

# Amnesty International Group 22 Pasadena/Caltech News

Volume XIX Number 9, September 2011

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Thursday, September 22, 7:30 PM.** Monthly Meeting. **Note new location, at private home (this month only).** Help us plan future actions on Sudan, the 'War on Terror', death penalty and more. Call 626-795-1785 for more information.

**Tuesday, October 11, 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, October 16, 6:30 PM.** Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion group. This month we read "Your Republic is Calling You" by Young Ha-Kim.

## COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi everyone

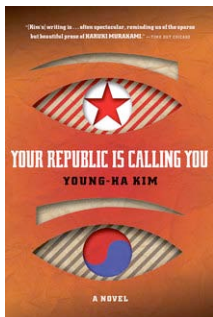
This month we have omitted the Violence Against Women section and substituted information on the Western Regional Conference that is happening near LAX Nov 4-6. Cheri is out of town and I've been so exhausted from the first weeks of school that I haven't had time to find anything on VAW. I did get some actions on Troy Davis, who is scheduled to be executed this week, from my email and have included them in this newsletter.

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, October 16, 6:30 PM

Vroman's Bookstore

695 E. Colorado Boulevard  
In Pasadena

**Your Republic Is Calling You**  
By Kim Young-ha

### About the Author

Born in 1968, Kim Young-ha kicked off his writing career with his first novel "I have the right to destroy myself", which won him the much-coveted Munhak-dongne prize in 1996. Since then, he has gained a reputation as the most talented and prolific Korean

writer of his generation, publishing five novels and four collections of short stories.



Kim's novels and stories focus on articulating a new mode of sensitivity to life's thrills and horrors as experienced by Koreans in the ever-changing context of a modern, globalized

culture. In his search for a literary style, as is often the case with internationally renowned post-modern novelists, Kim attempts to embark on exhilarating and provoking crossing of the boundaries of high and low genres of narratives. His historical novel "Black Flower" tells the story of the first generation of the Korean diaspora forced into slave labor in a Mexican plantation and later involved in a Pancho Villa-led military uprising in a style. Sources of inspiration for this novel came from classical "Bildungsroman", stories of sea trips as illustrated by the popular film Titanic, ethnography of religion, as well as Korean histories of exile and immigration. Another instance of Kim's fabulously mixed style is found in "The Empire of Light", his fourth novel, in which he raises the question of human identity in a democratic and consumerist Korean society by presenting a North Korean spy and his family in Seoul in the manner of a crime fiction combined with a truncated family saga and naturalist depiction of everyday life. The novel was published in the United States under a different title, "Your Republic Is Calling You" in 2010.

Each of Kim's novels has received acclaims from both critics and readers alike, and most have earned him major awards. In 2004--his "grand slam" year--he won three of the most prestigious literary prizes in Korea. With some 20 of his novels and stories being translated into more than 10 languages, he has begun to be recognized by critics overseas as well as in his country as representative of a literary breakthrough that occurred in the wake of democratization and post-industrialization in South Korea.

Kim began to earn his international recognition with a French translation of his first novel, "I have the right to destroy myself", which was published by Philippe Picquier in February 1998; the novel is set to be published in nine other languages, including English and German. A French version of "The Empire of Light" came out early in 2009 and gained favorable attention from such leading newspapers as Le Monde and Liberation.

As a young Korean master of storytelling, Kim is especially popular with Korean film directors, who have found in his works to be a repository of plots and characters that make for superb film-making. Two films have already been based on his fiction, and the cinematic adaptation of The Empire of Light

is currently in progress. His latest novel, *The Quiz Show*, was also made into a musical in 2009. Kim previously worked as a professor in the Drama School at Korean National University of Arts and on a regular basis hosted a book-themed radio program. In autumn 2008, he resigned all his jobs to devote himself exclusively to writing.

Currently a visiting scholar at Columbia University in the City of New York, he lives in New York City, USA.

<http://kimyoungha.com>

**BOOK REVIEW from npr.org**  
**A Kafkaesque Spy Thriller Straddles Two Koreas**  
**by John Powers**

September 30, 2010

When I was growing up, there was no more famous symbol of the Cold War than the Berlin Wall. But in fact, the Wall could never really compare to the demilitarized zone that divides North and South Korea. Still going strong after 57 years, it has created a parallel reality worthy of Philip K. Dick.

By now, most people know that North Korea may be the strangest country on Earth — an Orwellian dystopia complete with starving citizens, nuclear weapons, a goofball dictator, and public displays seemingly choreographed by Busby Berkeley. But in the West, it's less well-known that South Korea is a booming modern democracy with an infrastructure more advanced than our own. It's also an outward-looking cultural player. Even as South Korea's TV soaps dominate Asia, it also boasts one of the world's most exciting movie cultures — it had five films at Cannes last May.

From the outside, the split between the Koreas is usually seen in terms of geopolitical menace. But from the inside, it's lived as a bizarre form of identity crisis. This is precisely the subject of *Your Republic Is Calling You*, a smart new literary thriller by Young-ha Kim, who at 41 is one of South Korea's best and most worldly writers, with a knack for Kafkaesque surrealism and irony.

Taking place over a single day, the novel tells the story of Ki-yong, who seems to be an ordinary, middle-class guy in his 40s. He imports foreign films and has an attractive wife, Ma-ri, who sells VWs, and a brainy daughter who is just discovering boys. But Ki-yong has a secret: He's a North Korean spy who has been sleeping with the enemy for the past two decades. And on this day, he gets a chilling message from his masters back in Pyongyang: He has 24 hours to liquidate everything and return home. Terrified, Ki-yong doesn't know whether he's been found out by the South Korean authorities or whether the North is calling him back to liquidate him.

Unsure whether to go back, Ki-yong spends the day wandering around Seoul and remembering his time there, basking in what he calls "premature nostalgia" for the city he may be leaving. He doesn't have a clue

that Ma-ri also has secrets — she's trying to decide whether to partake in a threesome with her young lover.

Fueled by paranoia, *Your Republic Is Calling You* pulls you along like a thriller, yet Kim is after more than suspense. A keenly observant writer, he turns his story into an amusingly bleak X-ray of present-day South Korea that's as interested in Bart Simpson as in Kim Jong Il. Along the way, we meet a huge array of sharply drawn social types — comedians and tax cheats, porn addicts and schoolteachers, spoiled college kids and former student radicals like Ma-ri who find their generational dreams of national reunification curdling into desperate adulteries. She wonders how it all went wrong.

Nobody is more lost than Ki-yong, whom we see living in three different countries. He spends his first 21 years in North Korea being force-fed ideology, eventually training to be a spy in a crazy underground simulacrum of Seoul. The second country is '80s South Korea, starting to prosper but not yet democratic — it was exploding with protests like the American '60s. The third country is today's go-go South Korea, devoured by a run-amok selfishness and materialism that Ki-yong both enjoys and holds in contempt. Adapting to these very different realities, Ki-yong feels less like a spy than a cyborg, one programmed to adopt whichever self the society of the moment demands.

He feels trapped, and so do those around him. Although South Korea is wealthier and freer than ever before, the novel suggests that the country's apparent freedom is far from liberating. Like the Berglund family in Jonathan Franzen's new novel, *Freedom*, its characters wind up buffeted by confusion and regret, boundless yearning and fierce isolation.

It would spoil things to say what Ki-yong winds up doing, but suffice it to say that, by the end, he and Ma-ri have gained a cruel wisdom. They discover that the choices they think they're making freely aren't really free after all. In fact, they are hostage to forces — personal, historical and existential — that they can't control and don't fully understand. They're adrift. Children of a fractured republic, they forever hear something calling them back home, but they don't know where home is.

**PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE**

**Gao Zhisheng**

**by Joyce Wolf**

China is proposing changes to its laws that would legalize enforced disappearances such as that of human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng, Group 22's adopted prisoner of conscience, who has been missing since April 2010.

According to an L.A. Times article of Aug. 28, current Chinese law permits someone suspected of a crime but not formally charged to be put under house

arrest for six months. The change would apply to special cases involving national security or corruption and would allow the place of detention to be a secret location, not a police station or a regular detention center. <http://tinyurl.com/3mfqx4l>

The New York Times put the matter succinctly: "China is answering complaints by rights activists that the disappearances ... are unlawful and potentially inhumane: It is rewriting the national criminal procedure code to make them legal."

Some other proposed changes to the legal code are actually encouraging. The use of evidence obtained by torture would be barred, and most criminal suspects would have an unqualified right to see a lawyer. All the proposed changes are under review and are expected to be approved by the National People's Congress by the end of September.

Activists are concerned that suspects held in secret locations that are not lawfully supervised places of detention would be at great risk of torture.

The N.Y. Times article concluded, "Many of China's disappeared eventually resurface, some showing signs of having undergone arduous treatment while in captivity. Others have vanished without explanation for extended periods, including the Nobel Prize winning writer and dissident Liu Xiaobo, who vanished for six months in 2008 and 2009. And some do not return at all, like the prominent human-rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng, who has not been heard from since he disappeared in April 2010."

<http://tinyurl.com/42f93hy>

International Day of the Disappeared was August 30, but you can still do Amnesty's online action for Gao Zhisheng by clicking <http://tinyurl.com/3btmk26>.

## UPDATE ON TROY DAVIS

Dear Amnesty Family,  
The Global Day of Solidarity for Troy Davis kicked off in Hong Kong last night and events are happening in over 300 cities around the world to lift up the case of Troy Davis. Thank you for your role in making this happen!

Over 663,000 petitions were delivered in Georgia yesterday, and today Amnesty and our allies will be marching down historic Auburn Avenue in Atlanta at 6pm to Dr. King's church, Ebenezer Baptist. At the 7pm Prayer Service at Ebenezer, Larry Cox will be speaking along with Ben Jealous, Andy Young, Rev. Sharpton, death row exonerees, a murder victim family member and Georgia clergy and lawmakers. Three buses from Savannah, one from Columbus, GA, four from North Carolina and a group from Chicago will be coming into the city to be part of this witness. The thunderous chorus in support of

clemency for Troy is being heard loudly and clearly in Atlanta and around the world!

Troy Davis sent this message via phone to Seattle yesterday:

"I want to personally thank each and every one of you... You lift my spirits everyday single day. When I wake up and feel helpless, I thank God there are people like you taking on My Cause. I am asking you to do this for me on September 16th, *raise your voice LOUD because I cannot*. Raise your voice so VERY LOUD that you are heard all the way here to Georgia... Raise your voice for me, for my freedom..."

What we need now is for everyone to take this [new online action](#) directed at Larry Chisolm, the District Attorney for Chatham County, Georgia. Please share the action with your networks and groups, and keep up to date on Amnesty's blog and Twitter using the hashtag #toomuchdoubt.

In solidarity,  
Rini Chakraborty  
Western Regional Director  
Amnesty International USA

## WESTERN REGIONAL CONFERENCE: NOVEMBER 4-6, LOS ANGELES HUMAN RIGHTS FOR ALL: ONE MOVEMENT, ONE WORLD

Amnesty West invites you to attend the 2011 Western Regional Conference. Join hundreds of human rights activists from across the region in sunny California for expert panel discussions, skills-building workshops, and networking with leaders from across the Western region. Find out more today!

This year's conference theme, Human Rights for All: One Movement, One World, underscores the momentous human rights victories and struggles of the past year and spotlights the growing grassroots movement to fight human rights abuses around the world. Over 500 committed Amnesty activists from across the thirteen Western states are expected to converge in Los Angeles to participate in skills-building and content-focused workshops, expert panel discussions, and direct actions for human rights. The conference will feature prominent human rights defenders and leaders in the field who will discuss the most pressing human rights concerns of today: the uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa, the growing movement to abolish the death penalty; protecting migrant rights; ending poverty; the torture debate; and much more. The conference will also include a special human rights track with partners and allies in the broader human rights community. Register for the conference today and [visit this site](#) for more information about content, Ideas Fair, group sales, subsidies, and more.

# DEATH PENALTY NEWS

by Stevi Carroll

## Troy Davis

Despite a worldwide campaign to save him from execution, Troy Davis is scheduled to die September 21, 2011. He has exhausted his appeals and the courts say he has not proven his innocence. The recantation of seven defense witnesses was considered inconsequential. Amnesty International's position is "Given the doubts that persist in this case, the Board cannot in good conscience allow this execution to go ahead," said Amnesty International's USA researcher Rob Freer.



Photo: James Clark, ACLU and Los Angeles Country Coalition for Death Penalty Alternatives, June 22, 2010.

"While we oppose all executions whatever the state's case, even ardent proponents of this irrevocable punishment should be troubled by the state of the evidence against Troy Davis."

## Rick Perry

At the Republican debate September 7, 2011, Rick Perry was asked by moderator Brian Williams if he loses sleep over the many executions, 234 on that date, carried out during his governorship. Mr. Perry said, "I've never struggled with that at all." The audience response was resounding applause.

The case of Cameron Todd Willingham, executed on February 17, 2004, would make most of us toss and turn during our dream time. In August 1992, Mr. Willingham was convicted of murdering his three young children in a house fire. He was offered a life sentence if he confessed to the crime. He declined because he said he was innocent.

Before Mr. Willingham's execution, questions about his guilt were raised when Dr. Gerald Hurst, an arson expert, wrote a report that stated there was serious doubt about credence of arson in the fire that killed Mr. Willingham's children. The Governor's Office and the Board of Pardons and Paroles ignored this analysis. In 2005, the Texas Forensic Science Commission hired Craig Beyler, a nationally known fire scientist, to evaluate this case. His findings agreed that there was no credible scientific basis for the conclusion that arson had been committed. In October 2009, Mr. Beyler was to appear before the Texas Forensic Science Commission with his findings, but Governor Perry stopped it two days before.

As the applause replayed in his mind, I'm sure Mr. Perry snuggled into a sound sleep this past September 7. September 13, 2011, Steven Woods became the 235th person executed in Texas during Mr. Perry's governorship. His was the 10th execution in Texas this year. Three additional executions are scheduled in Texas this month, September 15, 20, 21.

## SB 490

On August 25, 2011, state Senator Loni Hancock (D-Oakland) withdrew SB 490 from consideration by the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Despite the appearance of former Attorney General John Van de Kamp and Law Professor Laurie Levenson in support of the bill before the Committee, the votes were not there to move it out and onto the floor.

What this means for death penalty opponents in California is a petition drive to garner enough signatures to get an initiative on the November 2012 ballot. As I said last month, this initiative would not abolish the death penalty but make district attorneys try cases with the harshest sentence of life without possibility of parole. When I know more about how to get involved in the initiative effort, I will let you know.

## Manuel Valle

Last month Manuel Valle, a foreign national, was granted a stay of execution for a hearing on the new use of a drug, pentobarbital. The Florida Supreme Court then allowed his execution to go forward. He had an additional brief stay because a federal appeals court in Atlanta wanted to see if he should have received a clemency hearing. His current date for execution is September 28, 2011; although, he does still have a case in the Jacksonville federal court and an appeal awaiting decision before the U. S. Supreme Court.

## Stays of Execution

September 2011

Scheduled date of execution

	Name	State
13	Joel Schneiderer	Tennessee
20	Billy Slagle (until 2013)	Ohio

## Executions

September 2011

13	Steven Woods	31
	Texas	Lethal Injection

## GROUP 22 MONTHLY LETTER COUNT

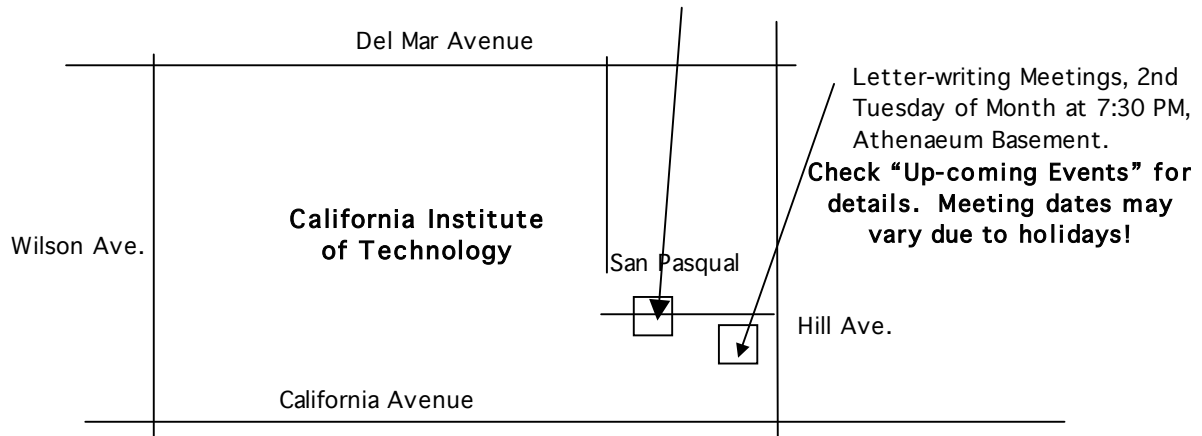
UAs	15
DP(Troy Davis)	8
Total	22

To add your letters to the total contact [lwkamp@gmail.com](mailto:lwkamp@gmail.com).



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Monthly Meetings, 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of Month, 7:30 PM.  
JULY 2011 WAS OUR LAST MEETING AT THIS LOCATION!



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://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.