

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Tuesday, September 11, 7:30-9:00 PM. Letter writing meeting** at Caltech Athenaeum, corner of Hill and California in Pasadena. In the summer we meet outdoors at the "Rath al Fresco," on the lawn next to the building. This informal gathering is a great way for newcomers to get acquainted with Amnesty.

**Sunday, September 16, 6:30 PM. Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion Group.** This month we read "Notes on a Foreign Country" by Suzy Hansen.

**Thursday, September 27, 7:30-9:00 PM. Monthly Meeting** at Caltech Y, 505 S. Wilson.

## COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hello all

Writing this on Rob's computer, as mine doesn't seem to want to work anymore... Summer is almost over, back to work and school. Hope everyone has had a relaxing time off.

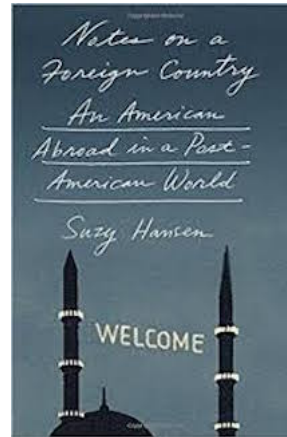
Right now I'm reading *Crazy Rich Asians*, set in Singapore...which is described as foodie heaven. How about a food outing there, eh?! The descriptions of the various noodle dishes and curries etc are mouthwatering, also the desserts. A mixture of Chinese, Malay, Indonesian and Filipino cuisines...nothing human rights themed in this book, just pure fun! (sorry Martha!)

We watch with interest the trials of Trump associate Manafort and the president's attorney Michael Cohen. Could this (finally) be the beginning of the end?

Sad to hear of John McCain's death from brain cancer yesterday. You may not have agreed with some of his politics, but he was a rarity in Washington -- someone with integrity, courage, and in the end, nobility. (I was a fan and considered voting for him in 2008 but for his VP pick lol)

Welcome to new attendees at our various activities and to long time member Veronica who has retired and has more time to devote to AI and other activities. Congratulations, Veronica. I will be joining you either this year or the next.

Con cariño,  
Kathy



**Next Rights Readers Meeting**

**Sunday, September 16  
6:30 PM**

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

**Notes on a Foreign  
Country**

**by Suzy Hansen**

## REVIEW

By Hisham Matar

Aug. 28, 2017

[[www.nytimes.com/2017/08/28/books/review/notes-on-a-foreign-country-suzy-hansen.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/28/books/review/notes-on-a-foreign-country-suzy-hansen.html)]

**NOTES ON A FOREIGN COUNTRY: An American Abroad in a Post-American World**  
**By Suzy Hansen**

When I was 12 years old, living in Cairo, my parents enrolled me in the American school. Most of the Americans there appeared oddly stifled, determined to remain, if not physically then sentimentally, back in the United States. It seemed particularly inconvenient that they had ended up in an Arab country. The school's architecture and grounds did all they could to remedy this. Even the urinals and hand dryers had been shipped from America. It was as though they believed, as Suzy Hansen observes in her remarkably revealing book, "Notes on a Foreign Country: An American Abroad in a Post-American World," that "as you went east, life degraded into the past."

This was in the early 1980s, before the two Gulf wars and the "war on terror," and yet even back then I wondered whether to be an American in the world was to be limited by a sort of imaginative obstacle. This is what concerns Hansen. According to her, the situation has gotten worse. "We cannot," she writes, "go abroad as Americans in the 21st century and not realize that the main thing that has been terrorizing us ... is our own ignorance — our blindness and subsequent discovery of all the people on whom the empire-that-was-not-an-empire had been constructed without our attention or concern."

Born and raised in New Jersey, Hansen became a journalist (she is a contributing writer for *The Times Magazine*), moved to New York and, after September 11 — when Americans, as she puts it, “had all lost their marbles” — moved to Istanbul. Her book is a deeply honest and brave portrait of an individual sensibility reckoning with her country’s violent role in the world. In the period between 9/11 and the election of President Trump, she lives in Turkey and travels to Greece, Egypt, Afghanistan, Iran and the Mississippi Delta. She uses these places, their complex histories and fraught present, as lenses through which to look at her own nation.

Hansen is not only unnerved by but also genuinely interested in the ways her country fails to “interrogate” itself. She asks why, given the extent to which America has shaped the modern Middle East — the lives it ended, the countries it fractured, the demons it created, its frantic and fanatical support of Israel — it “did not feel or care to explore what that influence meant.” She is unsettled by how absent or illusive or, worse, unnecessary this fact is to many Americans, including herself — for, before anything else, “*Notes on a Foreign Country*” is a sincere and intelligent act of self-questioning. It is a political and personal memoir that negotiates that vertiginous distance that exists between what America is and what it thinks of itself. That dramatic, dizzying and lonesome chasm is Hansen’s terrain.

One of the causes of this disparity, she proposes, is that “Americans are surprised by the direct relationship between their country and foreign ones because we don’t acknowledge that America is an empire.” She is curious about the nature of the impediment, about how “ignorance is vulnerable to the atmosphere it is exposed to.” Without realizing it, she too had absorbed a fear of Islam and the idea that Muslims “were people that must be restrained.” She admits, “My problem was that not only had I not known much about the Middle East, but what I *did* know, and how I *did* think, had been an obstacle to original and accurate and moral thinking.”

Hansen is doing something both rare and necessary; she is tracing the ways in which we are all born into histories, into national myths and, if we are unfortunate enough, into the fantasies of an empire. She traces the ways in which “Americans were in active denial of their empire even as they laid its foundations.” She is interested in and does well to expose the

machinery — the propaganda, the economic authoritarianism, the military might, the manipulative diplomacy, the myriad aid agencies and NGOs — that made this possible. She also shows the ways in which America, in its anti-Communist craze, has consistently supported the religious right in the Middle East and aided the rise of Islamic extremism. Hansen wants to uncover the lie, and this, of course, is both dangerous and hopeful, for as much as this book is a lament — what its author calls “a study in American ignorance” — it is also a plea.

The tone is at once adamant and intimate. This is a book that is spoken softly rather than screamed; and one senses that it took great personal discipline to be so. In fact, what is admirable is the extent to which Hansen implicates herself. She does this soberly and without self-pity. She is, to herself, independent but by no means innocent. The “foreign country” of the title is to be interpreted in different ways: as the writer’s adopted country, Turkey; as her homeland, America, made new and unfamiliar by the journey she has taken; and, perhaps most poignantly, as the existential place she finds herself in relation to the present and the history that has led to it. She takes James Baldwin’s words (he is as close as she gets to having a guide through this difficult landscape) and turns them on to herself, asking: “I ran the plantations, and I owned the slaves, and I lashed the whip — for everything?”

Strangely though, and as “un-American” as this book might seem, “*Notes on a Foreign Country*” is in fact a very American book. It is interested in personal transformation; it is both a record of conversion — “Once you realize that the way you have looked at the world has been muddled, you begin a process of shedding layers of skin” — and an optimistic attempt to convert. Because, as she writes, no one tells Americans that they will spend their first months abroad “feeling superior to everyone around them and to the nation in which they now have the privilege to live.” Hansen wants to be the one to tell them.

The problem, however — and it is a problem to do with conversion — is that it is assumed that the question is one of persuasion. If only America were like Hansen: disquieted, self-analytic and imaginative. Perhaps, in other words, Americans know that they feel superior and are quite content with their superiority. Perhaps their naïveté, if that is what it is, is not as deep as Hansen imagines; perhaps they are

aware of the myth of themselves and have simply decided it is too useful a myth to give up. For as she herself notes, “The largest existential threat to Americans might have been admitting the Afghans would be better off without them.”

This is why Hansen’s book is as much a gesture of despair as it is an expression of confidence in her people, that once they see what she saw and learn what she learned they would be persuaded. It is also an attempt at redemption — a word that appears in the final sentence of the book — for just like the Americans she criticizes, those who travel the world seeing nothing but themselves, Hansen too at times slips into a consciousness that looks at other countries in order to diagnose America’s perversions, as though part of her purpose is not only to show but also demonstrate how, if you are fated to be American, everything, including your well-intentioned desire to see the world clearly, will most likely lead you back home.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Suzy Hansen** is contributing writer to *The New York Times Magazine* and has written for many other publications. In 2007, she was awarded a fellowship from the Institute of Current World Affairs to do research in Turkey. She currently lives in Istanbul. *Notes on a Foreign Country* is her

first book.

### Security With Human Rights

By Robert Adams

**Amnesty International USA calls on the Trump administration to halt possible deportation of Mauritanian asylum seekers in the US**

08/20/2018

Amnesty International USA calls upon the Trump administration to refrain from deporting Mauritanians who have sought refuge and safety in the United States without renewed and fair consideration of their claims for protection. Many of them had previously sought asylum based on fears of human rights abuses including possible enslavement and racial discrimination.

The Trump administration’s aggressive anti-immigration policies enforced by ICE would place hundreds and possibly thousands of Mauritanians at risk upon their return to the west African nation.

“The deportation of individuals back to an environment where they risk possible enslavement shows disdain for their human dignity and basic human rights and a complete violation of international law that flies in the face of decades of US traditions” stated Adotei Akwei, Amnesty international USA’s Deputy Director of Advocacy and Government Relations.

“These are people that have built lives and communities in the United States, started families, raised American children, and would now face the threat of slavery, torture, and death in Mauritania.”

Mauritanians deported from the United States would face the stigma of being perceived to be activists or dissidents and could face deadly attacks.

#### Background

In a March 2018 report entitled [“A Sword Hanging Over Our Heads”: The Repression of Activists Speaking Out Against Discrimination and Slavery in Mauritania](#), Amnesty International found that slavery and racial discrimination remain rife in Mauritania, despite the formal abolition of slavery in 1981, its criminalization in 2007 and its elevation to a crime against humanity in 2012. While there is no official data, international anti-slavery groups estimated the number of people living in slavery in 2016 to be up to 43,000, about 1% of the total population.

Amnesty International also concluded that the Mauritanian government continues to use repressive laws and disruptive tactics including prohibiting peaceful protests, using excessive force against demonstrators; banning human rights organizations and interfering with their activities; arbitrary arrest, torture and other ill-treatment, vicious smear campaigns, assaults and death threats all carried out with complete impunity. This dangerous environment is [worsening](#) as the country gears up for parliamentary elections in September. The Mauritanian security forces have arrested journalists, opposition figures and anti-slavery activists in an apparent pre-election crackdown on dissent.

## DEATH PENALTY NEWS

By Stevi Carroll

### Pope Francis - Change in the Catechism of the Catholic Church

August 2, 2018, Pope Francis announced a revised teaching regarding the death penalty for the Catholic Catechism. While this revised Catechism acknowledges that the Church has in the past permitted capital punishment in limited circumstances, it has come to believe times have changed.

Prisons now have more effective systems of detention that insure the protection of other citizens from the convicted people. Inmates who would otherwise be sentenced to death retain the possibility of redemption. Additionally, Pope Francis called the death penalty 'inhumane' and 'unacceptable,' echoing Sister Helen Prejean's belief that "People are more than the worst thing they have ever done in their lives." Pope Francis believes that capital punishment does not lead to justice but rather to vengeance and that is also discriminatory and unreliable.

This change will put pressure on elected officials worldwide to work for an end to executions and should this occur, the Vatican thinks this will be a 'banner social justice issue' for the Church. This change will also insure that "even the most far-flung parish priest will teach this to young children," said Serigio D'Elia, the secretary of Hands Off Cain, an association that works to abolish the death penalty worldwide. Perhaps grown ups will hear and understand this message, too.

Pope Francis made this decision working from the teachings of his predecessors, Pope John Paul II (10/78-4/05) and Pope Benedict XVI (4/05-2/13).

### Billy Ray Irick

Who is fit for execution? Is the drug Midazolam appropriate to use in executions? On August 9, 2018, these questions were on the minds of many people.

Billy Ray Irick was a troubled child who grew into a troubled adult. When he was six years old, he began to show signs mental health

problems and possible brain damage. In concert with his mother's tying him up and beating him, he began mistreating animals. From the ages of 8 to 13, he lived at the Church of God Home for Children in Sevierville, TN. Even though his parents rarely visited him, he was allowed a home visit in 1972 during which he used an axe to destroy a TV, a club to destroy a flower bed, and a razor to cut off his sister's pajamas she was wearing while she slept.

Fourteen years later Mr Irick raped and murdered a seven-year-old girl, Paula Dyer, in whose home Mr. Irick was living. An investigator working on this case discovered that no one had interviewed members of Paula Dyer's stepfamily. Had they done so they would have found out that just before the murder, Mr. Irick had chased a school-aged girl down the street while he brandished a machete. He said he did this because he 'didn't like her looks.' They also would have learned that Mr. Irick had been 'hearing voices' and 'talking with the devil,' and that 'the only person that tells me what to do is the voice.' Despite the reality that he at the very least suffered from dissociative disorder and may have been schizophrenic or intermittently psychotic, the state Supreme Court decided Mr. Irick was 'competent to be executed.'

And then there is the drug used.

Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor wrote the dissent regarding Mr. Irick's plea for leniency. Her dissent stated that it was 'on the grounds of the torturous pain the lethal cocktail of drugs could cause.' Presently, the drug company Alvogen has sued to block the use of midazolam in executions in Nevada. Tennessee is one of 15 states that sides with Nevada against the company.

Midazolam was used in Mr. Irick's execution. At about 7:30 PM on August 9, the drugs - midazolam as a sedative, the muscle-relaxer vecuronium bromide, and then potassium chloride to stop the heart - began to flow into Mr. Irick. By 7:34, he coughed and huffed in deep breaths. "An attendant began yelling "Billy" and checked the inmate and grabbed his shoulder, but there didn't seem to be any reaction. Two minutes later, Irick was not making any noise and began to turn dark purple. He was pronounced dead at 7:48 p.m."

Mr. Irick's had been on death row for 32 years.

## Those pesky drug companies and executions

As we know, drug companies have become squeamish about the use of their drugs in State-sanctioned murder. The most recent company is a German pharmaceutical company called Fresenius Kabi. This company makes potassium chloride and cisatracurium besylate, two of the drugs used in the four-drug protocol of diazepam, fentanyl citrate, cisatracurium besylate, and potassium chloride. While the company takes no stand on the death penalty itself, it is concerned about the damage that could be done to its reputation, goodwill, and business relationships. The company says its products can only be sold by authorized dealers and that they have "contractually agreed to particular constraints, such as excluding sale to federal or state incarceration facilities."

In this cocktail of death, you may have noticed fentanyl citrate. Ah yes, the same drug that is now responsible for many overdoses and deaths in what has become our nation's opioid addiction problem. Carey Dean Moore is the first inmate on an American death row to be put to death using fentanyl citrate.

The officials in Nebraska had not executed anyone since 1997 when the person was executed by the electric chair. In 2015, the Nebraska state lawmakers voted to abolish the death penalty, but Governor Pete Ricketts put in \$300,000 of his own money to put the death penalty on the 2016 ballot where the voters approved the measure. With the help of drugs, Nebraska is back in the death penalty game.

Death Penalty Information Center Executive Director Robert Dunham sees the incongruity in the use of fentanyl. He said, "It's somewhat ironic that at the same time that the Justice Department and states are talking about how dangerous fentanyl is and how it's created a national public health emergency that states are now turning to it as a supposedly safe way of killing prisoners."

## Recent Exonerations

July

Dominic Lucci, Kenneth Gardiner, and Mark Jones

- State: GA - Date of Exoneration: 7/12/2018

In 1992, Mark Jones, Dominic Lucci, and Kenneth Gardiner were sentenced to life in prison for murder in Savannah, Georgia. They were exonerated in 2018 based evidence hidden by police that the only witness had lied and that there were other suspects.

Brad Jennings

- State: MO - Date of Exoneration: 7/12/2018

In 2009, Brad Jennings was sentenced to 25 years in prison for murdering his wife in Buffalo, Missouri. He was exonerated in 2018 by evidence concealed by the prosecution that the death was a suicide.

Shawn Williams

- State: NY - Date of Exoneration: 7/13/2018

In 1994, Shawn Williams was sentenced to 25 years to life in prison for murder in Brooklyn, New York. He was exonerated in 2018 after the sole eyewitness admitted that her identification was false and the product of coercion by Detectives Louis Scarcella and Stephen Chmil.

Marcel Brown

- State: IL - Date of Exoneration: 7/18/2018

In 2011, Marcel Brown was sentenced to 35 years in prison for a murder in Chicago, Illinois. He was exonerated in 2018 after a witness recanted and a judge ruled that police improperly obtained his confession.

August

Bobby Joe Maxwell - State: CA

- Date of Exoneration: 8/10/2018

In 1984, Bobby Joe Maxwell was sentenced to life in prison without parole for two murders on Skid Row in Los Angeles, California. The convictions were reversed in 2010 because the state's star witness was revealed to be a notorious jailhouse informant who had testified falsely in his trial. In 2018, several months after Maxwell was left comatose by a heart attack, the case was dismissed.

## Stays of Execution

August

- |    |  |    |
|----|--|----|
| 1  | David Sneed  | OH |
|    | Rescheduled for December 9, 2020 by Gov. John Kasich on September 1, 2017. |    |
| 14 | Jose Antonio Jimenez   | FL |
|    | Stay granted by the Florida Supreme Court on August 10, 2014.              |    |
| 30 | Joseph Garcia  | TX |
|    | Rescheduled for December 4, 2018.  |    |

## Executions

July

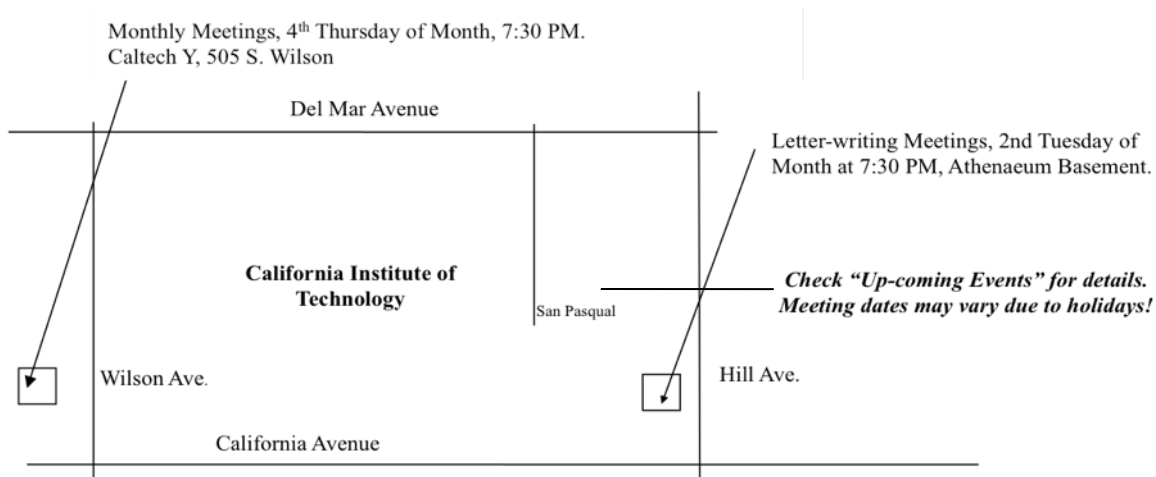
- |    |  |    |
|----|--|----|
| 17 | Christopher Young  | TX |
|    | Lethal Injection - 1-drug (Pentobarbital)<br>12 years from sentencing to execution |    |
| 18 | Robert Vaan Hook   | OH |
|    | Lethal Injection 3-drug (Midazolam)<br>32 years from sentencing to execution       |    |

August

9 Billy Irick TN  
Lethal Injection 3-drug (Midazolam)  
32 years from sentencing to execution

14 Carey Moore NE  
Lethal Injection 4-drug (Diazepam,  
Fentanyl)  
38 years from sentencing to execution

<b>GROUP 22 AUGUST LETTER COUNT</b>	
UAs	24
POC	8
Total	32



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://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.