

UPCOMING EVENTS

There will be no monthly meeting due to the holidays. Our regular schedule of meetings will resume in January.

Saturday, December 6, Letter writing marathon for Human Rights Day from 10am to 4pm at Zephyr Café, 2419 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena, 91107. Phone 626-793-7330.

Sunday, December 14, 6:30pm. Book group meeting and holiday potluck at Joyce's house in Montrose. RSVP to aigp22@caltech.edu or call Joyce at 818-354-7361. We are reading "Visitation" by Jenny Erpenbeck.

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi All

I can't believe that Christmas is only a few weeks away! Here's hoping everyone has a restful holiday. We will be spending the holiday in SoCal this year with my father, sister and her fiancée.

Con Cariño,
Kathy

RIGHTS READERS

Human Rights Book Discussion Group

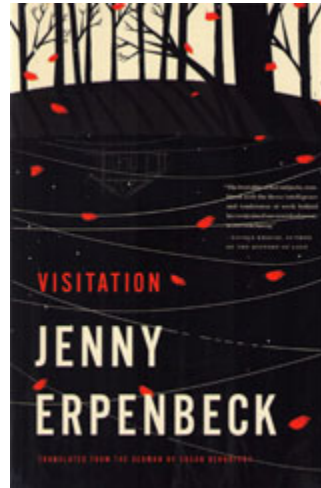
Keep up with Rights Readers at
<http://rightsreaders.blogspot.com>

**Next Rights Readers meeting:
Sunday, December 14, 6:30 PM**

***Visitation*
by Jenny Erpenbeck**

**MEETING IS NOT AT VROMANS
BOOKSTORE,**

SEE UPCOMING EVENTS SECTION!



REVIEW *Visitation*

By Jenny Erpenbeck

(The Telegraph, published 9 Dec 2010)

Kasia Boddy on the new offering from one of Germany's most experimental young writers, Visitation by Jenny Erpenbeck

By Kasia Boddy

Over the past 10 years, Jenny Erpenbeck has gained a reputation as one of Germany's most adventurous young writers, exploring personal and national secrets through allegory (*The Old Child*) and fable (*The Book of Words*).

Visitation, her third book, is set on a lake in the Brandenburg forest. A prologue enacts the violent drama of its Ice Age creation, while reminding us that even lakes are "temporary". The next great rupture comes at the end of the 19th century, for it is only then that a steady chain of inheritance, dating back to 1650, comes to an end.

Erpenbeck narrates the fairy tale of the mayor's four daughters, brought up according to what "may and must" be done. But the fiancé of one departs for Australia; another has a stillborn child with a workman; a third should have been "born a man"; and the youngest, Klara, goes mad and commits suicide. Modernity has arrived.

Klara's Wood is sold off as "parcels of land" and in 1936 holiday homes are built. The rest of the book considers what happens to a group of characters who live in or visit this "particular bit of earth located not terribly far from Berlin" from the Thirties through to the recent past. As the land is divided up, so is Erpenbeck's book. Each character initially seems to be isolated into a discrete story, just as most are, at one time or other, enclosed in a confined space – a wardrobe, an oven, a prison cell. The most poignant version is, inevitably, that of Jewish Doris, who hides, and dies, in a pitch-black closet in the Warsaw Ghetto.

But while Doris's world "had gone on shrinking as the end approached", other characters experience the pain of exile. Her uncle endures "expulsion to" (rather than from) an Indian Ocean paradise, while "The Writer" carries her typewriter from Berlin to Prague to Moscow to Ufa and back. That all suffering is more or less equal is the dubious implication.

No story is given priority but each instead hints at the connections that place forges between various owners, renters and subtenants. Erpenbeck encourages us to act like detectives, noting the re-emergence of previously insignificant details in new contexts.

As "The Architect" prepares to flee to the West in 1951, we learn that his wife's room "emanates" the scent of camphor and peppermint. It's a smell that lingers to the end of the book, evoking many of the house's other, less mundane, ghosts.

Present throughout is "The Gardener", who silently rakes his way through the book and through history. From his perspective, and that of the 24,000 years since the ice arrived in Brandenburg, the Nazis and Stasis are no worse than the potato beetle infestation. They're all just visitors.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/bookreviews/8191309/Visitation-by-Jenny-Erpenbeck-review.html>

AUTHOR BIO



Jenny Erpenbeck was born into a family of writers in East Berlin in 1967. Her grandparents, Hedda Zinner and Fritz Erpenbeck, both prominent cultural figures in the GDR, as well as her parents, John Erpenbeck and Doris Kilius, all worked as writers.

After her schooling, Erpenbeck completed an apprenticeship as a bookbinder. She worked as a prop-maker and dresser at the Staatsoper Berlin before studying theatre and stage direction for musical theatre. Since 1998 she has staged operas as a freelance director – including *Acis und Galathea* at the Staatsoper Berlin (2003); *Orpheus in der Unterwelt* in Palais Potsdam (2004), and Mozart's *Zaide* in Erlangen (2006). She staged her first original play, *Katzen haben sieben Leben* (t: Cats have seven lives), at

the Grazer Schauspielhaus. In 2007 she wrote a column for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*.

Erpenbeck's novels have been translated into over fourteen languages. She has been awarded numerous prizes, including the Ingeborg Bachmann Prize for her short story *Sibirien* (2001; t: Siberia). She was the Island Guest Writer of the *kunst:raum sylt quelle* Foundation in 2006. In 2008 she was awarded the Heimito von Doderer Literature Prize, the Solothurn Literature Award for her complete works, and *Heimsuchung* was nominated for the Prize of the Leipzig Book Fair. Erpenbeck lives with her son in Berlin.

AIUSA Executive Director Visits Pasadena By Laura Brown

On Election Night, 2014, Steve Hawkins, Executive Director of Amnesty International (AI) USA, met with local activists in Pasadena to lay out his priorities and tell about the group's national goals. Stephen and Susan Chandler hosted the event, billed as "dinner and conversation" for a varied group of 20 AI members.



(Steven Hawkins is second from right. Ted and Laura Brown are at back left.)

Hawkins told the group that he and other Amnesty workers had been present during the Ferguson, MO standoff between police and those protesting the shooting of Michael Brown. He felt the stinging effects of tear gas firsthand, and lamented the presence of militarized police officers. He alluded to the book by Radley Balko, "Rise of the Warrior Cop," and one of the guests who was familiar with the book said the author describes how the Drug War and the War on Terror since 9-11 has led to new levels of

SWAT type police units with heavy equipment like those seen at Ferguson. Hawkins has since returned to Ferguson after a grand jury did not indict Darren Wilson for Brown's killing, which has ignited protests in large U.S. cities including New York and San Francisco. He has reported that Amnesty International observers have been aimed at and gassed by riot police there. "Police raid safe space. Amnesty observers gassed," Steven Hawkins said November 25 on his official Twitter account.

Other topics discussed by the Pasadena group on election night included immigration and solitary confinement. Three of the guests, two from Iran and one from Canada, voiced their frustration about applying for legal status for years without success. Another guest pointed out that unaccompanied migrant children had been met in Murietta, CA by protesters who wanted them sent back, and that this attitude is un-American. A group member who had worked more than 20 years as a probation officer said that he has witnessed more people being doomed to long terms in solitary confinement, sometimes based solely on an accusation by another inmate. Young people are given no hope of rehabilitation and risk wasting their lives away with no one to advocate for them, he said.

The evening was a chance to meet with Hawkins on a personal level, as well as to converse with fellow AI members. Tracey Kardash, AI Director of Development, thanked the hosts for providing the forum and said she hoped the conversation would continue among the attendees and their circle of influence.

DEATH PENALTY NEWS

By Stevi Carroll

Michael Brown

The grand jury in Ferguson MO ruled not to indict Police Officer Darren Wilson in the shooting death of Michael Brown. From soon after the shooting, AIUSA has had volunteers on the ground in Ferguson as peacekeepers, observers, and nonviolence teachers.

Steven Hawkins, AIUSA's executive Director, posted a blog shortly after the decision was announced. He explained that Amnesty had a delegation in Ferguson to insure that people's

human rights, including the right to freely express themselves in peaceful protest be protected. He also said, "We are calling on them (law enforcement officers) to bear in mind **their role as partners and protectors of community**, seeking to do no harm. We are calling on them to **protect peaceful assemblies**, even if a small minority tries to turn a peaceful protest into a violent one. **That's what human rights looks like.**"

As I write this, violence has broken out in Ferguson. Mr. Hawkins said he was on his way to Ferguson to 'stand in solidarity' with the people and he asks us to remember the human rights of boys like the one in the photo accompanying his post.



David McCallum

October 15, 2014, was David McCallum's day of freedom. After 28 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, he was exonerated and freed thanks in part to work done by Brooklyn District Attorney Kenneth Thompson and the team of prosecutors now has working on his conviction review unit.

Mr. McCallum was 16 years old when he and Willie Stuckey, also 16, were arrested, tried, and convicted of the abduction and murder of Nathan Blenner. Despite no evidence linking them to the crime, they confessed to it. When DA Thompson took office, Mr. McCallum's lawyer sent him a letter asking him to review the case.

What Mr. Thompson found was that while Mr. McCallum's and Mr. Stuckey's confessions were there, they were very short and contained false-

fed facts. This led Mr. Thompson and his conviction review team to believe the confessions themselves were false.

Mr. McCallum said he’s been preparing himself for his eventual release. While in prison he learned the masonry trade and basic building and property maintenance, including electrical work. He also spent his time working with other inmates in substance abuse and mentor programs and helping them learn alternatives to avoid altercations that can lead to violence. Of his new life, Mr. McCallum said, “I am in shock, but I am not afraid of it. I embrace it.”

William Stuckey did not live to see freedom come his way; he died in prison. Not only did DA Thompson have to tell the family of Nathan Blenner that his killer is still free, but he also had to tell Mr. Stuckey’s mother that he’d been falsely imprisoned. In an interview on NPR, Mr. Thompson said that when he told Mr. Stuckey’s mother that his conviction was to be vacated, all he could hear “was her crying hysterically because she said her son was actually 15 when he was arrested, not 16, and he lost his life in prison.”

When I read stories of human beings freed because of innocence from prison after long imprisonments, I am always thankful they were not sentenced to death - and executed.

Rome

Recently, a friend of mine spent a few weeks in Rome. While she was there, she blogged about her experience. One of her stops was the Coliseum. From her blog:

“In more recent times, the Colosseo became the scene for activists against capital punishment, abolished in Italy in 1948. When a death sentence is commuted somewhere in the world, the elliptical ruin is illuminated at night with gold light. As it was when New Mexico abolished the death penalty in 2009.”

Perhaps one day all of the United States will have abolished the death penalty.

Executions

October

28	Miguel Paredes	Texas
	1-drug - pentobarbital	
29	Mark Christeson	Missouri
	3-drug - w/ midazolam hydrochloride	

November

19	Leon Taylor	Missouri
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1-drug - pentobarbital

Stays of Execution

November

13	Charles Warner	Oklahoma
19	Gregory Lott	Ohio
20	Richard Glossip	Oklahoma

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE
Gao Zhisheng
 by Joyce Wolf

Recently many organizations sent open letters to President Obama asking him to raise the case of Gao Zhisheng during his visit with Chinese leader Xi Jinping Nov 10-12. I have not been able to find any reports indicating that he did so.

Our own California Senator Barbara Boxer joined with a bipartisan group of 10 senators to urge President Obama to take up Gao Zhisheng’s case. On October 3, the senators wrote:

“Dear Mr. President:

We write to express our profound concern regarding the health and welfare of Chinese human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng and to ask that you use all available diplomatic means to urge the Chinese government to immediately allow him to relocate to the United States on humanitarian grounds due to his critical medical condition.”

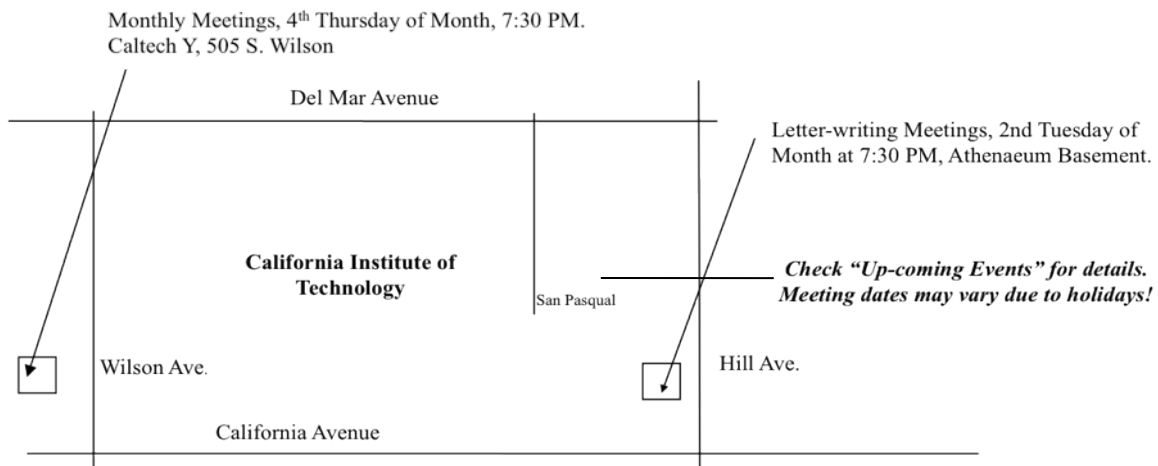
I suggest that we thank Senator Boxer for advocating for Gao Zhisheng, and ask whether President Obama responded to the letter from her and the other senators. Contact information for Senator Boxer is available on her website:

<http://boxer.senate.gov>.

GROUP 22 MONTHLY LETTER COUNT

UAs	21
Total	21

To add your letters to the total contact aigp22@caltech.edu



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.