

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, January 28, 8:00 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 9, 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 21, 6:30 PM. *Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion group.* This month we read **"The Moor's Account"** by Laila Lalami.

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi

Happy New Year to all! I can't believe it's 2016 already...

I'm glad to see that we're starting to get more rain to ease the drought.

As the area near Vroman's Bookstore becomes gentrified, we're sad to see the Mexican restaurant "La Fiesta Grande" relocate to South Pasadena. We usually go out to eat after the book group, alternating with "El Portal". (BTW, all are welcome to join us for the book group and/or meet for dinner afterwards, usually around 8 pm).

Amnesty's Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held in Miami April 1-3 2016. Click on this link to register and to see a preliminary agenda:

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/events/human-rights-conference-2016>

Con carino,

Kathy

RIGHTS READERS

Human Rights Book Discussion Group

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



Next Rights Readers meeting:

Sunday February 21, 6:30 PM

**Vroman's Bookstore
695 E. Colorado Blvd
Pasadena**

***The Moor's Account*
by Laila Lalami**

BOOK REVIEW

Kirkus Reviews Issue: Sept. 15th, 2014

Assured, lyrical imagining of the life of one of the first African slaves in the New World—a native, like Lalami (*Secret Son*, 2009, etc.), of Morocco and, like her, a gifted storyteller.

The Spanish called him Estebanico, a name bestowed on him after he was purchased from Portuguese traders. That datum comes several pages after he proudly announces his true name, "Mustafa ibn Muhammad ibn Abdussalam al-Zamori," and after he allows that some of the stories he is about to tell may or may not be quite true owing to the vagaries of memory and—well, the unlikelihood of the events he describes. The overarching event of this kind is, of course, the shipwreck that leaves him, with a body of Spanish explorers whose number will eventually be whittled down to three, to walk across much of what is now the American Southwest. Led by Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, "my rival storyteller," the quartet encounters wondrous things and people: cities of mud brick, maidens draped with turquoise, abundant "skins, amulets, feathers, copper bells," and always the promise of gold just beyond the horizon. They provide wonders in return: Estebanico is a source of exotic entertainment ("It was harmless fun to them, but to me it quickly grew tiresome"), while his fellow traveler Andrés Dorantes de Carranza sets broken bones and heals the sick. Lalami extends the stories delivered by Cabeza de Vaca himself in his *Naufragios*, which has been rendered in several English-language editions (e.g., *We Came Naked and Barefoot; Adventures in the Unknown Interior of America; Castaways*), but hers is certainly the most extensive telling of the tale from "the Moor's" point of view. As elusive

as gold, she tells us, is the promise of freedom for Estebanico, who provides the very definition of long-suffering. She has great fun, too, with the possibilities of a great historical mystery—namely, whatever became of him?

Adding a new spin to a familiar story, Lalami offers an utterly believable, entertainingly told alternative to the historical record. A delight.

AUTHOR BIO



Laila Lalami is the author of the novels *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*, which was a finalist for the Oregon Book Award; *Secret Son*, which was on the Orange Prize longlist, and *The Moor's Account*, which won the American Book Award, the Arab American Book Award, the

Hurston/Wright Legacy Award, and was on the Man Booker Prize longlist. *The Moor's Account* was also a finalist for the 2015 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. Her essays and opinion pieces have appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Washington Post*, *The Nation*, the *Guardian*, the *New York Times*, and in many anthologies. She is the recipient of a British Council Fellowship, a Fulbright Fellowship, and a Lannan Foundation Residency Fellowship and is currently a professor of creative writing at the University of California at Riverside.

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE Narges Mohammadi

By Alexi Daher

Update on Narges Mohammadi

Since our group adopted Narges Mohammadi last summer, an Individual-at-Risk from Iran, we've written letters on her behalf during our monthly letter-writing meetings and we've been seeking opportunities to get petitions signed whenever possible. We've been very fortunate to have Elise Auerbach as our co-group specialist on Iran. She's been great in providing updated information. Lately she proposed that we include, in conjunction to our work for

Narges, actions pertaining to the causes Narges fought for in Iran. If you recall Narges was imprisoned for her fight for human and women's rights. She also was very outspoken in her opposition to the death penalty of juvenile offenders. So, when our group adopts issues Narges spoke fiercely against, we continue her legacy in solidarity.

As we entered the New Year 2016, our group made a wonderful Amnesty connection with the International Narges Network, thanks to Jean Christophe, in Belgium. Narges' International Network includes Amnesty groups in Austria, Denmark, Norway, France, Sweden, UK, Group 139 in the US and now us! Isn't this exciting? The idea is for groups to share with one another their work on Narges' case, seek help in translation when needed, and work on actions together.

From Jean Christophe (Amnesty Belgium)

In December 2015, Taghi Rahmani (Narges's husband, exiled in Paris with their twin children) spoke at a conference. In an email received on Jan. 14, 2016, Jean-Christophe reported that the scheduled December trial for Narges did not happen and no new date has been set. This is reason for hope, as Narges was expected to face severe charges which would have been very difficult to change. In prison Narges does not regularly receive the medications she needs. This lack of medical support might be considered as a case in itself to request that Narges be released.

At this time, Jean-Christophe's group is working on getting an appointment with Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union For Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and vice-president of the European Commission, to urge her to speak to the Iranian authorities in favor of Narges.

Upcoming Events and Proposals

Three main projects, short and long term, have been proposed to the Network. Participating groups in projects 2 and/or 3 will inform the network. Our group will vote on project participation as well during our monthly meeting.

1. For the short term: **Letter Writing**
✓ **Date:** January 2016, on-going

- ✓ **What:** Write letters deliberately focusing on Narges being denied the medical support.
2. Upcoming **Iranian New Year, Nowruz** (Proposed by Jean-Christophe)
- ✓ **Date:** on or around March 21 2016
 - ✓ **What:** Take Group Pictures during monthly meeting, add 1 or 2 lines sentence. Jean Christophe will collect the group pictures and notes. Pictures will be addressed to Narges herself. He will insure it gets to her.

Nowruz Action 2

- ✓ **Date:** During Letter-Writing meeting, March 21 2016
- ✓ **What:** Generate cards to POCs in Iran and their families through the Nowruz action every year.

Nowruz Action 3 (proposed by me)

- ✓ **Date:** March 2016
- ✓ **Location:** TBD
- ✓ **What:** Amnesty International's **Iran Action Circle** in Pasadena. Celebrate to mark the Iranian New Year. Guests treated to delicious Iranian food, refreshments, awareness raising presentations and more. Share the festive spirit of Nowruz, welcome the spring, and remember to take action on the grave human rights abuses going on in Iran.

3. Long Term Project: A Vigil for **Narges** (Proposed by me)

- ✓ **Date:** Thursday April 21, on Narges' Birthday
- ✓ **What:** Vigil and Action towards media in collaboration with other groups. We will discuss a plan of action during our monthly meeting and propose to the Network.

Group 22 Legislative Efforts

I invite our group members to participate in lobbying our elected officials this year. Legislative efforts include establishing contact and meeting with our Congresswoman Judy

Chu. Members interested in getting involved in legislative work please let me know.

I look forward to keeping you abreast with work our group will be doing with the International Narges Network. We are onto a great start!

DEATH PENALTY NEWS

By Stevi Carroll

“Capital punishment has not, in a single state, proven to be a deterrent to capital crime. ... Society consists of human beings who make mistakes. There are those who are, occasionally, negligent, and some who are even dishonest or unethical. We are faced with the troubling fact that if we, as a society, err in a capital case, the sentence is irreversible.”

From *The Denver Post*: Pete Lister- retired corrections officer and military veteran

We're Off To The Races

You might be one of those lucky people who did know how much the Powerball was worth and somehow do not know who The Donald, Cruz, Rubio (and the rest of the Rep gang), Hillary, and Bernie are, but I doubt it.

Here in the Golden State we may be faced with dueling ballot measures to allow the good people of California to let the rest of the world know what we believe about the State killing of people. One would lessen the time between conviction and execution by shortening the appeals process. The other would abolish the death penalty.

Once again, Mike Farrell and Death Penalty Focus with the help of other organizations, like Amnesty International, are going to attempt to have the Department of Corrections move from the death penalty to life without possibility of parole and thus abolish the death penalty.

I've been in the 'I'm moving, now I'm on a trip, oh yeah, the holidays are here again, and now I'm back to work and the gym' mode for the past couple of months. By February, I am hopeful we will know how we can walk our abolition talk.

What's The Reward For Lost Years Behind Bars?

The coffers of LA are twenty-four million dollars lighter. Kash Delano Register spent 34 years in prison for a murder he didn't commit. His cash reward: \$16.7 million. Bruce Lisker was a 'guest of the State' for 26 years. His award: \$7.6 million. Both believe the detectives in their cases "ignored evidence of their innocence and fabricated evidence of their guilt."

While Mr. Register and Mr. Lisker cannot get their decades spent in prison back, and the real murderers in these cases have been free and among us, the LA city lawyers are worried about the police misconduct allegations that may come from this case. According to an article in the LA Times, "taking the cases to trial could be even more financially devastating."

To read more on this story, go to <http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-wrongful-convictions-20160119-story.html>.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Martin Luther King, Jr. and I got to share this beautiful planet for a little over 20 years, and for this, I am forever grateful. As hard as it might be for anyone to remember, MLK talked about more than his 'Dream'. The March on Washington August 18, 1963, was called *The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom*. Dr. King understood the impact of inequality not only for drinking fountains, the vote, and education but also for employment - social justice as well as racial justice.

We forget that June 4, 1967, Dr. King gave his *Beyond Vietnam* speech in which he shone the spotlight of injustice on the Vietnam War. He knew *We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools*. I often wonder what our national racial and class attitudes would be today if Dr. King had not been shot to death. And I am confident he would have worked for the abolition of the death penalty in the United States, and around the world.

... "in his sermon 'Loving Your Enemies,' Dr. King preached a philosophy that had no room for capital retribution: 'Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence, and toughness multiplies toughness in

a descending spiral of destruction.'" (from *Death Penalty Information*)

Exonerations

Note: As you read the exonerations, please hold in mind Cameron Todd Willingham, executed February 17, 2004. He, like Amaury Villalobos, William Vasquez, and Raymond Mora, Han Tak Lee, and Davey Reedy, was very likely innocent.

Donovan Allen

State: WA

Date of Exoneration: 12/1/2015

In 2002, Donovan Allen was sentenced to life in prison without parole for the murder of his mother in Longview, Washington. Allen was exonerated in 2015 after DNA tests implicated the victim's nephew as the killer.

Floyd Bledsoe

State: KS

Date of Exoneration: 12/8/2015

Floyd Bledsoe was sentenced to life in prison in 2000 in Jefferson County, Kansas for the sexual assault and murder of his 14-year-old sister-in-law. He was exonerated in 2015 when DNA testing linked his brother to the crime.

Amaury Villalobos

State: NY

Date of Exoneration: 12/16/2015

Amaury Villalobos (left), William Vasquez and Raymond Mora were sentenced to 25 years to life for setting a fire that killed a mother and her five children in Brooklyn in 1980. In 2015, they were exonerated (Mora posthumously) after the fire was shown to have been an accident and a witness who identified them recanted.

Han Tak Lee

State: PA

Date of Exoneration: 12/17/2015

Han Tak Lee was sentenced to life in prison without parole for setting a fire that killed his daughter in Pennsylvania in 1989. He was exonerated in 2015 after fire expert John Lentini demonstrated that forensic evidence did not support the theory that the fire was intentionally set.

Marvin Roberts

State: AK

Date of Exoneration: 12/18/2015

Marvin Roberts (left), Kevin Pease, George Frese and Eugene Vent, who became known as the Fairbanks Four, were convicted and sentenced to decades in prison for a 1997 murder in

Fairbanks, Alaska. They were exonerated in 2015 after the real killers were identified.

Davey Reedy

State: VA

Date of Exoneration: 12/22/2015

In 1989, Davey Reedy was sentenced to life in prison for setting a fire that killed his two children in Roanoke, Virginia. Reedy was pardoned in 2015 after advances in fire science established that the forensic evidence on which his conviction was based did not suggest arson. (source: The National Registry of Exonerations - <http://www.law.umich.edu/special/exoneration>)

“ When we, society, wrongfully convict someone, whether through malfeasance or neglect, or whether the technology extant at time of trial was insufficient to prove innocence, then we, society, have a responsibility to release him, to publicly acknowledge the error, and allow that citizen to move past the horror that we, society, have inflicted. How do we do that after we’ve put him to death?”

from *The Denver Post*: Pete Lister- retired corrections officer and military veteran

Stays of Execution*

January

14	Jason McGehee~	AR
14	Kenneth Williams~	AR
19	Gerald Watkins	PA
21	Ronald Phillips ^^	OH
21	Jeffery Wogenstahl^	OH
22	Andre Station	PA

Executions

December 2015

9 Brian Keith Terrell GA
Lethal Injection: 1-drug (pentobarbital)

January 2016

7 Oscar Ray Bolin Jr FL Lethal
Injection: 3-drug (midazolam)
20 Richard Masterson TX
Lethal Injection: 1-drug (pentobarbital)
21 Christopher Brooks AL
Lethal Injection: 3-drug (midazolam)

~ On October 8, the Arkansas Circuit Court granted a temporary restraining order staying all eight scheduled executions so that already pending judicial review of the state's execution procedures could take place.

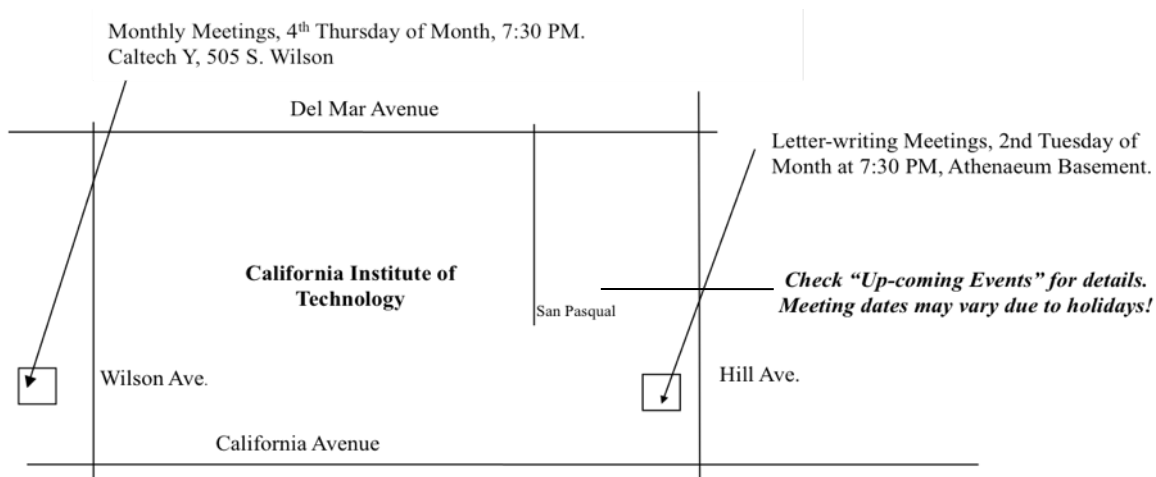
^^ On October 19, 2015 the Ohio Department of Corrections issued a statement that Gov. Kasich granted reprieves postponing all executions that the state had scheduled in 2016. Ohio has been

unable to obtain the execution drugs required to conduct executions under state law. All execution dates have been rescheduled by the state.

^On January 30, 2015, the Ohio State Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections announced that it would postpone all of the six executions scheduled in 2015 to that point. All of these executions would be scheduled in 2016 to allow time for the state to obtain new drugs for lethal injections. The new drugs that Ohio announced it would be trying to obtain were sodium thiopental and pentobarbital.

WRITE FOR RIGHTS (DECEMBER) GROUP 22 LETTER COUNT	
Girls Forced into Marriage	
BURKINO FASO	8
Fred and Yves	
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO	8
Teodora del Carmen Vasquez	
EL SALVADOR	8
Costas	
GREECE	7
Saman Naseem	
IRAN	8
Zunar	
MALAYSIA	9
Yecenia Armenta	
MEXICO	11
Phyoe Phyoe Aung	
MYANMAR	9
Waleed Abu Al-Khair	
SAUDI ARABIA	7
Rania Alabbasi and Her Children	
SYRIA	9
Albert Woodfox	
USA	12
Muhammad Bekzhanov	
UZBEKISTAN	9
TOTAL	105

GROUP 22 JANUARY LETTER COUNT	
UAs (IRAN)	11
UA (DP USA)	5
Other UAs	18
Total	34
To add your letters to the total contact aigp22@caltech.edu	



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.