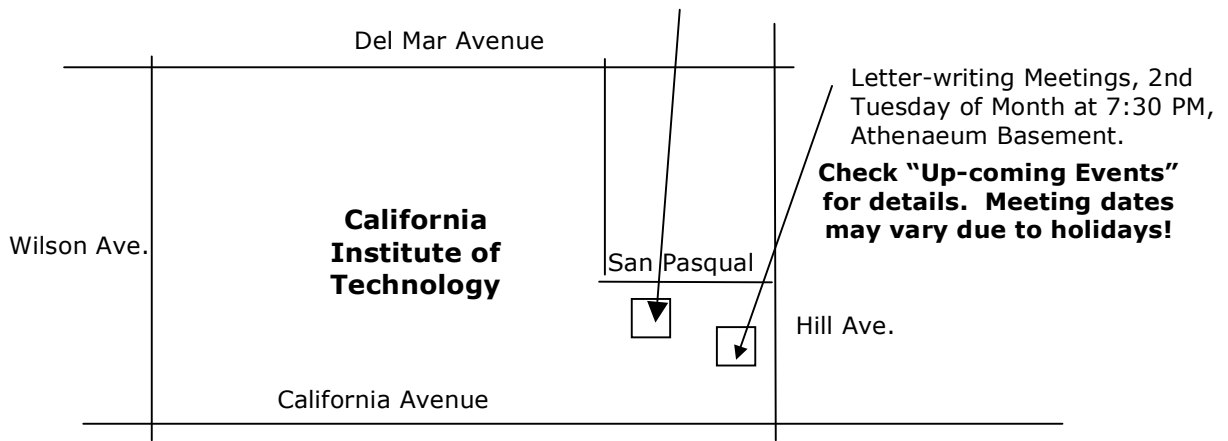
<http://www.amnestyusa.org/document.php?id=ENGPRES200803284343&lang=e>

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MONTHLY LETTER COUNT

Eritrea	9
Death Penalty	4
Other UAs	24
Total:	37
To add your letters to the total contact lwkamp@gmail.com	

Monthly Meetings, 4th Thursday of Month, 7:30 PM,
Caltech Y Lounge.



From the 210 exit on Lake Avenue, head south, turn left on Del Mar
From the 110 continue on Arroyo Parkway north, turn right on California
Street parking is generally available.

Amnesty International Group 22
The Caltech Y
Mail Code 5-62
Pasadena, CA 91125
www.its.caltech.edu/~aigp22/
<http://rightsreaders.blogspot.com>



Amnesty International's mission is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights.