

Amnesty International Group 22 Pasadena/Caltech News

Volume XVIII Number 3, March 2010

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, March 25, 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. Help us plan future actions on Sudan, the 'War on Terror', death penalty and more.

Tuesday, April 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!

Sunday, April 18, 6:30PM. Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion group. This month we read "Sarah's Key" by Tatiana de Rosnay.

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi everyone

I'm hurrying to get the newsletter done this evening (I'm a day late!), so this column will be brief. Some of you are aware that this year I also am doing the electronic newsletter for the Los Angeles Council of School Nurses, our district nursing professional organization! (I guess one wasn't enough!).

It is with sadness that we say goodbye to two young members of Group 22. Robert and Marie-Helene have livened up our group activities and made some great contributions, such as the last two Doo-Dah parade themes. They will be moving to Paris (Marie-Helene is French-Canadian) where Robert will pursue a post-doc in physics. We wish them all the best in their new life abroad. Bon Voyage!

Remember the Chinese democracy activist Tan Zuoren that we had children paint their handprints on a giant petition for at last year's Earth Day in Pasadena? Don't forget to send the urgent action for him – found in this newsletter.

Con cariño,
Kathy

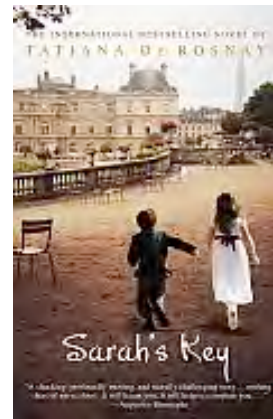
RIGHTS READERS

Human Rights Book Discussion Group

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

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

Vroman's Bookstore
695 E. Colorado Boulevard
In Pasadena



"Sarah's Key"
By Tatiana de Rosnay

Author Biography



Tatiana de Rosnay was born on September 28th, 1961 in the suburbs of Paris. She is of English, French and Russian descent. Her father is French scientist Joël de Rosnay, her grandfather was painter Gaëtan de Rosnay. Tatiana's paternal great-grandmother was Russian actress Natalia Rachewskia, director of the Leningrad Pushkin Theatre from 1925 to 1949.

Tatiana's mother is English, Stella Jebb, daughter of diplomat Gladwyn Jebb, and great-great-granddaughter of Isambard Kingdom Brunel, the British engineer. Tatiana is also the niece of historian Hugh Thomas. Tatiana was raised in Paris and then in Boston, when her father taught at MIT in the 70's. She moved to England in the early 80's and obtained a Bachelor's degree in English literature at the University of East Anglia, in Norwich.

Returning to Paris in 1984, Tatiana became press attaché for Christie's and then Paris Editor for Vanity Fair magazine till 1993. Since 1992, Tatiana has published eight novels in France (published at Fayard, Plon and EHO).

Sarah's Key is her first novel written in her mother tongue, English. Sarah's Key is to be published in 22 countries and has already sold over 400 000 copies worldwide. Film rights have also been sold.

Tatiana works as a journalist for French ELLE and is literary critic for Psychologies Magazine and the Journal du Dimanche. She is married and has two teenagers, Louis and Charlotte. She lives in Paris with her family.

Website: <http://www.sarahskey.com/>

PUBLISHER COMMENTS:

Paris, July 1942: Sarah, a ten year-old girl, is brutally arrested with her family by the French police in the Vel' d'Hiv' roundup, but not before she locks her younger brother in a cupboard in the family's apartment, thinking that she will be back within a few hours.

Paris, May 2002: On Vel' d'Hiv's 60th anniversary, journalist Julia Jarmond is asked to write an article about this black day in France's past. Through her contemporary investigation, she stumbles onto a trail of long-hidden family secrets that connect her to Sarah. Julia finds herself compelled to retrace the girl's ordeal, from that terrible term in the Vel d'Hiv', to the camps, and beyond. As she probes into Sarah's past, she begins to question her own place in France, and to reevaluate her marriage and her life.

De Rosnay's U.S. debut fictionalizes the 1942 Paris roundups and deportations, in which thousands of Jewish families were arrested, held at the Velodrome d'Hiver outside the city, then transported to Auschwitz. Forty-five-year-old Julia Jarmond, American by birth, moved to Paris when she was 20 and is married to the arrogant, unfaithful Bertrand Tezac, with whom she has an 11-year-old daughter. Julia writes for an American magazine and her editor assigns her to cover the 60th anniversary of the Vel' d'Hiv' roundups. Julia soon learns that the apartment she and Bertrand plan to move into was acquired by Bertrand's family when its Jewish occupants were dispossessed and deported 60 years before. She resolves to find out what happened to the former occupants: Wladyslaw and Rywka Starzynski, parents of 10-year-old Sarah and four-

year-old Michel. The more Julia discovers--especially about Sarah, the only member of the Starzynski family to survive--the more she uncovers about Bertrand's family, about France and, finally, herself. Already translated into 15 languages, the novel is De Rosnay's 10th (but her first written in English, her first language). It beautifully conveys Julia's conflicting loyalties, and makes Sarah's trials so riveting, her innocence so absorbing, that the book is hard to put down.--Publishers Weekly (starred review) This is the shocking, profoundly moving and morally challenging story . . . It will haunt you, it will help to complete you . . . nothing short of miraculous. --Augusten Burroughs

Have You Lobbied your Congressman Today? Yes, says AI Group 22 Member Vincent DeStefano

By Laura G. Brown



I first met Vincent DeStefano via email, when he asked for AI members to form a delegation to lobby Rep. Adam Schiff

(D-Pasadena). He held a meeting at his house to prepare for the session, and then off we went. Four of us showed up to meet with Schiff's representative, and I was impressed at DeStefano's aplomb at running the meeting. After brief introductions, he outlined several points Amnesty wanted the congressman to act upon, including closing Guantanamo, and then asked for follow-up contact.

I've gone with DeStefano two other times since—to visit representatives for Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Rep. David Dreier (R-San Dimas). I found each meeting to be well-organized, concise, and effective, and I plan to accompany him again in the future. His formula is methodical: 1.) He emails legislative staffs, politely asking for face time for Amnesty's views; 2.) He forwards the

accepted meeting times and dates to members who are likely to come; 3.) He confirms those who will attend via email; 4.) The AI delegation meets with the representative; and 5.) He sets a date for follow-up action by phone.

I recently asked the AI Group 22 member about the niche he's found in promoting AI's agenda. Vincent DeStefano is a fit, engaging Pasadenan with lifelong ties to the area, and a decided gift of gab. He said he began his program of lobbying elected officials about 1 ½ years ago when he lost his sales job after 30 years. He had always been a letter writer, he said, but now had the time to take activism a step further.

DeStefano fears that our wars in Afghanistan and Iraq show the US hasn't learned its lessons from Vietnam. "They don't have the willingness to admit that the light at the end of the tunnel... is the headlights of an oncoming train," he said, adding: "Not doing something to change the things about government you do not like means you are complicit in supporting their actions."

A recent delegation to Schiff's office moved DeStefano to tears and reinforced his belief that the primary mission of AI is pursuing justice and civil liberties. "Lupe introduced herself and spoke through an interpreter, describing how she'd been tortured in El Salvador. Her legs were broken; her teeth were broken," he said, adding that the woman downplayed her ordeal and said that preventing torture from happening to others was paramount.

Do the delegation visits from Amnesty actually affect legislation? DeStefano says that the lizard skin he grew during his years of sales work helps him to not expect immediate results. "I've been in sales my entire life. The closure rate is about 20 percent," he said, adding that he takes the longest possible view of any success the group might have with legislators. Yet, he asserts that elected officials pay attention to groups who take the time and trouble to drag people into their offices. "Keep poking them" is his squeaky wheel philosophy.

CHINA ACTIVIST TAN ZUOREN

URGENT ACTION

At the Pasadena Earth Day event nearly one year ago, Group 22 collected signatures and children's handprints on a giant petition for environmental activist Tan Zuoren. He was

recently sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment. Please join us in participating in the following Urgent Action from AIUSA.

(UA 91/09) CHINA, Tan Zuoren (m), aged 55, Chinese environmental activist and writer.

Tan Zuoren was sentenced to five years' imprisonment on 9 February, for "inciting subversion of state power". He is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

Tan Zuoren, from Sichuan province in southwestern China, was convicted for criticizing the Chinese Communist Party and the government authorities' military crackdown on the 1989 pro-democracy movement in Beijing. The verdict stated Tan Zuoren was "(u)nsatisfied with how the Chinese government handled the June 4th issue and over the years slandered the Chinese government through actions such as blood donations on June 4th commemorating the anniversary and writing articles such as "The last beauty – A witness's diary on Tiananmen Square" in 2007 posted on overseas website "The Fire of Liberty". The verdict also accused him of "contacting an overseas enemy" by sending to Wang Dan, an exiled Chinese student leader from 1989 an email titled "Suggestions for 20th anniversary activities".

Tan Zuoren's trial was held on 12 August 2008 at the Chengdu Intermediate People's Court, but his sentence was only announced on 9 February 2010 after more than five months' delay, in contravention of Chinese Criminal Procedure Law. In addition to his prison sentence, Tan Zuoren was also sentenced to three years' deprivation of political rights after he is released. This means that for these three years, he will not be able to vote, stand for election, or hold a position in any state body or state-owned company and shall submit to supervision.

Tan Zuoren's trial disregarded China's criminal procedures. His lawyers reported they were unable to call their witnesses to testify in court, show the video footage they prepared, or present their defense. Journalist were harassed and prevented from reporting both on the trial and the sentencing.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Tan Zuoren is a prominent environmentalist. He previously issued a report warning against possible health, safety and environmental hazards of the government's chemical projects in Sichuan province. Following the earthquake in Sichuan in May 2008, he joined a team of volunteers who

distributed food and clothing to survivors. He also worked with several academics to investigate the cause of the deaths in the earthquake and improve building standards to prevent a reoccurrence.

He was detained by the police in Chengdu city, Sichuan province, on suspicion of “inciting subversion of state power” on 28 March 2009. He was detained for five months before his trial took place. He is held at Wenjiang Detention Centre and has appealed.

When his trial took place on 12 August 2009, internationally acclaimed artist Ai Weiwei was due to give evidence for the defense. However individuals claiming to be police came to Ai Weiwei’s hotel room on the day of the trial severely beat him and illegally detained him for hours until after the trial had ended. Two Hong Kong journalists were prevented from covering the trial when local police detained them in their hotel room under the guise of searching for drugs. Police barred supporters of Tan Zuoren from the courtroom, allowing only his wife and one of his daughters, to attend the trial. Court officials filled the rest of the seats.

At his trial in August 2009, the indictment focussed both on his criticism of the Chinese government’s handling of the 1989 crackdown and his investigation into the deaths of children in the 2008 Sichuan earthquake due to corruption and the collapse of poor-quality school buildings. His defence lawyers’ arguments at trial mainly focussed on his right as a citizen to investigate these deaths and speak out on human right abuses. However, the verdict said that lawyer’s defence statements in August were “irrelevant”.

On 9 February 2010, the day his sentence was announced, journalists were again harassed as they tried to cover the story at the court. His wife, Wang Qinghua, and his two daughters were not allowed to go into the court room. They were told that the room was full.

According to a local source, his indictment said that he was originally detained because he had intended to publish sensitive information about the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. On the first anniversary of the earthquake, he had reportedly planned to publish a list of children who died in the earthquake, along with an independently investigated report on the collapse of many school buildings due to corruption. However in his verdict announced in court the charges connected to the earthquake were removed.

Prior to his detention in March 2009, Tan Zuoren had been repeatedly questioned by the police. He was also previously harassed by unidentified individuals who stole his computer twice and stabbed and injured his dog.

Human rights activists in China who attempt to report on human rights violations, challenge policies which the authorities find politically sensitive, or try to rally others to their cause, face serious risk of abuse. Many are jailed as prisoners of conscience after politically motivated trials, while growing numbers are being held under house arrest with the police conducting intrusive surveillance and standing guard outside.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible:

- * Calling on the authorities to release Tan Zuoren immediately and unconditionally;

- * Urging authorities to ensure he has access to a lawyer, his family and any medical treatment he may require;

- * Calling on them to guarantee Tan Zuoren will not be tortured or otherwise ill-treated;

- * Calling on them to take effective measures to ensure that all human rights defenders can carry out their peaceful activities without fear of arbitrary detention, imprisonment, hindrance or intimidation, in line with the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

APPEALS TO:

Director of the Sichuan Provincial Higher People’s Court
Liu Yushun Yuanzhang
Sichuansheng Gaoji Renmin Fayuan
108 Zhengfujie
Qinyangqu
Chengdushi 610017
Sichuansheng
PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA
Email: yuanzhangmailbox@sina.com
Salutation: Dear Director

Director of the Chengdu City Department of Public Security
LI Kunxue Juzhang
Chengdushi Gonganju
144 Wenwulu, Qingyang Qu
Chengdushi 610016
Sichuansheng
PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC IF CHINA
Email: cdsqaj@cheng.gov.cn
Salutation: Dear Director

COPIES TO:

Prime Minister
WEN Jiabao Guojia Zongli
The State Council General Office
2 Fuyoujie, Xichengqu
Beijingshi 100017
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA
Fax: 011 86 10 65961109
(c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
Salutation: Your Excellency

Ambassador Wen Zhong Zhou
Embassy of the People's Republic of China
2300 Connecticut Ave. NW
Washington DC 20008
Fax: 1 202 328-2582
Email: Chinaembassy_us@fmprc.gov.cn

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.
Check with the AIUSA Urgent Action office if
sending appeals after 24 May 2010.

DEATH PENALTY NEWS

By Stevi Carroll

The past month has seen the executions of Joshua Maxwell (3/11/10 - Texas), Lawrence Reynolds (3/16/10 - Ohio), and Paul Powell (3/18/10 - Virginia). Jack Harold Jones, Jr. was granted a stay of execution March 16, 2010. Lawrence Reynolds' execution was carried out nine days after he attempted suicide. Paul Powell died in the electric chair. To read an account of his execution, go to "Post reporter recounts Paul Powell's execution"
<http://voices.washingtonpost.com/crime-scene/josh-white/detailed-account-of-powells-vi.html>.

Upcoming executions include Hank Skinner (3/24/10 - Texas), Franklin Alix (3/30/10 - Texas), and Richard Smith (4/8/10 - Oklahoma). Jurors in Richard Smith's case have come forward to oppose his execution.

Six Jurors Oppose Oklahoma Execution

Death Penalty, United States | Posted by:
Brian Evans, March 18, 2010 at 1:04 PM

Oklahoma has the opportunity to save a life on April 8, 2010 and it is our responsibility to take action to prevent another state killing.

(<http://takeaction.amnestyusa.org/siteapps/advocacy/index.aspx?c=jhKPIXPCIoE&b=2590179&template=x.ascx&action=14014>) Richard Smith was convicted of murder in 1987, and now has been on death row for more than half of his life. Not only do six jurors from his trial now oppose his execution, but so does a brother of the victim.

Similar to many other death penalty cases, Richard Smith was not given an adequate defense. His lawyer presented almost no evidence, and no expert testimony. He did not begin investigating until seven to ten days before the date of trial, and he failed to present evidence of Smith's past abuse as a child, addiction problems, psychological problems, brain injury, and borderline intelligence.

If the jury at the time of the trial had heard this evidence, the outcome of Smith's case could have been significantly different. The six jurors who now oppose his execution exemplify the very reason why we should act in the name of justice. Due to Smith's poor representation in trial, we must act to commute the death sentence of Richard Smith.

Executive clemency is in place so that justice can be upheld even when the courts drop the ball. In the case of Mr. Smith, powerful mitigating evidence was never heard by a jury. Justice would not be served by executing Richard Smith under these circumstances. The Oklahoma Pardon and Parole Board should recommend that Governor Brad Henry commute this death sentence, and Governor Henry should accept that recommendation.

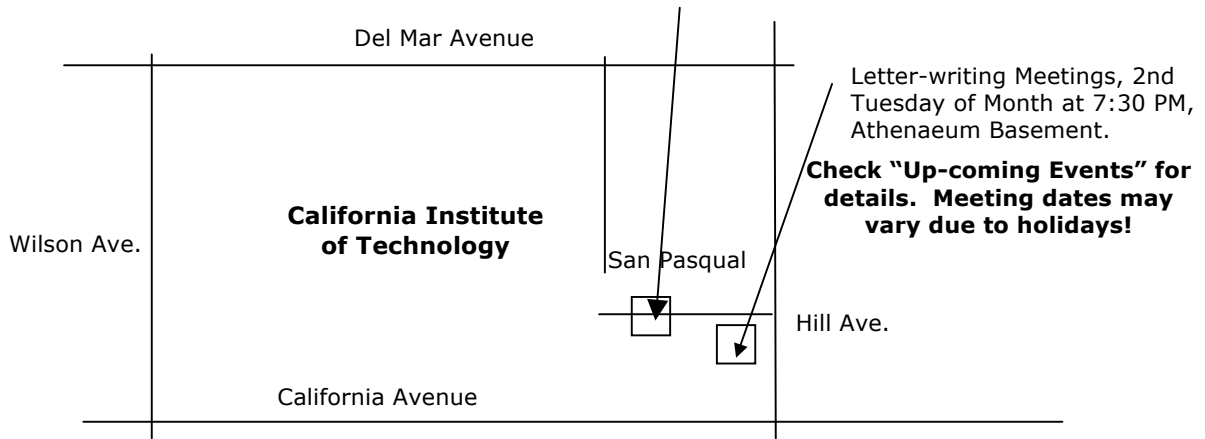
source:

<http://blog.amnestyusa.org/deathpenalty/six-jurors-oppose-oklahoma-execution/>

MONTHLY LETTER COUNT

Postcards for Eritrea	11
UA's	13
Total	24
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.