

Amnesty International Group 22 Pasadena/Caltech News

Volume XVIII Number 6, June 2010

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, June 24, 7:30 PM. Monthly Meeting. Caltech Y is located off San Pasqual between Hill and Holliston, south side. You will see two curving walls forming a gate to a path--our building is just beyond. This month we are showing a 30-minute film, "**The Response**," a courtroom drama based upon the actual transcripts of the Guantanamo military tribunals. A discussion will follow. Please join us! Refreshments, Fair Trade included, will be provided.

Tuesday, July 13, 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! During the summer we are outside on the lawn next to the Athenaeum.

Sunday, July 18, 6:30 PM. Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion group. This month we read "Strength in What Remains" by Tracy Kidder.

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi everyone

Happy Father's Day! Hope everyone has had a good day. My family will have a joint mother's birthday and Father's Day celebration next weekend.

School is almost out and I look forward to summer plans -- working 17 days, driving to Oregon to see Rob's family, and finding time for fun and relaxation!

Here's some activities you may want to participate in:

There will be a candlelight march and rally for Troy Davis at the LA City Hall June 22. For further information, see the Death Penalty section of this newsletter.

Another event of interest is happening June 27 in Pasadena. "First Do No Harm: the Role of Medical Professionals in US-Sponsored Torture" is from 7-8:30 pm at All Saints Church, 132 N. Euclid, Pasadena, 91101. The keynote speaker is John Bradshaw, J.D., Director of Policy Physicians for Human Rights. There will be a panel discussion. For more information, call 818-225-0410 or email vclassick@aol.com.

Con cariño,
Kathy

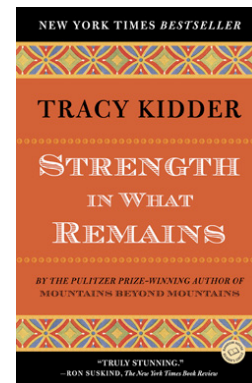
RIGHTS READERS

Human Rights Book Discussion Group

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

Next Rights Readers meeting:
Sunday, July 18, 6:30 PM

Vroman's Bookstore
695 E. Colorado Boulevard
In Pasadena



Author Biography



Tracy Kidder graduated from Harvard and studied at the University of Iowa. He has won the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award, the Robert F. Kennedy Award, and many other literary prizes. The author of [*Strength in What Remains*](#), [*Mountains Beyond Mountains*](#), [*My Detachment*](#), [*Home Town*](#), [*Old Friends*](#), [*Among Schoolchildren*](#), [*House*](#), and [*The Soul of a New Machine*](#), Kidder lives in Massachusetts and Maine.

BOOK REVIEW

STRENGTH IN WHAT REMAINS

By Tracy Kidder

Dwight Garner's Review of 'Strength in What Remains' (September 2, 2009) New York Times

Of course, most writers, from daily reporters to best-selling authors, get paid for something else: knowing what they want early on, getting the goods and then anxiously turning them into something worth reading. The reason this model tends to miss more than hit is that the most

precious gems gathered in any journalistic journey are frequently those found around the edges of a story.

Kidder has become a high priest of the narrative arts by diving deep into an improbable subject or character with little more than a hunch as to what he might eventually find. Since 1981, when “The Soul of a New Machine” — the story of a team creating that era’s cutting-edge computer — won him a Pulitzer and commercial success, he has worked relentlessly to carry on the tradition of John McPhee, sublimating ego in a tireless search for somewhere to hide, for a subject into which to vanish and live, sometimes for years. Few have been better at this than Kidder. He has followed a team of home builders (“House,” 1985), a fifth-grade teacher (“Among School-children,” 1989) and nursing home residents (“Old Friends,” 1993), and in each case emerged — sooty, battered, blinking in the sunlight — to write books illuminated by a glowing humanism. This is a feat of increasing difficulty as an author’s fame grows. The transaction between writer and subject can easily be stage-managed for market-place effect — moments overlaid to guide readers to tears or elation or preordained insights — and prose often takes on the weight of sentimentality, the great enemy of good writing, as J. D. Salinger put it, giving something “more tenderness than God gives to it.”

What happened in this case? While reporting his 2003 best seller, “Mountains Beyond Mountains,” a fitfully earnest book about a character almost impossible to love too much — Dr. Paul Farmer, leader of a global campaign to eradicate preventable disease — Kidder stumbled across a spectral African refugee who had signed on with the doctor’s organization, Partners in Health, as a bit player, a guy helping out, answering e-mail, “performing any jobs that needed doing.” His name was Deogratias, or “thanks be to God” in Latin.

“Strength in What Remains” is Deo’s story. And what a tale it is, opening from a passenger seat in an airliner in war-torn Burundi, where Deo, then 24, is leaving behind what once seemed a promising life in Africa as a third-year medical student. It was 1994. Burundi and neighboring Rwanda were exploding in civil wars, in which Hutu and Tutsi were slaughtering one another in one of the 20th century’s most horrifying conflicts. With the help of the privileged family of one of his med-school friends, Deo is able to escape the carnage, bound for America.

Soon, with only \$200 and no English, Deo is struggling to survive on the streets of New York. With remarkable acuity, Kidder puts the reader in the young man’s place, as he sleeps in an abandoned tenement in Harlem and gets a job for \$15 a day (yes, you read that right) delivering groceries for Gristedes, the supermarket chain. Kidder lets the story unfold, staying out of the way, letting Deo’s reactions and insights carry each page. Though the reader is informed that Deo witnessed horrors in Burundi, and is haunted by them, snatches from his past are unearthed solely to show what he relies on to survive — backward glances that testify to his resilience.

With many thousands of Africans fleeing their continent’s widening nightmares for America, Deo’s experience can feel like this era’s version of the Ellis Island migration — a story, then and now, of trauma and forward motion. The reader is pulled along, feeling rage when the Gristedes manager pokes at him with a stick “sometimes, it seemed, just for fun”; shame when the young man goes tipless, day after day, delivering groceries to Park Avenue. “You had to get tips,” explained a friend at the store. “You lingered in doorways, you cleared your throat, sometimes you asked for a tip outright. But this was the same as begging, Deo thought.” A reader also feels a strange kind of relief when Deo enters Central Park, sees it through the eyes of someone who grew up in forests, and finds an ideally concealed patch of grass where he can sleep. He falls into a routine, working days and living nights in the park, a canopy of stars providing a link to the fields of Africa and anything he once knew.

The story seems to tell itself, but that’s never the way it really happens. Strategic decisions have to be made, and Kidder seems to make all the right ones, first taking readers for a flashback to Burundi, showing the rural landscape where Deo’s family farmed and tended cows, and the grandfather who told him he would get his first cow only “when you finish school” — all of it, surely, a world that would be washed away.

Then it’s the mid-’90s in New York, where a nun, Sharon McKenna, takes an interest in the homeless Deo. He is grateful, though he worries that he’s building up a debt to her — “borrowed salt,” he calls it — leaving him with a childlike neediness. One day, when she points out the birds and flowers in Central Park, he fumes, sotto voce: “I’m not 5 years old. I know what a bird is. Yes, I know that is a flower. And I know Central Park

better than you do. I sleep here." This is Kidder's great feat, one that has eluded him in some of his later work: trusting the reader enough to present characters in the full splatter of unsettling complexity. This is not about presenting a holy man, a hero. His protagonist is bold, insecure, foolish, inspiring and, as the young man's memories race to catch him, there are hints that even more shades of personality will soon be revealed.

Ron Suskind is the author of "The Way of the World" and "A Hope in the Unseen," among other books.

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE GAO ZHISHENG

By Joyce Wolf

Group 22 is committed to working on the case of Prisoner of Conscience Gao Zhisheng (pronounced Gow Jir-sheng). He is a human-rights lawyer who was detained by the Chinese authorities in February 2009. His whereabouts were unknown for over a year, causing great anxiety among his family and friends and provoking confusing, bizarre statements from Chinese authorities. He reappeared on 28 March 2010 and stated sadly that he was giving up his human rights work and wished only to be reunited with his family. On April 20 (which happens to be his birthday) he disappeared again.

In a May 31 editorial in the Wall Street Journal, Jerome A. Cohen and Beth Schwanke wrote:

We have little doubt that the Chinese government intended Mr. Gao's brief reappearance this spring to relieve the increasing international pressure surrounding his mysterious detention. Now, however, it appears that the government fears Mr. Gao, even under house arrest, more than it fears the international community's condemnation of his renewed "disappearance." It is willing to blatantly violate its own domestic law, not to mention international law, to silence the man known to many as "the conscience of China." Mr. Gao's case is about far more than the tragedy of one man and his family. It is about the rule of law in China. If the government can act with impunity toward a lawyer as prominent as Gao Zhisheng, then...other dissidents will continue to be "disappeared". (http://www.cfr.org/publication/22261/silencing_of_gao_zhisheng.html)

Before we get to this month's action for Gao Zhisheng, here's an update on Tan Zuoren, the environmental activist who was the focus of Group 22's Earth Day action in April. The good news is that we picked up two more pages of signatures on our Tan Zuoren petition at the Visual Arts Guild's annual Tiananmen commemorative dinner, but the bad news is that Tan lost his appeal. The Sichuan Provincial High People's Court announced on June 9 that it upheld his sentence of five years in prison, with an additional three years' deprivation of political rights.

Amnesty suggests we write regularly to the Director of the Beijing Municipal Justice Bureau on behalf of Gao Zhisheng. Here's a sample letter that you can use as a guide. Postage is 98 cents.

WU Yuhua Juzhang
Beijingshi Sifaju
12 Xinjiekouwaidajie
Xichengqu
Beijingshi 100088
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Dear Director,

I am writing about human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng. I call for all restrictions to his freedom of movement to be lifted and for any continued surveillance to be stopped.

I respectfully urge the authorities to guarantee that he will be free from any kind of torture and ill-treatment, and to order a full and impartial investigation into allegations that Gao Zhisheng has suffered ill treatment in detention, including beatings and inadequate access to medical treatment, and to bring those responsible to justice.

I further urge that the authorities allow peaceful work by human rights defenders, and also exercise of rights to freedom of assembly and expression, in line with their international commitments.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

DEATH PENALTY NEWS

By Stevi Carroll

The death penalty continues to execute people here in the USA and around the world.

On June 18, Ronnie Lee Gardner was executed by firing squad in Utah. This is the third execution

by firing squad in Utah since 1976. One article I read included, "Amnesty International, which has long called for a worldwide repeal of the death penalty, said shooting had also been used in China, Libya, Syria, Yemen and Vietnam this past year." The use of the firing squad in Utah has roots in a Mormon practice of blood atonement; although, the Church of Latter Day Saints no longer endorses this form of execution.

According to an Amnesty International article, three of the jurors from Mr. Gardner's 1985 trial no longer supported his death sentence. (<http://blog.amnestyusa.org/deathpenalty/this-week-in-pointless-executions/>) To read more about Mr. Gardner's execution written by an Associated Press witness, to go <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=127575036>.

In support of Troy Davis' evidentiary hearing scheduled for June 23, 2010, rallies for him will be held around the world on June 22. I am planning on going to the one in Los Angeles.

The following people have recently been executed in the US:

In May

25 - John Alba - Texas

27 - Thomas Whisenant - Alabama

In June

2 - George Jones - Texas

9 - Melbert Ford - Georgia

10 - John Forrest Parker - Alabama

15 - David Powell - Texas

18 - Ronnie Lee Gardner

"For centuries the death penalty, often accompanied by barbarous refinements, has been trying to hold crime in check; yet crime persists."

Albert Camus,
Resistance, Rebellion and Death

-Stevi Carroll

INFO ON TROY DAVIS ACTION IN LOS ANGELES

Troy Davis Campaign: June 22 Global Day of Solidarity.

Troy Davis has a hearing date (June 23, 2010)

Candlelight March and Rally in support of Troy Davis Tuesday, June 22, 2010 (6pm). (This is the day before the hearing) at Los Angeles City Hall (200 North Spring Street, Los Angeles, CA)

Troy Davis has been on death row for more than 18 years for the murder of police officer Mark Allen MacPhail in Savannah, Georgia. His compelling case of innocence raises critical questions about the death penalty and the larger criminal justice system.

If you would like to take show your solidarity at the LA City Hall Rally on June 22nd please contact Kalayaan (Kala) Mendoza, Field Organizer for Southern California for more information.

Kalayaan Mendoza:

Tel # 415.288.1862

Email: kmendoza@aiusa.org

To take action online please go to the Justice For Troy page at:

<http://justicefortroy.org/>

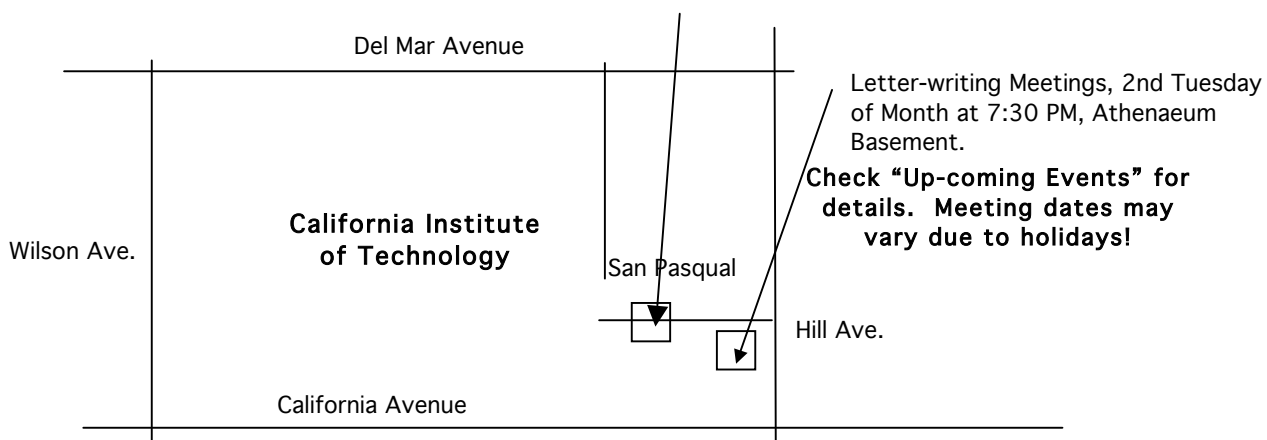
To invite your friends and family on Facebook please go to the Justice for Troy Facebook Event Page:

<http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=119258598098972>

MONTHLY LETTER COUNT

UA's	11
Total	11
To add your letters to the total contact lwkamp@gmail.com .	

Monthly Meetings, 4th Thursday of Month, 7:30 PM,
Caltech Y Lounge.



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://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.