

Amnesty International Group 22 Pasadena/Caltech News

Volume XVIII Number 7, July 2010

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, July 22, 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, August 10, 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! During the summer we are outside on the lawn next to the Athenaeum.

Sunday, August 15, 6:30PM. Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion group. This month we read "The Girl who Played With Fire" by Steig Larsson.

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi everyone

Hot enough for you?!! We're trying to be good citizens (and save money) and not overuse our air-con, so we have fans everywhere, but I'm still sweating....hopefully it will be cooler next week.

Its summer and we always read a mystery in August for the book group. Don't know about the rest of you, but I haven't been able to put down the series of 3 books written by our August author, Steig Larsson. I just finished the 3rd book in the series, "The Girl who Kicked the Hornet's Nest" a few days ago, reading in bed until after midnight! We saw the first movie, Girl with the Dragon Tattoo, and are looking forward to seeing the 2nd one based on our August book!

Group 22 members Laura and Ted Brown, myself, Robert, and Yuny Parada attended the forum at All Saints Church June 28, "First do no Harm", about medical professionals participation in torture. See Laura's article about the event in this newsletter.

Enjoy your summer activities, whatever they may be. We are driving to Oregon next month to see Shakespeare in Ashland and Rob's family in Corvallis.

Con cariño,
Kathy

RIGHTS READERS

Human Rights Book Discussion Group

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

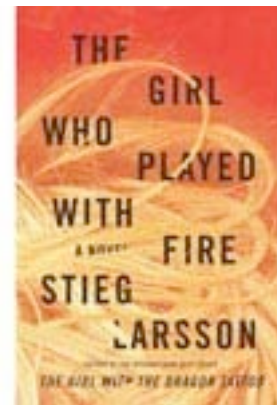
Next Rights Readers meeting:

Sunday, August 15, 6:30 PM

Vroman's Bookstore

695 E. Colorado Boulevard

In Pasadena



Noomi Rapace as Lisbeth Salander
In the movie version of "Girl with the Dragon Tattoo", the first in the series

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Source: www.stieglarsson.com/Life-and-work

Background

Stieg's grandfather, an inspiring role model

Stieg Larsson was born in Västerbotten in northern Sweden in 1954. At the time of his birth, his parents were too young and too poor to keep him, so he was raised by his grandparents in a

small village in the north of Sweden. Stieg's grandfather, Severin Boström, became the male role model for the young Stieg. Severin was strongly anti-fascist [and during the Second World War he was imprisoned in the work camp in Storsien for his anti-Nazi opinions]*. Had he been Danish, he would no doubt have been placed in a German Concentration Camp. The fate of his grandfather deeply affected and shaped Stieg's character. He wanted to protect equal rights and fight for democracy and freedom of

speech in order to prevent history, and what happened to his grandfather, from repeating itself.

** Stieg's father, Erland Larsson, says to stieglarsson.com that nobody in the family can confirm the information about the camp.*

Youth, left-wing movement and far travels

When Stieg was nine years old, his grandfather died and he moved to

live with his parents and his younger brother. Stieg was given a typewriter for his 12th birthday, and he spent most nights of his youth staying up writing, keeping his family awake with the drumming sound. At 18 years of age he met Eva Gabriellsson at an anti-Vietnam War meeting in Umeå. Eva was to become his life long companion. With some short exceptions, mainly due to the fact that Stieg was sometimes too obsessed with his work, they lived together until Stieg's death the 9th November 2004. After his military service, Stieg travelled in Africa and has been described as "an early backpacker". He rarely had enough money on his travels, in an interview with Norra Västerbotten in 2006, his father describes how he had to work as a dishwasher and sell his clothes to afford a ticket home from Algeria.

Stieg Larsson was also interested in Science Fiction. Among other things was he the chairman of the Scandinavian science fiction society and published two magazines.

A life under constant threat

During the last 15 years of his life, he and his life companion Eva Gabriellsson lived under constant threat from right-wing violence. When a labor-union leader was murdered in his home by neo-Nazis in 1999, the police discovered photos of and information about the couple in the murderer's apartment. So it was not without reason that the couple took precautionary measures. They were never seen together outside the house, they moved mirrors in the hall and they always kept the blinds down. Those are just a few examples. Stieg was an expert in the area, and wrote a book of instructions on how journalists should respond to threats for the Swedish Union of Journalists ("Överleva Deadline", 2000).

Writing as a relaxation

The situation created a contrast between Stieg's work at Expo and his night-time novel writing. He regarded his writing of detective novels as relaxing. Keeping track of loose ends, characters and made up conspiracies posed no problem since it was, after all, fiction and no one would threaten either Eva or himself because of it.

BOOK REVIEW FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES JULY 16, 2009

"SUSPECTED, PURSUED. INNOCENT?"

Lisbeth Salander, the angry punk hacker in Stieg Larsson's 2008 best seller, "The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo," was one of the most original and memorable heroines to surface in a recent thriller: picture Angelina Jolie's Lara Croft endowed with Mr. Spock's intense braininess and Scarlett O'Hara's spunky instinct for survival. She and the middle-aged, down-on-his-luck reporter Mikael Blomkvist made quite the odd couple, and their chemistry fueled that earlier novel, driving it through its hurried, contrived ending.

Now Salander is back in "The Girl Who Played With Fire" in an even more central role. This time she is less detective than quarry, as she becomes the chief suspect in three murders. Hunted by the police and enemies from her past, she goes underground, while Blomkvist, one of the few people to believe in her innocence, races to find her — and clues to the real killer.



Though this novel lacks the sexual and romantic tension that helped spark “Dragon Tattoo” — Salander and Blomkvist share few scenes here — it boasts an intricate, puzzle like story line that attests to Mr. Larsson’s improved plotting abilities, a story line that simultaneously moves backward into Salander’s traumatic past, even as it accelerates toward its startling and violent conclusion.

The three people murdered are Nils Erik Bjurman, a lawyer and Salander’s guardian, who once brutally raped her; Dag Svensson, a writer finishing an explosive article about the sex trade for Blomkvist’s magazine (an article that threatens to ruin the reputations of several policemen, five lawyers, a prosecutor, a judge and three journalists); and Svensson’s girlfriend and researcher, Mia Johansson. In his last conversation with Blomkvist, Svensson mentioned he had a new lead on a mysterious gangster, known as Zala, whom he wanted to track down before his article went to press.

Like many thriller writers, Mr. Larsson — who died in 2004, shortly after turning in this novel, “Dragon Tattoo” and a third companion volume — is overly fond of coincidence, and this is certainly the case here. Salander has just come back from a year of traveling: she had left Stockholm after falling in love with Blomkvist, who had taken up with another woman, and was furious with herself for falling prey to an emotion that goes against her image of herself as unsentimental and tough as nails.

Upon returning, she hacks into Blomkvist’s computer to check up on him and discovers an e-mail message from Svensson mentioning Zala, who just happens to be a dreaded figure from her own past. Hours before Svensson and Johansson are found dead — by Blomkvist, of all people — Salander pays them a surprise visit, determined to find out what they know about Zala. The police discover her fingerprints on the gun used to kill them — a gun, we learn, that belonged to her former guardian, Bjurman, who is later found dead in his apartment, naked and draped over his bed.

By cutting cinematically from one set of characters to another, Mr. Larsson builds suspense, while tracking the progress of several simultaneous investigations: the campaign of a likable criminal inspector named Bublanski and his team to track down Salander, whom they regard as their chief suspect; Blomkvist’s quest to exonerate Salander and find the real killer, who he suspects must have had something at stake in

the pending publication of Svensson’s exposé; the efforts of a private security investigator named Armansky, who once employed Salander, to track down her whereabouts; and Salander’s own crusade to find Zala, exact revenge and finally come to terms with the horrors of her childhood.

As he did in “Dragon Tattoo,” Mr. Larsson — a former journalist and magazine editor — mixes precise, reportorial descriptions with lurid melodramatics lifted straight from the stock horror and thriller cupboard. He gives us an immediate sense of the sleek, yuppified world inhabited by Blomkvist and his married business associate and sometime lover, Erika Berger and the daily rigors of publishing a monthly magazine. He gives us a detailed, “CSI”-type understanding of the investigative methods employed by the police and the computer pyrotechnics performed by Salander. At the same time Mr. Larsson has his characters talk in portentous tones of things like “All the Evil.” And he gives us two cartoony James Bondian villains: a hulking blond giant, incapable of feeling pain, and his evil, physically disfigured master, who happens to be a former Soviet agent with ties to the underworld.

The ending of “The Girl Who Played With Fire” — like the revelation about Salander’s past, which gives the book its title — comes straight out of a horror movie: it’s gory, harrowing and operatically over the top. The reason it works is the same reason that “Dragon Tattoo” worked: Mr. Larsson’s two central characters, Salander and Blomkvist, transcend their genre and insinuate themselves in the reader’s mind through their oddball individuality, their professional competence and, surprisingly, their emotional vulnerability.

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE GAO ZHISHENG

by Joyce Wolf



Group 22 continues to work on the case of human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng (pronounced Gow Jir-sheng). Detained by the Chinese authorities in February 2009, he was missing for over a year before he reappeared for a month in March. He vanished again on April 20. The Washington Post published an editorial about

him on July 9, saying "He took on sensitive cases most other lawyers avoided, even asserting the rights of detained Falun Gong members to judicial review. As a result of his activism, he has been kidnapped, tortured and disappeared." (<http://tinyurl.com/28z5bpt>)

The Epoch Times wrote an article on July 9 about Gao's second disappearance. "Gao's family said that Gao has been missing for nearly three months now and no one knows where he is. ...Gao's family did not understand what was going on, but they thought Gao was detained somewhere." (<http://tinyurl.com/2dp2zv7>)

This month let's write again to the Director of the Beijing Public Security Bureau. Here is a sample letter that you can use as a guide. Postage is 98 cents.

MA Zhenchuan Juzhang
Beijingshi Gong'anju
9 Qianmen Dongdajie
Dongchengqu
Beijingshi 100740
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Dear Director,

I am deeply concerned about Gao Zhisheng (高智晟), a Beijing-based human rights lawyer who was detained in Shaanxi Province on February 4, 2009. His current whereabouts has been unknown since April 20, 2010.

A highly respected lawyer, Gao Zhisheng has represented a number of human rights defenders, including members of the spiritual group Falun Gong. His law license was revoked in 2005, and in December 2006 he received a suspended three-year prison sentence for "inciting subversion." According to Gao, he was tortured during the period of detention before his trial. I respectfully urge that the authorities open a full and impartial investigation into allegations that Gao Zhisheng suffered ill-treatment in detention, including beatings and inadequate access to medical treatment, and bring those responsible to justice.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

[your name and address]

"FIRST, DO NO HARM"

BY LAURA G. BROWN, AI GROUP 22
MEMBER

All Saints Church hosted a panel discussion June 28 about physicians' involvement in torture before about 50 people. John Bradshaw, Director of Policy for Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), spoke first on the theme that health professionals are bound by ethics to never participate in torture, though some do. Following him was David Gangsei, Ph.D., who spoke about psychological abuses, and an ACLU attorney whose client was detained and tortured in Dubai at the behest of the U.S.

Bradshaw's focus was PHR's June 2010 report, which says little is being done to stop the use of torture as standard practice. President Obama's policy is one of "looking forward, not backward", Bradshaw said, which translates to no prosecution for past or current authors of torture policies, in violation of international law.

The report's most shocking revelation is that health professionals, including doctors who worked for the CIA, did experiments on prisoners, took notes about how much pain victims could withstand, and used the results to make torture techniques more effective. The CIA dubbed its new, improved near-drowning "Waterboarding 2.0."

Psychologist David Gangsei relayed that psychological torture, so-called "Torture Light", is becoming more popular because it doesn't leave marks. One strategy is to make prisoners listen to the screams of people being beaten and to tell them: "That's going to happen to your wife; that's going to happen to your child." Bradshaw added that there's no proof that psychological or physical torture elicits accurate information, and that a technique known as "rapport building", or gaining the confidence of the prisoner, works best.

Ed Bacon, All Saints Rector, said torture's toll isn't limited to the victims, but that the perpetrators also become damaged and are prone to depression and suicide. He agreed with an audience member that it is a good idea to present a positive model of the United States which we would like to have—a nation which stands for principles like the Bill of Rights and the value of each human life.

Event organizer Virginia Classick had two actions for participants. People could sign on to the PHR

complaint to the Office of Human Research Protections of Health & Human Services, and send postcards to Congress asking them to guarantee Red Cross access to all detainees. These can be completed online at www.nrcat.org/OHRP and at www.nrcat.org, click on Torture Awareness Month.

DEATH PENALTY UPDATE

BY STEVI CARROLL

Troy Davis

June 22, 2010, Lucas, Candy and I joined people from the ACLU and Amnesty gathered at the Los Angeles City Hall. While the group was relatively small - fewer than 30 I think - its members knew they stood with people throughout the world who were in turn standing publicly in their blue "I AM TROY DAVIS" T-Shirts.



photo by Stevi Carroll
Lucas Kamp, second from left; Candy D'Addario, second from right

To see video of events for Troy Davis in Savannah, Georgia and London, England, go to Savannah:

<http://link.brightcove.com/services/player/bcpid1184614610?bctid=101554585001>

London:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=del1Tc5Qnz&feature=PlayList&p=5F343BDF4C5AC7AD&playnext_from=PL&index=0

An evidentiary hearing for Troy Davis' case was held in Savannah, Georgia on June 23, 2010. Both the Attorney General's brief and Troy Davis' brief were filed in the U. S. District Court in Savannah on July 7, 2010. Amnesty's "Archive for the 'Death Penalty' Category" says,

(<http://blog.amnestyusa.org/category/deathpenalty/>)

"The Troy Davis case is buried in doubts. Doubts from the witnesses whose recantations were at the heart of last month's hearing, doubts from jurors..., doubts from a former Georgia Supreme Court Justice who originally upheld his conviction, and even – with over 130 exonerations from death row since the 1970s – doubts about the reliability of the criminal justice system itself."

A verdict in the case may be soon and may be followed by further action by the U. S. Supreme Court.

Gaile Owens

In a few months, I thought I would be reporting the execution of Gaile Owens since she was scheduled to die September 28, 2010. July 14, 2010, Tennessee Governor Phil Bredesen commuted her death sentence to life in prison. As the story of her abuse at the hands of her husband - whom she had killed - became public, many Nashvillians worked for her case to be reconsidered. She now may be eligible for parole by Spring of 2012. For an article on this case, go to <http://deathpenaltynews.blogspot.com/2010/07/tennessee-governor-commutes-sentence-of.html>.

Stay of execution:

Ivan Teleguz

Execution reprieve:

Jonathan Green

(<http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/A/PStories/stories/D9GLR2300.html>)

Executions:

July

1 Michael Perry - Texas

13 William Garner - Ohio

"For centuries the death penalty, often accompanied by barbarous refinements, has been trying to hold crime in check; yet crime persists."

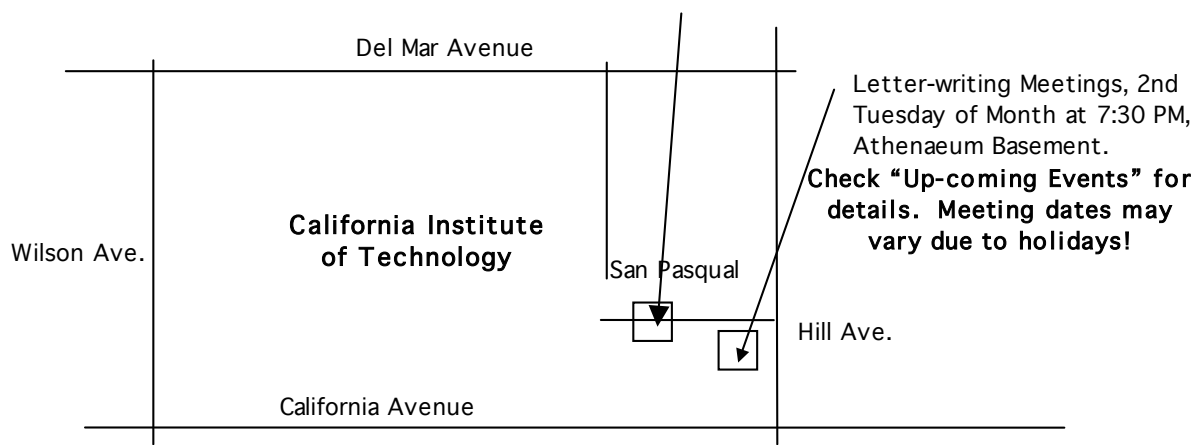
Albert Camus,

Resistance, Rebellion and Death

MONTHLY LETTER COUNT

UA's	29
POC	6
Total	35
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.