

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, September 27, 7:30 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, October 9, 7:30 PM. Letter writing meeting at Caltech Athenaeum, corner of Hill and California in Pasadena. The Rathskeller is in the Athenaeum basement; take the stairs to the right of the main entrance. Look for the table with the Amnesty sign. Please join us to write actions on human-rights violations around the world. This informal gathering is a great way for newcomers to get acquainted with Amnesty!

Sunday, October 21, 6:30 PM. Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion group. This month we discuss "The Barbarian Nurseries" by Héctor Tobar..

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi everyone!

I want to thank Joyce, Stevi, and Lucas for working on the newsletter this month as I have been overwhelmed at work...it's only September and I've already helped to put together and teach two CPR and first aid classes for staff with my co-workers and we're doing another one next week! This year we have some fun new people in our office and our diabetic coverage list is 6 pages long! At least we're back on the Eastside, where most of my schools are (some in South LA). Many of the schools have not had the funding to purchase a full time nurse, and we are taking up the slack. As one of my former co-workers used to say, "one day at a time"...

Several members of Group 22 attended a community forum on the Supreme Court's recent Citizens United decision at Villa Gardens. Rob (and others) videotaped the session, Lucas was at our Amnesty table, and Stevi introduced the speakers. I think I saw some of you in the audience - caught a glimpse of Laura. I came along as gofer and helper to Rob, but found it to be a very interesting and informative event. Rob is working now on posting his video on Youtube, so keep looking for it! (More about Citizens United at <http://tinyurl.com/cxcxs2w>)

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, Oct. 21,
6:30 pm

Vroman's Bookstore
695 E. Colorado,
Pasadena

The Barbarian Nurseries

by Héctor Tobar

We enjoyed reading Héctor Tobar's novel *The Tattooed Soldier* back in August 2001 and are looking forward to this recent book of his.

REVIEW

The Washington Post
Book review: 'The Barbarian Nurseries,' by Héctor Tobar
By Dinah Lenney,
Published: November 20, 2011

In "Translation Nation," an account of the Latino experience across America published in 2005, Héctor Tobar recalled his father, a Guatemalan immigrant, telling him: "We are part of a bigger world . . . full of beauty and horrors. . . . Our history and our future cannot be contained within borders." The author goes on to say, "I grew up believing it was my destiny to advance this essentially Latin American story into new, northern territories."

Now, in his third book and second novel, "The Barbarian Nurseries," Tobar is as good as his word. Once again, he explores the boundaries that bind and divide families, neighborhoods and Southern Californians; this time, to darkly hilarious and moving effect.

The story, told in three parts, begins in a gated community in Orange County, where we meet pale-skinned, half-Mexican Scott Torres; his wife, Maureen; and their three children, Brandon, Keenan and Samantha. Having dismissed the gardener and the nanny, Scott and

Maureen are making do with one domestic in these tough economic times.

Enter housekeeper Araceli Ramirez, who, they've calculated, can be counted on in a pinch to keep an eye on the kids. Even so, Maureen can't quite get with the program. The neglected garden embarrasses her; impulsively, she decides to replace it for a four-figure sum. When Scott's credit card is subsequently rejected after a business lunch, tempers flare and he accidentally pushes her into a glass coffee table, which shatters. Scott drives away to lick his wounds in the company of an adoring co-worker, while Maureen empties their piggy bank and heads off to a spa, baby Samantha in tow.

What is the poor housekeeper to do? She didn't sign on for this. She doesn't even like children. Four days later, with no word from either parent (each assumes that the other stayed home), Araceli sets off with the two boys in search of their grandfather Torres, who, she naively reasons, must still reside on a street in a distant Los Angeles neighborhood where he posed for a family photograph three decades earlier.

So begins a wild and crazy ride, which gets wilder and crazier after the boys are returned to their parents and Araceli is jailed on kidnapping charges. In a moment of rare fluency, this illegal from south of the border describes herself as having landed in "a very strange North American circus."

In this ode to L.A., as affectionate as it is terrifying, Tobar's position is clear: An exclusive enclave with vast ocean views is no less scary than the flats of South Central, its isolated inhabitants all the more alienated from each other and themselves.

In fact, the farther we get from the order and calm of the Torres family's McMansion, the more believable, if bizarre, events become in Tobar's vivid rendering of people and place.

Although epic in scope, this is, at heart, the story of two women: Araceli and Maureen. And never were there such a couple of unlikely heroines: One is inscrutable, withholding and thick-waisted; the other is spoiled, controlling and perfectly accessorized. Lucky for us, Tobar, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, is that rare male author who credibly inhabits a woman's point of view — both women, in fact, and a slew of other characters besides. If we spend more time with some than with others, it's a credit to Tobar that we feel we know them all: neighbors,

friends, politicians, passers-by — a cast that includes a rabid prosecutor, a pregnant public defender and a social worker who deserves a novel all to herself.

Each moment surprises, right up to a scene close to the end when domestically challenged Maureen faces off with an army of ants invading her beautiful house: "Every day they conquered new territories of tile, particleboard and porcelain," Tobar writes. "They gathered in pulsating masses around pieces of chicken underneath the dining room table, over the toilet paper in the bathroom trash cans, and inside the kitchen sink, carrying away whatever it was that settled at the bottom of the garbage disposal."

Baffled by the chalk lines that Araceli drew along the baseboards, Maureen scrubs them away along with the ants, who keep coming back for more. At last, she resorts to pesticide, "so desperate to see the chemicals work that she didn't bother to get the children out of the house before she began spraying." Maureen is on border patrol, resolved to keep appearances up and the aliens out.

Sad, funny, seemingly inevitable — such are the metaphors and insights from Héctor Tobar, an author from whom we expect nothing less, and look forward to more.

Lenney, the author of "Bigger than Life: A Murder, a Memoir," teaches at Bennington College, Pacific Lutheran University and in the Master of Professional Writing Program in the USC Dornsife College.

Héctor Tobar (born 1963 Los Angeles) is a Los Angeles author and journalist, whose work examines the evolving and interdependent relationship between Latin America and the United States.



He is the son of Guatemalan immigrants. He is currently a weekly columnist for the Los Angeles Times. Previously, he was the paper's bureau chief in Mexico City and in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He also worked for several

years as the National Latino Affairs Correspondent. In 1992, he won a Pulitzer Prize for his work as part of the team covering the L.A. riots for the Los Angeles Times. He is a graduate of the University of California, Santa Cruz and the MFA program in Creative Writing at the University of California, Irvine.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Héctor_Tobar

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE

Gao Zhisheng

by Joyce Wolf

Our own California senator, Barbara Boxer, introduced a resolution on September 13 calling on China to free Gao Zhisheng! (Human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng is Group 22's adopted prisoner of conscience.)

Senator Boxer stated, "We are introducing this bipartisan resolution today to send a clear message that the Chinese government must release Gao Zhisheng and end its persecution and torture of innocent lawyers, writers and dissidents."

<http://boxer.senate.gov/en/press/releases/091312.cfm>

The press release contains the complete text of the resolution (S.Res. 554). After summarizing Gao Zhisheng's story, the resolution concludes:

"Whereas the continued detention of Gao Zhisheng, with limited or no access to family or legal counsel, by the Government of the People's Republic of China is a source of grave concern to the United States Senate: Now, therefore, be it Resolved, That the Senate calls on the Government of the People's Republic of China—

- (1) to immediately facilitate continued access to Gao Zhisheng by his family and lawyers;
- (2) to facilitate the immediate and unconditional release of Gao Zhisheng, including allowing Mr. Gao to leave China to come to the United States to be reunited with his family, should he wish to do so; and
- (3) to release all persons in China who have been arbitrarily detained."

The resolution has been referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations. It was co-sponsored by Senator John Cornyn (R-TX).

This month let's send a thank-you to Senator Boxer. Her contact information is at <http://boxer.senate.gov>. Please thank her for S.Res. 554, and mention that AI Group 22 has been working over two years for Gao Zhisheng. You might also mention that just recently (August 27), two lawyers retained by Gao Zhisheng's brother Gao Zhiyi were denied permission to see him in Shaya Prison. Details about the lawyers' attempted visit are at <http://tinyurl.com/c972ym4>.

Here's a mailing address for Senator Boxer:
Office of U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer
312 N. Spring St. Suite 1748
Los Angeles, CA 90012

DEATH PENALTY NEWS

By Stevi Carroll

Troy Davis –One year later

Troy Davis was executed one year ago on September 21, 2011. Friday evening the California NAACP, the YES on 34 Campaign, civil rights groups and clergy leaders held a vigil to commemorate his execution. Because the divinity, Google Maps, led me astray, I was unable to attend, but I want us to remember Troy as we work to end the death penalty.



"This fight to end the death penalty is not won or lost through me but through our strength to move forward and save every innocent person in captivity around the globe. We need to dismantle this Unjust system city by city, state by state and country by country."
~Troy Davis

We in California have the opportunity to move in that direction with Proposition 34.

YES on Proposition 34

Soon we will have a volunteer opportunity to do phone banking for the YES on 34 campaign. I will let you know when the dates and times are established for Pasadena.

Ronald Post

Ronald Post is scheduled for execution January 16, 2013, for the 1985 murder of Helen Vantz. Mr. Post wants his execution delayed because he is morbidly obese, 480 pounds, and finding a vein into which the lethal injection would go could be difficult to find.

His attorneys say, "Given his unique physical and medical condition there is substantial risk that any attempt to execute him will result in serious physical and psychological pain to him, as well as an execution involving a torturous and lingering death."

What to me is interesting about this case is the comment thread that follows the article. I know the anonymity of the internet allows people to

say many things without concern of censure. Here are a few of the comments.

"Given his unique physical and medical condition there is substantial risk that any attempt to execute him will result in serious physical and psychological pain to him, as well as an execution involving a torturous and lingering death," the attorneys said.

So.....what's the downside?

Cut off his head... You all can pay for him to live.

If they can't find a vein, two bullets in the back of the head. Ridiculous. I don't care if you're 1000 lbs or 50 lbs, you killed someone all the same.

Well, then it seems to me that hanging would be most effective in this case.

America can't even remove sick murders from society properly; maybe we should outsource that to China too.

According to the article **"Three Percent of US Executions Since 1900 Were Botched, Study Finds,"** Professor Austin Sarat, Amherst College, found that from 1900 to 2011, 270 executions during that time had some problem. He said that early in the 20th century "In the vast majority of the stories about the botched executions, the narratives were both sensational and what we called 'recuperative' -- reporters consistently made the point that, despite the gruesomeness of the proceedings, the inmates didn't suffer, that justice was done. There was very little criticism of the process or questioning of the death penalty itself."

Professor Sarat's student researcher, Heather Richard, said, "the institution of capital punishment was not really examined or critiqued. It certainly says something about the newspapers and their readers."

Professor Sarat's final comment in the article is, "Punishment tells us who we are. The way a society punishes demonstrates its commitment to standards of judgment and justice, its distinctive views of blame and responsibility, its understandings of mercy and forgiveness and its particular ways of responding to evil. Sadly, our attachment to the death penalty reveals an unpleasant, unseemly side of American character."

This is vividly revealed in the comment thread regarding the upcoming execution of Ronald Post. <http://tinyurl.com/cfoj55l>

Terrance Williams

October 3, 2012, the state of Pennsylvania is scheduled to execute Terrance Williams for the 1984 murder of Amos Norwood. Amos Norwood was a leader of the acolytes at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Philadelphia where he used his position in the church to have access to children to sexually abuse. The jury did not know about the sexual abuse from a number of abusers Mr. Williams had endured since he was six years old, the violence that accompanied the abuse, nor the possibility of his being imprisoned for life without parole.

Even though three out of the five members of the state Board of Pardons voted to spare Mr. Williams' life, his sentence cannot be commuted because the vote must be unanimous. Governor Tom Corbett may be able to commute the sentence to LWOP without the unanimous vote.

Mamie Norwood, the widow of Amos Norwood, has asked for Mr. Williams' life to be spared. Among the reasons she gave in her Declaration are "(h)is execution would go against my Christian faith and my belief system. He is worthy of forgiveness and I am at peace with my decision to forgive him and have been for many years."

An online Amnesty International action is available at <http://tinyurl.com/cdyt4fr>.

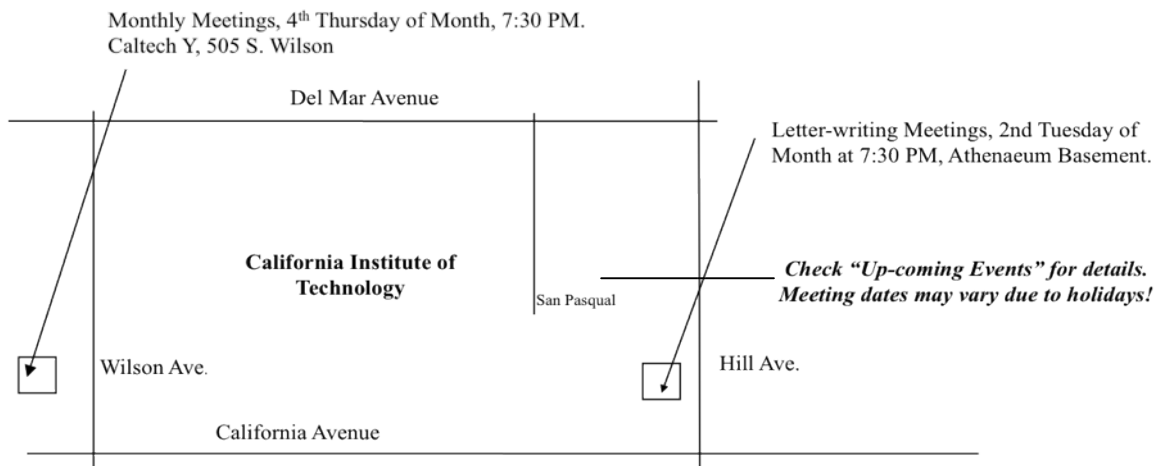
Stays of Execution

August		
22	John Balentine	Texas
September		
9	Rodney Berget	South Dakota
13	Michael Travaglia	Pennsylvania

Executions

September		
20	Robert Harris	Texas
	one-drug lethal injection	
20	Donald Palmer	Ohio
	one-drug lethal injection	

GROUP 22 MONTHLY LETTER COUNT	
UAs	14
China postcards	5
Total	19
To add your letters to the total contact lwkamp@gmail.com .	



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.