

UPCOMING EVENTS

NO MONTHLY MEETING FOR DECEMBER DUE TO HOLIDAYS.

Saturday, December 9, 11:00 – 3:00, WRITE FOR RIGHTS. *Human Rights Day letter writing marathon* at Dog Haus Biergarten, 93 E. Green St., Pasadena. Drop by to write a few letters and enjoy the food. (This event replaces our usual Tuesday letter writing for December.)

Sunday, December 10, 4:00 PM. *Holiday Potluck & Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion Group.* This month we read **"On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century"** by Timothy Snyder.

NOTE: This month our book group meeting is combined with a holiday potluck and will be held at Joyce's house in Montrose. For information, email aigp22@caltech.edu or phone 818-249-4056 and leave a voicemail.

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi everyone,
This is Joyce, substituting for Kathy this month.

You're invited to celebrate International Human Rights Day with Group 22 all weekend Dec. 9-10! On Saturday you can write for rights and on Sunday come to my house for a holiday potluck and book group discussion.

People seemed to enjoy the Dog Haus at last year's event – something welcoming about those long tables in the outdoor patio – so we decided to return this year. As usual, we will provide case information sheets, writing materials, and postage. You can learn about the ten cases featured in Amnesty's 2017 campaign at <https://write.amnestyusa.org>.

Hope to see you at one or both events!
Joyce

BOOK REVIEW

'On Tyranny' by Timothy Snyder

Carlos Lozada

The Washington Post

[www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/books/ct-review-on-tyranny-by-timothy-snyder-20170227-story.html]

The early cautions that **Donald Trump** could become an American strongman, trampling our sad checks and loser balances, came in the late spring of last year - and they were both dire and a bit conflicted.

"Trump is an extinction-level event" for American democracy, Andrew Sullivan declared in New York magazine, even while wondering if he was overreacting. And Washington Post columnist Robert Kagan's broadside, "This is how fascism comes to America," was as much an attack on a feckless **Republican Party** for falling in line behind Trump's nomination as a surefire prediction of what was to be.

Now, nine months later, the warnings have become more specific and resigned, and thus even more believable. Trump may attract scorn and ridicule - think of the late-night jokes, low approval ratings and all that #NotMyPresident stuff - but he elicits ever stronger fears of homegrown authoritarianism. In the latest Atlantic, David Frum paints a plausible landscape of American illiberalism circa 2020, when voting is harder, self-censorship is rampant, Congress is submissive, graft is pervasive and truth is ever hazier. This is the gradual eclipse of liberty, "not by diktat and violence, but by the slow, demoralizing process of corruption and deceit," he writes.

Historian Timothy Snyder does not offer a corrective to the pessimism of this genre - he is a scholar of the **Holocaust**, after all - but begins to illuminate a path forward from it. "On Tyranny" is a slim book that fits alongside your pocket Constitution and feels only slightly less vital. Steeped in the history of interwar Germany and the horrors that followed, Snyder still writes with bracing immediacy, providing 20 plain and mostly actionable lessons on preventing, or at least forestalling, the repression of lives and minds.

Don't count Snyder among the American-exceptionalism crowd, at least not as the concept is usually understood. "Americans today are no wiser than the Europeans who saw democracy yield to fascism, Nazism, or communism in the twentieth century," he writes. "Our one advantage is that we might learn from their experience." The U.S. political system, he notes, was designed "to mitigate the consequences of our real imperfections, not to celebrate our imaginary perfection."

The author dwells on "the politics of the everyday" to show the small ways people succumb to or fend off the encroachment of tyranny. Much of the initial power granted to nondemocratic leaders is given

Next Rights Readers Meeting

Sunday, Dec. 10, 4:00 PM

Holiday Potluck at private home in Montrose

On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century

by Timothy Snyder

ON TYRANNY

TWENTY LESSONS
FROM THE
TWENTIETH CENTURY

TIMOTHY SNYDER

freely, via "heedless acts of conformity," long before popular docility is requested or required. Snyder recalls how, when Hitler threatened to invade Austria, regular Austrian citizens looked on, or joined in, as local Nazis detained Austrian Jews or stole their property. "Anticipatory obedience is a political tragedy," the author writes.

The early days of the Trump presidency have seen acts of subversion by civil servants, including damaging leaks and social-media rebellions, signaling opposition to particular policies or actions by the new administration. Snyder emphasizes that the professional classes - civil servants as well as doctors, lawyers and businesspeople - bear special responsibility when individual freedoms are at risk. "It is hard to subvert a rule-of-law state without lawyers, or to hold show trials without judges," he writes. "Authoritarians need obedient civil servants, and concentration camp directors seek businessmen interested in cheap labor."

Professional associations, with their codes of ethics, best practices and collective voices, can command attention, creating "forms of ethical conversation that are impossible between a lonely individual and a distant government," Snyder explains.

That hardly means there is no role for that lonely individual. Snyder devotes several of his lessons to the power of small decisions in the face of eroding democracy. "The minor choices we make are themselves a kind of vote," he argues. "Our words and gestures, or their absence, count very much."

Make eye contact and small talk with strangers, he encourages; it is part of being a citizen. ("People who were living in fear of repression remembered how their neighbors treated them," Snyder writes.) Defend American institutions and civil society groups by joining them, advocating for them or even supporting them financially, Snyder urges. ("Institutions do not protect themselves.") Beware of loyalty symbols - be it a sticker or armband, or even a hat, I imagine - however innocuous they seem, because they are often used to exclude. ("When everyone else follows the same logic, the public sphere is covered with signs of loyalty, and resistance becomes unthinkable.")

And then there's this ominously concise suggestion: "Make sure you and your family have passports."

Snyder points to clear and recognizable actions that a leader or a party can take to suffocate freedom - such as exploiting terrorist attacks to curtail individual liberties or enabling the rise of pro-government paramilitary forces - but he is especially attuned to the abuses of language. Showing no compunction in going there, Snyder compares the rhetoric of the Führer and the Donald to highlight phrasing that serves the interests of the leader and no one else:

"Hitler's language rejected legitimate opposition: The people always meant some people and not others (the president uses the word in this way), encounters

were always struggles (the president says winning) and any attempt by free people to understand the world in a different way was defamation of the leader (or, as the president puts it, libel)."

Snyder warns against the treacherous use of patriotic expressions and the mindless repetition of political catchphrases, whether in the news media or from the government. "Think up your own way of speaking," he challenges readers. "When we repeat the same words and phrases that appear in the daily media, we accept the absence of a larger framework," and permit a narrowing of vocabulary and thought that only empowers the strongman.

The popular understanding and interpretations of Trump are dominated by his words and phrases - "Sad!" "Fake news!" - and by his use of those words to rouse supporters, identify opponents and distort verifiable reality. "To abandon facts is to abandon freedom," Snyder writes. "If nothing is true, then all is spectacle." And Trump thrives on spectacle; indeed, his rise has been based on it.

A leader's constant repetition of "shamanistic incantations," as Snyder puts it, and the people's misplaced faith in an oracular strongman over evidence and reason - these are ways truth begins to fade. Throughout history, despots have "despised the small truths of daily existence, loved slogans that resonated like a new religion, and preferred creative myths to history or journalism."

And that elevation of mythology over truth has consequences. "Post-truth," Snyder writes, "is pre-fascism."

To break free of the incantations, we must loosen the hold that our televisions and phones have over us, Snyder argues. "Get the screens out of your room and surround yourself with books," he urges, like the good academic that he is. "The characters in Orwell's and Bradbury's books could not do this - but we still can."

It is not an entirely persuasive course, as if television and online debates did not have the power to introduce new ideas or vital reporting into public circulation. In fact, this very book - easily the most compelling volume among the resistance literature emerging in response to Trump - took inspiration from a November 2016 Facebook post by the author.

Perhaps the greatest contribution in Snyder's clarifying and unnerving work is buried in its epilogue, and it shows the slippery intellectual path from freedom to tyranny. After the Cold War, he writes, we were enthralled by the politics of inevitability, the notion that history moved inexorably toward liberal democracy. So we lowered our defenses. Now, instead, we are careening toward the politics of eternity, in which a leader rewrites our past as "a vast misty courtyard of illegible monuments to national victimhood." Inevitability was like a coma; eternity is like hypnosis.

"The danger we now face is of a passage from the politics of inevitability to the politics of eternity, from a naive and flawed sort of democratic republic to a confused and cynical sort of fascist oligarchy," Snyder concludes. "The path of least resistance leads directly from inevitability to eternity."

A possible detour from that path may be found in "On Tyranny," a memorable work that is grounded in history yet imbued with the fierce urgency of what now.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Timothy Snyder is the Levin Professor of History at Yale University and the author of the books *On Tyranny*, *Black Earth*, and *Bloodlands*. His work has received the literature award of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Hannah Arendt Prize, and the Leipzig Book Prize for European Understanding. He lives in New Haven, Connecticut.

[www.penguinrandomhouse.com/authors/246064/timothy-snyder]

DEATH PENALTY NEWS

By Stevi Carroll

Governor Brown Pardons Craig Coley

Let's all think back to our lives 39 years ago. Craig Coley was a night manager at a restaurant. Rhonda Wicht and her son, Donald, were murdered. After Mr. Coley's first trial ended in a hung jury, a second trial found him guilty of the murders. He is the son of a retired Los Angeles policeman. And he'd been dating Ms Wicht for two years. Some of the witnesses at his trial said he was like a 'second father' to Donald.

Mr. Coley's case was reopened in October 2016 after a retired detective raised concerns about it. This caused investigators to look into it where they found that a key piece of evidence used to convict him 'contained others' DNA, but not his' (Mr. Coley's).

After 39 years, Mr. Coley has been pardoned of the crime. In his statement following the pardon, Governor Brown wrote, "The grace with which Mr. Coley has endured this lengthy and unjust incarceration is extraordinary. It is my hope that

any and all individuals responsible for the murder of Rhonda and Donald Wicht are brought to justice."

In a joint statement released by Simi Valley Police Chief David Livingstone and Ventura County District Attorney Gregory D. Totten, they said, "This case is tragic. An innocent woman and a small child were murdered. Craig Coley has spent 39 years in custody for a crime he likely did not commit. The real murderer or murderers have not been brought to justice."

Fortunately, Mr. Coley was not sentenced to death.

California and the Death Penalty

Yes, the death penalty is operative in California. But what to use to kill people is still up in the air. Governor Jerry Brown's administration has yet to finalize what drug protocol the State will use. While the Governor personally opposes the death penalty, he has a history of enforcing it when he was attorney general.

Some advocates of the death penalty thought executions would resume by the end of the year, but that now seems unlikely. Resumption may be a year away, but it is coming right along. Michele Hanisee, president of the Association of Deputy District Attorneys for L.A. County believes the finalization of the lethal injection protocol will be by January. Regarding executions, Dean Erwin Chemerinsky of the UC Berkeley law school said, "it is just a matter of time."

We may remember that Governor George Ryan commuted the death sentences of all of Illinois' condemned inmates, but Governor Brown is unable to do this unilaterally. The California Constitution requires him to have the support of the California Supreme Court for inmates with multiple felony convictions on their records. Lawyers estimate that at least half of all people on death row have committed two felonies. Four of the seven California Supreme Court justices would be needed to commute sentences for those inmates. Whether Governor Brown would have enough support for the commutation for those on death row is uncertain.

Etomidate

In August when Florida executed Mark James Asay with a new drug, etomidate, I somehow missed that this drug was being used. I think this may be because it was used in a three-drug cocktail: etomidate, an anesthetic; rocuronium

bromide, a paralytic; and potassium acetate, a heart stopper. Etomidate replaces midazolam, which became difficult to get because drug companies didn't want it used in executions.

Even though I tried to find out what drugs were used in Patrick C Hannon's execution, I've found no information except for the detail at Death Penalty Information Center. What I wonder is if Mr. Hannon was killed using only etomidate. If so, will etomidate join other single drug execution protocols?

A New Book

Deadly Justice - A Statistical Portrait of the Death Penalty by Frank R. Baumgartner, Marty Davidson, Kaneesha R. Johnson, Arvind Krishnamurthy, and Colin P. Wilson

In their new book, [Deadly Justice: A Statistical Portrait of the Death Penalty](#), a team of researchers led by University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill political science professor Frank Baumgartner uses forty years of empirical data to assess whether the modern death penalty avoids the defects that led the U.S. Supreme Court to declare in *Furman v. Georgia* (1972) that the nation's application of capital punishment was unconstitutionally arbitrary and capricious. Their conclusion: "A reasoned assessment based on the facts suggests not only that the modern system flunks the *Furman* test but that it surpasses the historical death penalty in the depth and breadth of the flaws apparent in its application." *Deadly Justice* explores an enormous range of issues—including, among others, racial, gender, and geographical bias, innocence, deterrence, mental health, childhood abuse, length of time on death row, reversal rates, and execution methods—to determine whether the death penalty is fairly and proportionally applied and reserved for the "worst of the worst." Reviewing the data, Baumgartner *et al.* find that the modern death penalty "is it just as arbitrary, just as biased, and just as flawed as the pre-*Furman* system." Worse yet, they write, "it has added to these flaws increased levels of geographical focus on the South, even more concentration in just a few jurisdictions, astronomical financial costs unimagined in the earlier period, average periods of delay now measured in the decades, odds of reversal well over 50 percent, routine and often successful last-minute legal maneuvering even while the inmate is in the execution room and has been prepared to be executed, and a medicalization paradox that was

not even imagined in the pre-*Furman* period." In an interview with the *Houston Chronicle*, Baumgartner says "[t]he key driver in the system" is not the frequency of homicides or the nature of the murder but "the choices that district attorneys make.... There's really no rhyme or reason to it." He says the biggest change in public opinion began in the 1990s as evidence began to mount that "there might be innocent people on death row. ... The innocence argument has really shaken people's faith that you can count on the government to get it right every single time. ... The system is so tied up in knots, partly because of the concern of executing an innocent person. It's really hard to justify or have enthusiasm about a system so dysfunctional as the current modern death penalty, even if you're a prosecutor."

This review is from Death Penalty Information Center <https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/>
Posted: November 27, 2017

Recent Exonerations

Evin King - State: OH - Date of Exoneration: 10/17/2017

In 1995, Evin King was sentenced to 15 years to life in prison for the murder of his girlfriend in Cleveland, Ohio. He was exonerated by DNA testing in 2017.

Steven Odiase - State: NY - Date of Exoneration: 10/25/2017

In 2013, Steven Odiase was sentenced to 25 years to life in prison for second-degree murder in the Bronx, New York. He was exonerated in 2017 when a previously undisclosed witness statement came to light that identified a different person as the shooter.

Kerry Masterson - State: IL - Date of Exoneration: 11/2/2017

In 2011, Kerry Masterson was sentenced to 58 years in prison for murder in Chicago, Illinois. She was granted a new trial and acquitted in 2017 based on evidence showing that the real killers falsely implicated her and three eyewitnesses had mistakenly identified her.

Keith Mitchell - State: IL - Date of Exoneration: 11/6/2017

In 1995, Keith Mitchell was sentenced to 30 years in prison for a murder and assaults that occurred in Chicago, Illinois when he was 15 years old. He was exonerated in 2017 by evidence that detectives fabricated his confession.

Arthur Brown - State: IL - Date of Exoneration: 11/14/2017

In 1990, Arthur Brown was sentenced to life in prison after falsely confessing to an arson that killed two people in Chicago, Illinois. He was exonerated in 2017 after another man confessed to setting the fire, and evidence showed that police forced Brown to sign a fabricated confession, testified falsely about it, and coerced a witness to lie.

Jose Maysonet - State: IL - Date of Exoneration: 11/15/2017

In 1995, Jose Maysonet was sentenced to life in prison without parole for a double murder in Chicago, Illinois. He was exonerated in 2017 by evidence that he falsely confessed to a detective who repeatedly beat and tortured him during a 17-hour interrogation.

Stays of Execution

November

9 Jack Greene AR

Stay granted by the Arkansas Supreme Court on November 7, 2017 on petition raising issue related to Arkansas procedures for determining competency to be executed.

14 Scott Dozier NV

Stay granted by the Clark County District Court on November 9, 2017 to permit the prosecution to appeal its ruling barring the use of a paralytic drug in Nevada's execution protocol.

15 Alva Campbell OH

Gov. John Kasich called off the execution on November 15, 2017 after personnel of the Ohio Department of Corrections failed five times to find a suitable vein to insert an intravenous execution line.

15 Larry Swearingen TX **Stay granted by trial court** on October 27, 2017 because of clerk's error in serving notice of execution.

December

1 Bobby Wayne Stone SC

Legally premature death warrant. The death warrant was issued before Stone had been provided habeas corpus review to which he is entitled as a matter of federal law. **Stay granted by the U.S. District Court for the District of South Carolina** on November 21, 2017 to permit Stone to pursue federal habeas review of his conviction and death sentence.

14 Juan Castillo TX

Stay granted by the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals on November 28, 2017 and evidentiary hearing ordered on Castillo's claim that his conviction and sentence were obtained with false or perjured testimony from a prison informant.

Executions

November

8 Patrick C Hannon FL
Lethal Injection - 3-drug (etomidate) -
Years from sentencing to execution: 26

8 Ruben Ramirez Cardenas TX
Lethal Injection - 1-drug (Pentobarbital) -
Years from sentencing to execution: 19

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE
Narges Mohammadi
By Joyce Wolf

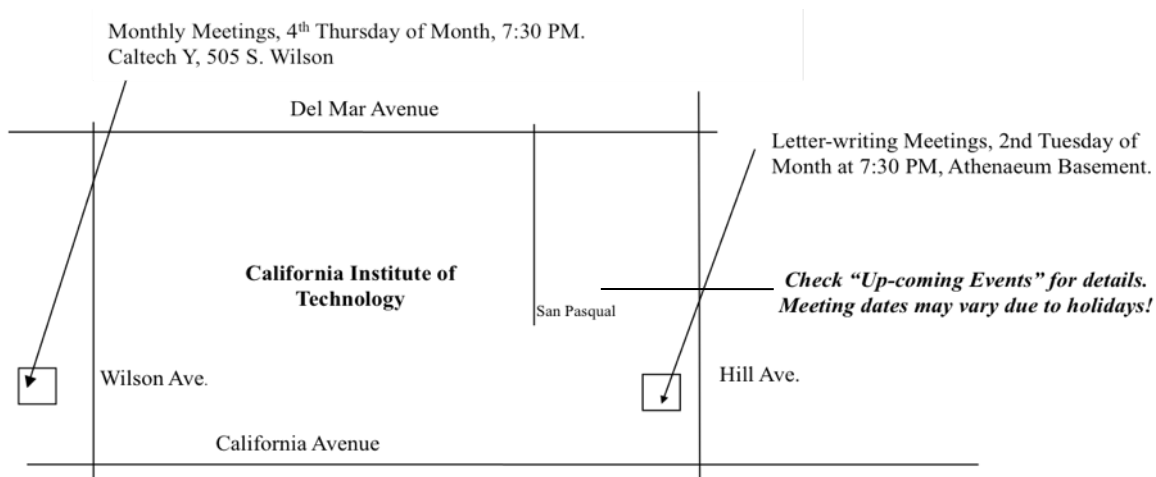
Group 22's adopted prisoner of conscience Narges Mohammadi continues her activism in prison. The Center for Human Rights in Iran reported that she recently called on members of Iran's Parliament to end solitary confinement of prisoners:

"As a defender of human rights who has been tortured by this practice, I consider it my duty to take every opportunity to express my protest against solitary confinement, the suffering victims of which I continue to see in Evin Prison," wrote Narges Mohammadi in a letter from the prison where she is serving a 16-year sentence for peacefully advocating for human rights.

<https://www.iranhumanrights.org/2017/10/narges-mohammadi-calls-on-mps-to-end-the-illegal-torture-of-solitary-confinement-in-irans-prisons/>

Group 22 will continue our work for Narges. We'll make sure to write some letters for her at our Write For Rights event this month.

GROUP 22 NOVEMBER LETTER COUNT	
UAs	24
Petitions (POC and Gao Zhisheng)	2
Total	26



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.