

Amnesty International Group 22 Pasadena/Caltech News

Volume XXII Number 1, January 2014

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, January 23, 7:30 PM. Monthly Meeting. We meet at the Caltech Y, Tyson House, 505 S. Wilson Ave., Pasadena. (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.

Tuesday, February 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, February 16, 6:30 PM. Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion group. This month we read "Farewell, Fred Voodoo" by Amy Wilentz.

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi All

Happy New Year! Can't believe it's 2014 already...I enjoyed 3 weeks off, seeing my sister and her BF, who came down from northern California, catching up on my reading and exercising, and even having some time left over to work on some household projects and see a movie or two!

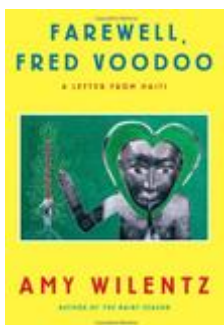
Here's hoping 2014 is a better year for human rights.

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, February 16, 6:30 PM

Vroman's Bookstore

695 E. Colorado, Pasadena

Farewell, Fred Voodoo

by Amy Wilentz

Book Review: *Farewell Fred Voodoo*

A veteran journalist captures the functioning chaos of Haiti.

New Yorker writer Wilentz has been covering shattering events in Haiti since the Duvalier dynasty fell in 1986, culminating in her book *The Rainy Season*. Now based in Los Angeles, the author again felt the fatal pull of the country after the recent natural-disaster devastation and returned repeatedly in order to record the uneven progress in reconstruction and humanitarian aid as well as interview many of the so-called (in politically incorrect parlance) Fred Voodoos, or Everymen on the street, for a reality check.

Describing herself as "a naïve person, and a romantic," she has grown enormously wary of the good intentions heaped on the country from one crisis to another and is frequently cynical after many years of her "Haitian education." Since its very inception as the first (and last) slave revolution in history, Haiti has been victimized, plunged into poverty, denuded of resources and patronized by rich white neighbors bent on a "salvation fantasy" that has never lifted the country out of poverty. After the hurricane, suddenly whites appeared everywhere to help out.

While Wilentz does chronicle some extremely good work being done—by the indefatigable infectious-disease specialist Dr. Megan Coffee and by actor Sean Penn in setting up a workable refugee camp—much of what the journalist witnessed remained a familiar profound malaise and dysfunction. Seeking out her old acquaintances and former protégés of President Aristide, the author found drugged-out zombies, many living in permanent refugee camps without proper sanitation and little or no literacy. She learned that nothing is as it seems in Haiti. Like voodoo ceremonies, society runs on "artifice and duplicity," and its government (a kleptocracy) has been organized "to be porous and incompetent, to allow for corruption."

An extraordinarily frank cultural study/memoir that eschews platitudes of both tragedy and hope.

[From Kirkus Reviews]

Author Biography

Amy Wilentz is the author of *Farewell Fred Voodoo* (2013), *The Rainy Season: Haiti Since Duvalier* (1989), *Martyrs' Crossing* (2000), and *I Feel Earthquakes More Often Than They Happen: Coming to California in the Age of Schwarzenegger* (2006). She is the



winner of the Whiting Writers Award, the PEN Martha Albrand Non-Fiction Award, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters Rosenthal Award, and also a 1990 nominee for the National Book Critics Circle Award. Wilentz has written for *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Time* magazine, *The New Republic*, *Mother Jones*, *Harper's*, *Vogue*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, *Travel & Leisure*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *More*, *The Village Voice*, *The London Review of Books* and many other publications. She is the former Jerusalem correspondent for *The New Yorker* and a long-time contributing editor at *The Nation*. She teaches in the Literary Journalism program at the University of California at Irvine, and lives in Los Angeles.

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE

Gao Zhisheng

by Joyce Wolf

Last week on January 16 the U.S. Congress **Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission** (TLHRC) held a hearing titled "Defending Freedoms Hearing – Highlighting the Plight of Prisoners of Conscience around the World." Geng He, wife of Group 22's adopted prisoner of conscience Gao Zhisheng, was a featured witness. The hearing was chaired by Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA), who himself adopted Gao Zhisheng's case back in 2012 and pledged to continue advocating until China released Gao.

Here are excerpts from <http://tlhrc.house.gov>

"Background: In December 2012 the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission (TLHRC), in conjunction with the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) and Amnesty International USA (AIUSA), launched

the Defending Freedoms Project (DFP) with the aim of supporting human rights and religious freedom throughout the world with a particular focus on prisoners of conscience.

The Lantos Commission's first hearing of 2014 will address the plight of prisoners of conscience, who are currently unjustly detained by repressive governments around the world. By highlighting several such cases, the hearing will explore strategies for securing the release of prisoners of conscience, the need to shine a bright light on some lesser known cases, the historical precedent for effective advocacy campaigns and the importance of human rights as a central factor in U.S. foreign policy.

WITNESS LIST: Panel II: Ms. Geng He, Wife of Imprisoned Chinese Human Rights Lawyer Gao Zhisheng, Accompanied by Mr. Jared Genser, Founder, Freedom Now and Pro Bono Counsel for Gao Zhisheng."

NTDTV interviewed Geng He after the hearing: "Geng He said, 2014 was a year of hope to her and her children, as according to the CCP's announcement in 2011, Gao should return home during this year. In addition, Geng He hoped that all media and those people who cared about Gao's case, kept watching over the supposed release of Gao in 2014."

<http://www.ntd.tv/en/China%20Forbidden%20News/20140117/84840-will-gao-zhisheng-return-home-in-2014-gaos-wife-called-for-global-attention.html>

In other news, the documentary "Transcending Fear: The Story of Gao Zhisheng" is now available on DVD. Our copy is on order. You can also watch it online for \$1.99.

<http://transcendingfearfilm.com>

January 31 marks the start of the Year of the Horse according to the Chinese calendar. So let's send New Year greetings to Gao Zhisheng in remote Shaya Prison.

Gao Zhisheng
Shaya Prison
P.O. Box 15, Sub-box 16
Shaya County, Aksu Prefecture
Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, 842208
People's Republic of China

SECURITY WITH HUMAN RIGHTS

by Robert Adams

“A Person Under Surveillance is No Longer Free”: Why We Care About Obama’s Speech Today

*By Naureen Shah, Advocacy Advisor at Amnesty International USA
January 17, 2014*

Who does U.S. surveillance impact? Millions of people around the world, including activists, scholars, artists and journalists. Not only can the U.S. government keep their emails, phone calls and other activities under watch, but it can share that information with other governments – including governments that target and retaliate against anyone they view as a political dissenter. The result: a climate of fear, where people worry that their emails or phone calls could endanger themselves or anyone with whom they communicate.

Journalists

Journalists like Naomi Klein interview political activists around the world for articles that expose repressive governments and corporations.

“Some of my sources will decline to share information with me if they believe their communications are being monitored by the United States,” Klein wrote in a 2008 affidavit for the lawsuit Amnesty v. Clapper, which challenged U.S. surveillance law.

Klein said some of her sources feared that by communicating with her, they risked retaliation by the U.S. government – denials of visas or placement on a “watch list.”

More often, Klein said, these political activists feared “that the United State will share information about them...and that their own governments will retaliate as a result.”

Protesters

Protesters and activists around the world are vulnerable to U.S. spying on the content of their emails and Internet activity. That’s because U.S. law – under section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act – permits surveillance “to acquire foreign intelligence

information” of people reasonably believed to be outside the United States.

But the law does not require the government to demonstrate that surveillance targets are foreign agents, engaged in criminal activity, or connected even remotely with a designated “terrorist organization” or “terrorist.”

Surveillance need only be for the purpose of gathering “foreign intelligence information,” a term that’s so broadly defined that it can include any information that relates to U.S. “foreign affairs.” That could include emails about peaceful protests outside international meetings, human rights conferences, or activists’ meetings on just about any issue with a connection to U.S. foreign policy.

Artists

Mass surveillance like the kind authorized under current U.S. law creates a climate of fear, where creative thinking and expression are stunted.

As Chinese artist Ai Wei Wei put it: “When human beings are scared and feel everything is exposed to the government, we will censor ourselves from free thinking. That’s dangerous for human development.”

Ai Wei Wei was arrested in China in 2011 and detained without charge, but later released.

“Privacy is a basic human right, one of the very core values. There is no guarantee that China, the U.S. or any other government will not use the information falsely or wrongly,” he recently wrote.

Writers

Surveillance undermines freedom of expression by making people afraid to speak out or share their ideas – including writers and authors. A recent PEN America study found that 85% of its members who responded to the survey feared government surveillance. Nearly a quarter had deliberately avoided certain topics in phone or email conversations, and another 9 percent had seriously considered it.

As an open letter signed by Nobel laureates Orhan Pamuk, J.M. Coetze, and hundreds of other authors put it: “A person under surveillance is no longer free.”

Worshipers

Everyone has the right to associate freely – and without arbitrary government snooping.

But the U.S. government can use section 215 of the USA PATRIOT ACT to collect phone records of religious, political and activist organizations and their members – to learn who they are talking to, when and for how long. Collection of this “metadata” can create a chilling effect. As Rev. Rick Hoyt of the First Unitarian Church of Los Angeles, who joined a lawsuit, put it: “Our church members and our neighbors who come to us for help should not fear that their participation in the church might have consequences for themselves or their families. This spying makes people afraid to belong to our church community.”

You

If your emails, online chats or Skype calls mention a person or topic of “foreign intelligence” interest – say, Pussy Riot’s release or Pope Francis – they may be surveilled even if the U.S. government doesn’t believe you yourself have any “intelligence” value. That’s because section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act permits surveillance of emails and other communications about a target – not just those to or from a target. So if you aren’t a U.S. citizen or permanent resident – and even if you are – you are susceptible to surveillance based on your beliefs and interests. And we are still talking about spying without any notice, let alone a day in court to challenge these invasions of your right to privacy.

Mass surveillance threatens human rights and human dignity – that’s why we need President Obama to put human rights at the center of surveillance reform.

DEATH PENALTY NEWS

By Stevi Carroll

Justice or Revenge?

Michael Lee Wilson

January 9, 2014, Michael Lee Wilson said, “I feel my whole body burning” as he was executed with the drug pentobarbital. Since 2011, the Danish pharmaceutical company Lundbeck has refused to sell pentobarbital for use in US executions. This has caused authorities in states that execute to go to compounding pharmacies that will create the drug for executions. These pharmacies produce unregulated drugs that have less rigorous testing and may contain

contaminants that cause significant pain. Jerry Massie, the Oklahoma Department of Corrections spokesperson did not comment on the source of the pentobarbital used to kill Mr. Wilson.

Dennis McGuire

Now that the manufacturers of the drugs authorities in our penal system use to execute human beings will not sell the drugs to the State governments that execute, new drug combinations must be used. January 16, 2014, officials in Ohio put into practice a combination of the sedative midazolam and the painkiller hydromorphone. The eighth amendment of the US Bill of Rights tells us that agents of our government cannot inflict cruel and unusual punishments. These words are part of why those people in our country who support the death penalty and the officials they elect have fine tuned executions from the first execution on American soil of Captain George Kendall by firing squad in 1608, before we were the United States, to hangings to Sing-Sing’s Old Sparky and his buddy electric chairs first used in 1890 to the gas chamber beginning in the 1920s. Lethal injection was adopted as a more humane alternative thus assuring no cruel and unusual punishment.

Dennis McGuire’s execution on January 16th in Ohio calls this into question. Depending on the news source, Mr. McGuire’s death took from 15 to 26 minutes. During that time, “McGuire was still for almost five minutes, then emitted a loud snort, as if snoring, and continued to make that sound over the next several minutes. He also soundlessly opened and shut his mouth several times as his stomach rose and fell. ...A coughing sound was Dennis McGuire’s last apparent movement, at 10:43 a.m.” (Washington Post 1.16.14) This article goes on to say that “Attorneys for the state persuaded a judge that the Constitution does not entitle condemned prisoners to die painlessly, so long as the punishment is not cruel.”

Dennis McGuire’s adult children who were present at their father’s execution are filing a suit in federal court. What they saw were 19 minutes during which their father convulsed and appeared to gasp for air. His son said, “I watched his stomach heave, I watched him sit up against the straps on the gurney. I watched him try to breathe but it appeared to me he was suffocating.” His daughter said, “He was

gasping for air and his head kept coming up and he kept making horrible noises."

The lawsuit Mr. McGuire's family will file sometime during the week of January 20th could influence the death penalty in Ohio and throughout our nation.

Learn More About The Death Penalty

Laura Dimon published 'Chilling Testimony Of Death Row Executioners Casts Dark Shadow Over Entire System' on the website PolicyMic January 15, 2014. The article includes Texas's lack of public defenders for capital cases, a murder victim's mother's appeal to spare the killer, a chaplain's account of the distress the condemned feel after they are strapped to the gurney, and the toll on prison employees who take part in executions.

To read the article, go to <http://www.policymic.com/articles/78235/chilling-testimony-of-death-row-executioners-casts-dark-shadow-over-entire-system>.

2013: Fewer Executions

Prosecutors seem to be relying less on the death penalty and executions are fewer. While 39 executions nationwide may seem to me to be 39 too many, 2013 is only the second time in 19 years that the numbers been lower than 40. Texas led the pack with 16; Florida was a distant second with seven. Seven more states filled out the 39: Oklahoma-six; Ohio-three; Arizona and Missouri-two each; and Alabama, Georgia, and Virginia-one each.

Maryland became the 18th state to abolish the death penalty and was the sixth state to do so in the past six years. A 2013 study shows that only 2% of counties in the country are responsible for the majority of death penalty cases. These include: The top ten counties among the two percent of counties responsible for more than half of the nation's death row population are: Los Angeles County, CA; Harris County, TX; Philadelphia County, PA; Maricopa County, AZ; Riverside County, CA; Clark County, NV; Orange County, CA; Duval County, FL; Alameda County, CA; and San Diego County, CA.

The top ten counties among the two percent of counties responsible for over half of the executions since 1976 are: Harris County, TX; Dallas County, TX; Oklahoma County, OK; Tarrant County, TX; Bexar County, TX; Montgomery County, TX; Tulsa County, OK;

Jefferson County, TX; St. Louis County, MO; and Brazos County, TX. Just four counties in Texas (out of 254) account for almost half of all executions in the state. Three counties in California produce more than half of the state's death row - the largest in the country.

<http://deathpenaltyinfo.org/twopercent>

Hope may be on the horizon, but we in California have work to do.

Daniel Villegas

After nearly two decades in prison, Daniel Villegas has been exonerated. As a 16 year old, Mr. Villegas was arrested and charged in a drive-by shooting. While he was in custody, he was told that if he didn't confess, "he would be raped in prison and given the death penalty." That would be quite an offer for a 16-year-old high school dropout.

Mr. Villegas's supporters included people involved in 'The Innocence Project,' an advocacy organization from Northwest University Law School. Although Mr. Villegas is out of prison, the prosecuting attorneys will, within a week of his release in mid January, decide whether or not the case should go back to trial.

Upon his release, Mr. Villegas went to Pius X Catholic Church to celebrate and give thanks. Even as he is deciding what to do with the rest of his life, for now he is thankful. "Now I can just wake up when I wake up and I don't got to wake up at three in the morning for breakfast." Mr. Villegas is 37 years old.

Stays of Execution

December

3	Askari Muhammad*	Florida
17	Cecil Davis	Washington

January

15	Rigoberto Avila	Texas
15	Billy Ray Irick	Tennessee
16	Edgardo Cubas	Texas
	(Foreign National Honduras)	
22	Edgar Tamayo	Texas
	(Foreign National Mexico)	

Executions

December

3	Jerry Martin**	Texas
		1-drug pentobarbital

December

10 Ronald Lott Oklahoma
 3-drug w/ pentobarbital
 11 Allen Nicklasson Missouri
 1-drug pentobarbital
 17 Johnny Dale Black Oklahoma
 3-drug w/ pentobarbital

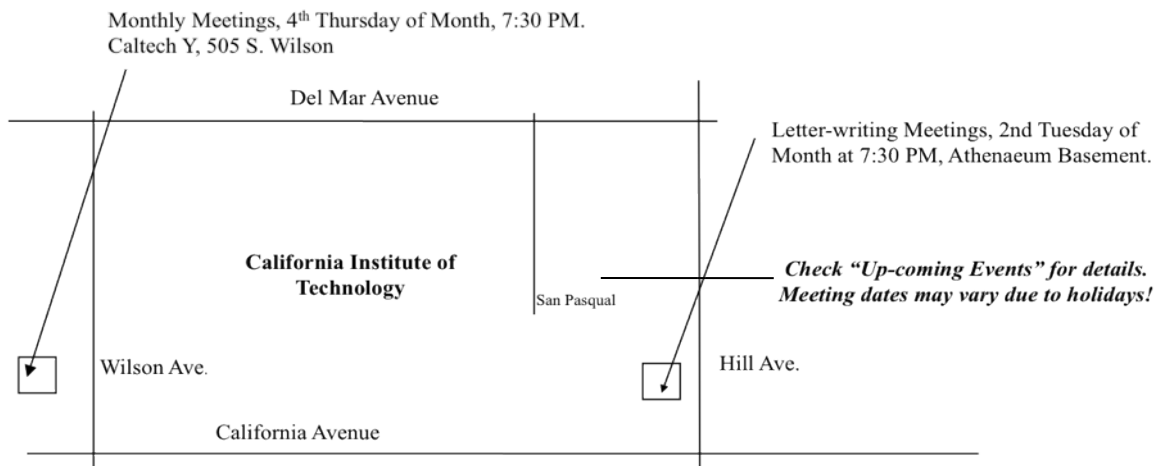
DECEMBER	
WRITE-A-THON LETTER COUNT	
POC	9
Write-a-Thon Cases	113

January

7 Askari Muhammand* Florida
 3-drug w/ midazolam hydrochloride
 9 Michael Wilson Oklahoma
 3-drug w/ pentobarbital
 16 Dennis McGuire Ohio
 2-drug midazolam & hydromorphone

JANUARY	
GROUP 22 MONTHLY LETTER COUNT	
POC	8
UAs	24
Total	32
To add your letters to the total contact	
lwkamp@gmail.com	

** volunteer- an inmate who waived ordinary appeals that remained at the time of his execution.



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.