

Amnesty International Group 22 Pasadena/Caltech News

Volume XIX Number 11, November-December 2011

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, December 1, 7:30 PM. *Monthly Meeting.* (Normally the 4th Thursday of every month, but moved up for Thanksgiving.) We meet at the Caltech Y (505 South Wilson Ave), in the Living Room. (This is just south of the corner with San Pasqual. Signs will be posted.) We will be planning our activities for the coming months. Please join us! Refreshments provided.

Saturday, December 10, 9 AM - 4 PM.
Global Human Rights Write-a-Thon, at Zephyr Café, 2419 E. Colorado Blvd, Pasadena. (Tel. 626-793-7330) This is part of a global effort by Amnesty International to commemorate Human Rights Day (10 Dec). Please join us to write cards to victims of human-rights abuses all over the world, but also to engage in friendly conversation and enjoy the delicious food at Zephyr Café. (This replaces our normal December letter-writing session on the 2nd Tuesday of the month.)

Saturday, December 17, 6:30 PM. *Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion Group.* (Normally the 3rd Sunday of every month, but changed to suit members' holiday schedules.) This month we discuss "After the Quake: Stories" by Haruki Murakami. Vroman's Bookstore, our usual meeting place, is not available for us in December, so we will meet at a private residence: 187 South Catalina Ave., Unit 2, Pasadena. Call 626-795-1785 or email aigp22@caltech.edu for more information..

Gyatso, a Tibetan monk who was imprisoned for 33 years by the Chinese and whose autobiography our book group read back in 2001; Melissa Roxas, active in health care for the poor, who was detained and tortured by the Philippine army; and the three hikers who were imprisoned by Iran for up to 2 years, the last having been released just last September: Sarah Shourd, Shane Bauer and Josh Fattal. All gave very moving accounts of their experiences, which were not only very informative, but also very inspiring in their messages about the need to avoid becoming embittered by their experiences and to forgive those who had inflicted suffering upon them.

During the following week, we had a very well attended letter-writing meeting in the Athenaeum and a table at Caltech's Community Service and Advocacy Fair. The week after that was our book group, where we discussed *The Honor Code* by Kwame Appiah. Again, the attendance was way higher than usual, and the discussion was very interesting, as the book was liked by all and contained much new material to digest.

This coming month will be a bit less energetic, but there will be our Human Rights Day Write-a-thon at the Zephyr Café on Dec. 10. I hope many of you will attend!

Cheers,
Lucas

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi all --

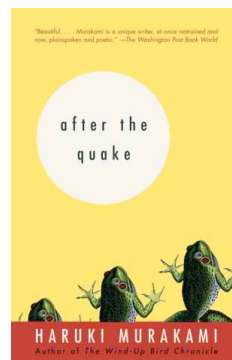
Kathy's schedule prevented her from writing the column this time, so I'm doing it instead.

This past month has been a busy one for Group 22. During the first weekend of November we had the Western Regional Conference at the Sheraton Hotel near LAX. About 8 members of our group attended part or all of it. It was very successful, with over 500 attendees. Some of the highlights for me were a very enlightening panel on migrant rights, a fascinating workshop on "AI around the world", led by the Chair of AIUSA's board of directors, Carole Nagengast, and some outstanding speakers at several plenaries. Notable among the latter were Palden

RIGHTS READERS

Human Rights Book Discussion Group

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



Next Rights Readers
meeting:

Saturday, Dec. 17, 6:30 PM

Pasadena

(Location details are in
Upcoming Events)

BOOK REVIEW

(from The New York Times)

By Jeff Giles

Published: August 18, 2002

After the Quake: Stories

By Haruki Murakami

Translated by Jay Rubin.

181 pp. New York:

Alfred A. Knopf. \$21.

Haruki Murakami's surreal, metaphysical detective novel, "The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle" (1997), was a sort of test of his readers' allegiance: when a character spends 50 pages just sitting at the bottom of a well and trying to clear his head, you're either in or you're out. The novel turned out to be the author's most transfixing work, its prose as plain-spoken as ever but its appetites surprisingly epic and dark, particularly for a book about a guy trying to find his cat. Murakami has released three slim novels here in the last few years, if you count the long-delayed American publication of 1987's "Norwegian Wood." All of them were moving in their way. None were entirely nourishing. Given the scope of "The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle," the minor-key love stories felt like subplots that had sneaked out of town under cover of darkness and were trying to make a go of it alone.

Murakami's new book, "After the Quake," is unexpectedly powerful, a collection of stories, slender and small as a hand, about the emotional aftershocks of the 1995 earthquake in Kobe. Murakami has said that he considers himself a novelist above and beyond all else, telling his translator and biographer, Jay Rubin, "I think it's important to write short stories, and I enjoy doing so, but I believe strongly that if you take away my novels, there is no me." Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain. Even if "After the Quake" had nothing to say about Murakami, which it certainly does, I'd gladly settle for what it says about us.

Kobe lies in western Japan, a considerable distance from the country's twitchiest fault lines, and was always thought to be fairly safe as far as earthquakes were concerned. But at 5:46 on a Tuesday morning in January, a quake struck nonetheless, causing tens of thousands of old blue and brown tile roofs to fall in, killing more than 4,000 people and leaving nearly 300,000

homeless, including Murakami's parents. It took 20 seconds. I'm laying all this out, like a sixth grader's oral report, because it will be hard for Americans to read "After the Quake" without taking the earthquake as a metaphor for the attack on the World Trade Center. It's worth remembering that Murakami wrote these stories before Sept. 11, and that he wrote them not because he'd gotten his hands on a nifty literary device but because his homeland had taken a traumatizing shock to the system.

The six stories in "After the Quake" are all set in February 1995, a month after the earthquake and a month before cult members carried out a sarin gas attack in the Tokyo subway. Which is to say that Murakami has chosen to freeze in time the moment when Japan was staggering away from the scene of one tragedy and, unknowingly, toward another. (The twin disasters moved the author himself to return to Japan after years of self-imposed exile in the United States and write the nonfiction book "Underground." Rubin investigates the intersection of the author's life and art in a lively and eccentric new critical study called "Haruki Murakami and the Music of Words.") The characters in "After the Quake" all live at a safe remove from Kobe, but the shock waves reach them daily via the newspaper and television. The opening story, "U.F.O. in Kushiro," concerns Komura, a stereo salesman and a familiar Murakami hero in the sense that he's so straightforward, so decent -- ultimately so plain -- that weirdness seems drawn to him like a storm looking for a low-pressure area. For five days, Komura's wife watches earthquake reports around the clock, barely eating, never speaking. On the sixth day, she walks out on him, leaving a note that reads: "The problem is that you never give me anything. Or, to put it more precisely, you have nothing inside that you can give me. You are good and kind and handsome, but living with you is like living with a chunk of air." What happens next is a classic bit of deadpan Murakami strangeness: Komura agrees to deliver a box for a friend and only after he's passed it along does he think to wonder what was inside. In the end, the mystery drives him close to violence. The box, presumably, is a symbol for Komura himself. Either it contains his soul, and he's just handed it to a stranger -- or it's been empty all along.

Murakami has always been drawn to characters who feel empty inside -- if you take away my novels, there is no me -- and the earthquake has

only heightened their sense of dislocation. "Landscape With Flatiron" is a melancholy story about a young woman and a middle-aged painter who apparently abandoned his wife and children in Kobe. The pair make hypnotic bonfires on a beach, form a bond and trade fears until, one night, the artist says: "I don't know. We could die together. What do you say?" "Super-Frog Saves Tokyo" is a wild story about a six-foot-tall frog who appears in the home of an ordinary bank officer named Mr. Katagiri. The frog tells Katagiri that he needs his aid in the battle against an enormous worm that lives beneath Tokyo and is planning to unleash a crippling earthquake. "Super-Frog" is such an engaging mix of realism and fantasy ("I am a genuine frog. Shall I croak for you?") that it takes a while for you to realize what a sad undertow the story has and how much it says about Katagiri's solitary life, his feelings of powerlessness and his dread of another quake. I mean, unless there really was a six-foot frog. With Murakami, you never know.

The final story in "After the Quake," "Honey Pie," comes closest to spelling out Murakami's message, which, with apologies to Rilke, is something along the lines of: you must change your life, if you can even call it a life. An agonizingly passive writer named Junpei gets a second chance to marry a woman he's never once stopped thinking about. Astonishingly, he equivocates. Then the earthquake hits: "He hadn't set foot on those streets since his graduation, but still, the sight of the destruction laid bare raw wounds hidden somewhere deep inside him. . . . Junpei felt an entirely new sense of isolation. I have no roots, he thought. I'm not connected to anything." Junpei's attempt to seize the day -- and the woman -- is fraught and painful and enormously affecting.

Yes, Murakami wrote these stories before Sept. 11. Still, he must know how "After the Quake" will resonate in the United States. The collection was published in Japan as "All God's Children Can Dance," but he changed the title for the English translation. One sliver of what makes the book so moving is the sense that on some level it is Murakami's deeply felt get-well card.

About the Author

(source: <http://contemporarylit.about.com>)

Haruki Murakami was born January 12, 1949 in Kyoto, Japan. The son of two teachers of Japanese literature, Murakami grew up in Kobe,



Japan, reading Western authors and listening to Western music. He attended Waseda University in Tokyo, where he studied theater and worked at a record shop. Before he graduated, he had opened a coffeehouse/jazz bar in Tokyo with his wife, Yoko, which they ran for seven years, from 1974 to 1981.

In *What I Talk About When I Talk About Running*, Murakami recalls the exact moment in the Spring of 1978 when, lying on the grass at a Yakult Swallows baseball game in Jingu Stadium, it occurred to him for the first time to write a novel.

By Autumn, Murakami had written a 200-page novel entitled *Hear the Wind Sing*, which he entered into a new writers contest at a literary magazine. He won the contest, and his novel was published. He followed in 1980 with a second novel, entitled *Pinball*, 1973. Both novels were nominated for the Akutagawa Prize, and with this initial writing success, Murakami sold his club and devoted himself full-time to writing novels. In 1982, he published *A Wild Sheep Chase*, the third novel in his "Trilogy of the Rat."

In 1987 Murakami published *Norwegian Wood*, a bestseller in Japan. In 1995 he wrote the Yomiuri Prize-winning novel, *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*. *Kafka on the Shore* (2006) won Murakami the Czech Republic's Franz Kafka Prize.

In 2011, Murakami released the English translation of *1Q84* (One Q Eighty-Four or ichi-kew-hachi-yon), a 1,000 page epic work of magical realism that was originally published in three separate volumes to accolades in Japan.

Murakami is known for his blending of the fantastic realism in his novels, and it's this magical realism, in combination with his flowing use of language, that gives his novels an ethereal, dreamlike quality.

Murakami is also a devoted marathon runner, and he writes about both writing and running in his 2008 work of nonfiction, *What I Talk About When I Talk About Running*. Newcomers to his Murakami's fiction may want to start with *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, Murakami's the most surreal of Murakami's novels and widely regarded as his best.

DEATH PENALTY NEWS

by Stevi Carroll

This month blew by. My shyness makes me about the worst signature gather for the SAFE campaign. I'm hopeful we, as a group, will be able to help out with this. The Amnesty Western Regional Conference made me realize how many of us there are who care about human rights. The young people who attended made my heart leap with joy because I know they will carry on with the good fight as I wind down over the years.

Rais Bhuiyan

Rais Bhuiyan, a Bangladeshi Muslim, was shot and blinded by Mark Stroman shortly after the September 11, 2001, when criminals crashed jets in New York City, at the Pentagon, and in a field in Pennsylvania. During his shooting spree, Mr. Stroman killed two other men he thought were Muslims. He was caught, tried, convicted and sentenced to death.

Prior to Mr. Stroman's execution, Mr. Bhuiyan completed the hajj to Mecca. As he prayed, he decided he needed to do something to help lessen the hatred in the world. When he returned, he contacted Mr. Stroman and worked to have Texas grant him clemency. His plea fell on deaf ears, and on July 20, 2011, the state of Texas carried out Mr. Stroman's execution. Before he died, Mr. Stroman told Mr. Bhuiyan, "Hate brings a lifetime of pain."

Mr. Bhuiyan now spends his life working for a world without hate, including the death penalty. A video is available at Rais Bhuiyan - World Without Hate

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YivxImox3B8>.

Execution in Idaho

Idaho hasn't executed anyone for 17 years until the 18th of November with the execution of Paul Rhoades. According to Idaho Governor C. L. "Butch" Otter "(t)he State of Idaho has done its best to fulfill this most solemn responsibility with respect, professionalism and most of all dignity for everyone involved."

The Amnesty International USA website states that many other inmates wrote letters requesting clemency because Mr. Rhoades helped them look at their lives and 'turn away from violence.' Rob Freer, Amnesty International's USA

researcher said, "The death penalty rejects any notion of reconciliation or rehabilitation, labeling the condemned prisoner as an object to be toyed with and discarded. This is a punishment that offers no constructive solutions to violent crime."

Execution in Oregon

Just as Oregon was about to break its 14-year hiatus of state-sponsored murder December 6 with the execution of Gary Haugen, Governor John Kitzhaber announced he will allow no more executions in the state as long as he is governor.

In the comment thread following one of the articles I read about this announcement, some people expressed caustic comments disparaging the governor's change of thought.

When 26 states outlaw the death penalty, it will then be considered 'unusual' and will be open for national review.

SAFE California

As I said earlier, I am the wimpiest person in the world to collect signatures on petitions. Now with that said, if each of us have a petition in hand, we can ask for people we know to consider the issue and perhaps sign on the line. Two women I've asked about it, both of whom did sign the petition, said they'd heard nothing about the initiative and were glad to know something is being done. I have petitions to share and more information is available at SAFE California - Savings Accountability Full Enforcement.

<http://www.deathpenalty.org/article.php?id=637>.

Saudi Arabia

I have concentrated completely on the death penalty in the USA, and of course, we know that while 139 countries have abolished the death penalty, others continue. Since Saudi Arabia is the USA's ally, I thought I'd see what's been up with that country's death penalty.

As many of us know, the method of execution in Saudi Arabia is public beheading. On October 6, 2011, eight Bangladeshi nationals were beheaded for killing an Egyptian man in 2007. The eight men executed were Ma'mun Abdul Mannan, Faruq Jamal, Sumon Miah, Mohammed Sumon, Shafiq al-Islam, Mas'ud Shamsul Haque, Abu al-Hussain Ahmed, Mutir al-Rahman.

Apparently in Saudi Arabia, the condemned person can pay blood money to the family of the victim but many of the convicted prisoners do not have the money to do this. They could also secure a pardon by having connections which they also lack.

By October, 58 people had been executed in Saudi Arabia causing the UN to call for a moratorium on executions in that country. So far as of this writing, six more executions have been carried out.

To read more on this, go to <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/saudi-arabia-executes-eight-bangladeshi-nationals-2011-10-07> and <http://vaticaninsider.lastampa.it/en/homepage/world-news/detail/articolo/saudi-arabia-arabia-saudita-chiesa-church-iglesia-pena-di-morte-capitol-punishment-pena-de-mu/>.

Stays of Execution

November		
9	John Lesko	Pennsylvania
	Hank Skinner	Texas
10	Anthony Juniper	Virginia

Executions 2011

October		
27	Frank Garcia	39
	Texas	Lethal Injection
November		
15	Reginald Brooks	66
	Ohio	Lethal Injection
15	Oba Chandler	65
	Florida	Lethal Injection
16	Guadalupe Esparza	46
	Texas	Lethal Injection
18	Paul Rhoades	54
	Idaho	Lethal Injection

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE Gao Zhisheng

by Joyce Wolf

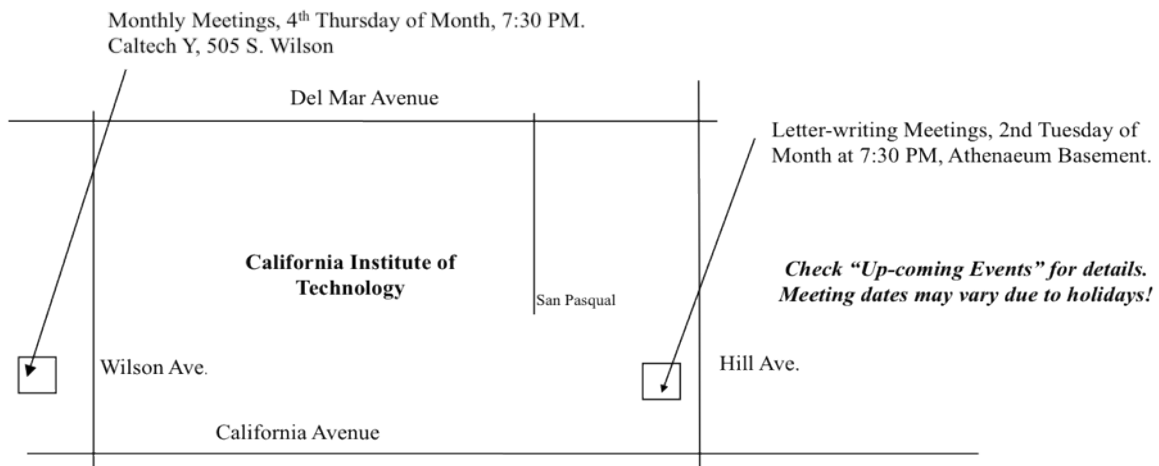
Each month as I begin to write this column, I do a Google search for news about Gao Zhisheng. Nearly always there is something new, usually an organization or an American or European official issuing a public appeal to the Chinese government to find and free human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng. It has been encouraging to learn of these many efforts on behalf of our group's adopted prisoner of conscience. Today, however, my reaction to the search results was "No! Please, no!"

The Epoch Times reported on November 24, "Twitter Post Claims Gao Zhisheng Is Dead: An unconfirmed report of human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng's death has been posted to China's Internet. On Nov. 17 a netizen with the screen name GuaDai posted a message on Twitter saying 'It is believed that Gao Zhisheng passed away on Nov. 15 in Inner Mongolia where he was detained. Man will die eventually, and to die for the sake of freedom, although dead, he is still with us in spirit.' "

The twitter post has not been confirmed. Gao's family has not received any official notice of his death. On NDTV Beijing activist Hu Jia said he believes that Gao is still alive and urged the international community and human rights organizations to "keep paying attention to Gao Zhisheng's disappearance case and keep putting pressure on Chinese authorities."

Please join us at our Dec. 10 Write-a-thon and help us follow Hu Jia's suggestion. We'll hope for better news next month about Gao Zhisheng.

GROUP 22 MONTHLY LETTER COUNT	
UAs	28
POC	2
Total	30
To add your letters to the total contact	
lwkamp@gmail.com	



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 C1-128
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.