

Amnesty International Group 22 Pasadena/Caltech News

Volume XXIII Number 4, April 2015

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, April 23, 8:00 PM. [NOTE NEW TIME!] 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, May 12, 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, May 17, 6:30 PM. Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion group. This month we read "Now I Know Who My Comrades Are" by Emily Parker.

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi All

Group 22 celebrated our POC Gao Zhisheng's birthday last week with a cake, candles, and Happy Birthday sung in Chinese and English! (Thanks to Wen for the translation.) Robert videotaped it and put it on You Tube!
<https://youtu.be/rvMrqy8TifY>

Stevi was invited to speak to a political science class at PCC. Read her article 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, May 17, 6:30 PM

Vroman's Bookstore

695 E. Colorado, Pasadena

AUTHOR BIO



Emily Parker is the author of "*Now I Know Who My Comrades Are: Voices from the Internet Underground*" which was published by Sarah Crichton Books/Farrar, Straus & Giroux in 2014.

"Now I Know Who My Comrades Are"

tells the stories of Internet activists in China, Cuba and Russia. Mario Vargas Llosa, winner of the 2010 Nobel Prize for Literature, wrote that the book is "a rigorously researched and reported account that reads like a thriller. It's been a while since I have read a book that is so entertaining, not to mention so encouraging for the culture of liberty." Vargas Llosa's full article about "Now I Know Who My Comrades Are" can be found [here](#). "Now I Know Who My Comrades Are" has been assigned in courses at Harvard, Yale, Columbia and Tufts.

Emily is currently digital diplomacy advisor and senior fellow at the New America Foundation. She spent over five years working for The Wall Street Journal, first as a writer in Hong Kong and later as a writer and editor in New York. From 2004 to 2005 she wrote a Wall Street Journal column called "Virtual Possibilities: China and the Internet." She is also a former editor at The New York Times.

Previously, Emily was a member of Secretary Clinton's Policy Planning staff at the U.S. Department of State, where she covered 21st-century statecraft, innovation, and technology. While at State she advised on issues related to Internet freedom and open government, and traveled to the Middle East to explore the role of new media in post-revolutionary Egypt. She no longer has any affiliation with the U.S. government.

Emily is the creator of three digital diplomacy projects: [Make Energy: A US-Mexico Innovation](#)

[Challenge, Green Electronics: A US-China Maker Challenge](#) and [Code4Country](#), the first open government coding marathon between the United States and Russia. Code4Country brought together Russian and American software developers to identify technological solutions to challenges of government transparency. Emily is a former International Affairs Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, an Arthur Ross Fellow at Asia Society's Center on U.S.-China Relations and a Global Policy Fellow at Carnegie Moscow Center, where she researched the role of blogging and social media in today's Russia.

She has written for *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Slate*, *The New Yorker*, *Politico*, *Newsweek*, *Foreign Policy*, *The New Republic* and *World Affairs*. Her chapter on Chinese nationalism appeared in *China's Great Leap: the Beijing Games and Olympian Human Rights Challenges* (Seven Stories Press, May 2008). In 2002 she worked at the Japan Business Federation (Keidanren) in Tokyo, where she researched how historical tensions between China and Japan would affect Sino-Japanese business relations.

She has worked in China and Japan, and speaks Chinese, Japanese, French and Spanish. She graduated with Honors from Brown University with a double major in International Relations and Comparative Literature (French and Spanish). She has a Masters from Harvard in East Asian Studies.

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BOOK REVIEW: 'Now I Know Who My Comrades Are' by Emily Parker

Authoritarian regimes use the Internet as a tool for repression, but dissidents around the world believe it can be a force for freedom.

By Luke Allnutt
March 20, 2014

Zhao Jing was working as a hotel receptionist in an eastern Chinese province when he downloaded a dissident newsletter from a proxy server in 1999. The firsthand accounts and bloody photographs of the Tiananmen Square massacre 10 years earlier changed everything for him. Whispered critiques that had previously gone no further than dinner-table conversations were suddenly confirmed, and he was no longer alone in his doubts about the Communist state. He began digging into online discussion forums

and eventually started his own blog—until Microsoft, which hosted the site, shut it down in 2005. Writing under the pen name Michael Anti, he is today one of China's most well-known bloggers. "The Internet made me know who I am," he tells Emily Parker. "Now I know who my comrades are."

Mr. Anti's statement gave Ms. Parker the title for her investigation of the power of the Internet to empower political dissidents. Over the past few years, there has been a fierce debate among intellectuals and technologists over whether the Internet is an inherent force for democracy or whether the Web can just as easily be used as a tool of repressive regimes. Particularly after the so-called Arab Spring, there was hyperbolic talk of an era of Twitter uprisings—a decentralized new cyber-commons was, with the help of Silicon Valley, just a few clicks away from toppling despots.

Ms. Parker doesn't discuss the Mideast much in "Now I Know Who My Comrades Are," concentrating instead on China, Cuba and Russia. In three sections respectively titled "Isolation," "Fear" and "Apathy," she shows the malign, sophisticated ways in which modern authoritarians operate. To do so, she profiles the charismatic dissidents who resist them.

A Chinese speaker—and a former editorial writer for *The Journal in Asia*—Ms. Parker is at her best on China. For many Chinese citizens, the Internet circumvents traditional state-run media, just as samizdat once did in the Soviet Union. Despite the state's extensive surveillance and censorship of content, commonly referred to as the Great Firewall, more than 600 million Chinese are online.

Ms. Parker's portraits of Chinese bloggers complicate the caricature of brave, principled freedom fighters. These are spiky, sectarian personalities—and sometimes far from democratic. Many explain that their criticism of the system can only go so far. Direct calls for street protests are a red line. As Mr. Anti puts it: "If you want to be a public opinion leader, self-censorship is part of your job."

It is not self-censorship but outright fear that characterizes Cuba. This is an old-fashioned authoritarian society in Ms. Parker's telling, with networks of citizen-informers keeping a watchful eye. Bloggers and their families are always being hauled in for "interviews" with security officials. Ms. Parker's reporting (she also speaks Spanish) captures well the online

activists' pervasive feeling of being constantly monitored.

The author experiences this herself when she meets with one Cuban blogger, Laritza Diversent. "Whenever I went out with Laritza, we were never quite alone. A man would sit down at a nearby table and stare straight ahead or thumb listlessly through a newspaper. Someone would come over to the table and ask for the time, or perhaps a cigarette," Ms. Parker writes. Brave bloggers like Ms. Diversent write about their country's social problems, like being forced into the black market to survive, yet with merely an estimated 5% of Cubans online, only a handful of Cubans will get to read their work.

Russia is a much freer place, where the Internet is widely available. Direct, Chinese-style censorship, where many websites are simply inaccessible, is relatively rare. Instead, the state relies on other tactics to limit dissent, such as armies of online commenters who propagate the Kremlin line. The challenge for activists in this context is apathy: A largely ineffectual opposition, relative economic stability compared with the chaos of the 1990s, and the relentless Putin propaganda machine have left Russians with little appetite for public protest.

One person who has tried to ignite ordinary Russians' sense of civic purpose is Alexei Navalny, a lawyer and anticorruption activist. By relentlessly blogging about high-level corruption in state-controlled companies, "he wanted to show Russians that they could fight corruption from the convenience of their living rooms, and that they could win," Ms. Parker writes. Mr. Navalny has paid a price for his activism: He is now under house arrest, while a probe continues against him for alleged money laundering—a charge he says is politically motivated.

Ms. Parker is optimistic about the Internet's power to spread freedom. "Over the years," she writes, "blogs and social media helped to transform cowed, powerless individuals into revolutionaries." Yet governments, she acknowledges, are fighting back: "They censor content and block entire websites. They try to influence online discussions. They spy on troublemakers and intimidate and arrest bloggers." But the author doesn't cover these efforts in much detail, asserting that such countermeasures "are not nearly enough to reverse the psychological transformation taking place among citizens of the Web." She gives short shrift to the critics who have assailed the

idea that the Internet is necessarily liberating, and she fails to show the exact nature and extent of the 'psychological transformation.'"

The key question Ms. Parker dodges is whether the so-called netizens who are emerging will be genuine liberals or whether they're just as likely to be ultra-nationalists—or something worse. Ordinary citizens may be "discovering their voices," as Ms. Parker writes. But these voices might not be what we expect.

[Mr. Allnutt is an editor at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Review from the Wall Street Journal.]

SECURITY WITH HUMAN RIGHTS

by Robert Adams

AIUSA released the following press release on April 17, 2015:

Amnesty International USA Calls for Approval of Civilian Board to Oversee St. Louis Police

WASHINGTON- Amnesty International USA calls for the St. Louis Board of Aldermen to establish a Civilian Oversight Board that would evaluate police shootings, as well as broader police practices.

The civilian review board was proposed in the wake of the killing of unarmed teenager Michael Brown by Ferguson police officer Darren Wilson and the subsequent Department of Justice investigation. While the DOJ did not press charges against Wilson, the report found that the Ferguson Police Department violated individuals' Fourth Amendment rights and exhibited racial bias when it stopped people without reasonable suspicion, arrested them without probable cause, and used unreasonable force against them. Alderman Terry Kennedy filed Bill 208 calling for the formation of a police civilian oversight board.

The DOJ report showed that the Ferguson police force was more concerned about generating revenue through unfair fines and tickets than they were with protecting the lives of the people they were sworn to serve," **said Steven W. Hawkins, executive director of Amnesty International USA.** "This legislation would be an important step in ensuring appropriate systems of oversight. It is critical that reforms at

the national level follow suit, including guidelines for using deadly force in the U.S. that are in line with international standards.”

If approved, the civilian review board would have the ability to investigate allegations of police misconduct; research and assess police policies, operations and procedures; and make findings and recommendations. The board could also independently review evidence and witness statements from investigations by police internal affairs. All findings will be reported to the city’s public safety director and police commissioner.

To read *On the Streets of America: Human Rights Abuses in Ferguson*, go to: amnestyusa.org/OnTheStreetsOfAmerica

AI GOES TO NIGHT SCHOOL
by Stevi Carroll

On April 7, Brittany Conrad from the Department of Political Science at Pasadena City College contacted us to have someone come to speak to her class on World Government and Politics.

When I got to PCC, the class was discussing terrorism. It seemed like a good idea to follow that with some human rights. A couple of students knew a little about AI, so when they finished, I filled in a little history of Amnesty that included the importance of the UN Declaration of Human Rights. I passed out our bookmarks that enumerate the Rights. I noticed a number of the students carefully reading them.

The first big case I remember writing for is Ken Saro-Wiwa. I told about getting involved with AI and how this case had touched me. I had some visuals including this one that makes what happened and by whom very clear.



The story of Gao Zhinsheng interested them. I showed them our birthday photo as well as the

Lego images from Ai WeiWei’s installation on Alcatraz. One of the students explained who Ai WeiWei is. What joy!

When I talked about our book group, I passed around a few of our past books. Again, I noticed a number of the students looking at the text on the backs and flipping through the pages. I did mention they could join us without having read the books.

I always figure letter writing is the one thing students might be able to do. I asked them to join us and said the information was available in the newsletters each one of them got. During class, a number of recent Urgent Actions circulated around the room along with paper and envelopes. The Urgent Actions snagged five letters and the sign up sheet that was also wandering around room netted us six names and email addresses!

Many thanks to Brittany Conrad for inviting us to her class.

DEATH PENALTY NEWS
By Stevi Carroll

Free At Last

For Anthony Hinton, April 3, 2015, will be a lifelong day to celebrate; he became the 152 person exonerated, freed from death row since 1973. After being imprisoned for 30 years, the charges against him were dismissed. Mr. Hinton’s original lawyer did not know they could have funds to hire a qualified firearms expert, so instead he hired one he knew was inadequate. The results from testing bullets used in the killings Mr. Hinton was accused of and those fired from a gun found in Mr. Hinton’s house led to his conviction. Racial bias also played a part in the outcome of his trial. The prosecutor, who had a history of racial bias, said he could tell Mr. Hinton was guilty and ‘evil’ by looking at him.

Bryan Stevenson and others from the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) took Mr. Hinton’s case. The three firearms experts employed by EJI found no conclusive proof the six bullets used in the murders Mr. Hinton was convicted of committing were fired from the gun found at his house.

Mr. Stevenson says Mr. Hinton faces challenges along with joy for his freedom. Thirty years is a long time to be removed from the world as we know it.

March 11, 2014, Glenn Ford walked out of Angola Prison's death row a free man. He, too, had endured 30 years of incarceration. Mr. Ford was accused of killing Isadore Roseman. His defense lawyers had little experience and had never been to court before, and he faced an all-white jury. Recently, Marty Stroud, the prosecutor in Mr. Ford's case wrote a letter of apology to *The (Shreveport, LA) Times* in which he said he was at the time of Mr. Ford's trial "arrogant, judgmental, narcissistic and very full of myself". Later Mr. Ford and Mr. Stroud met for a formal apology. To see this moving encounter, go to

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vmxier611JM>.

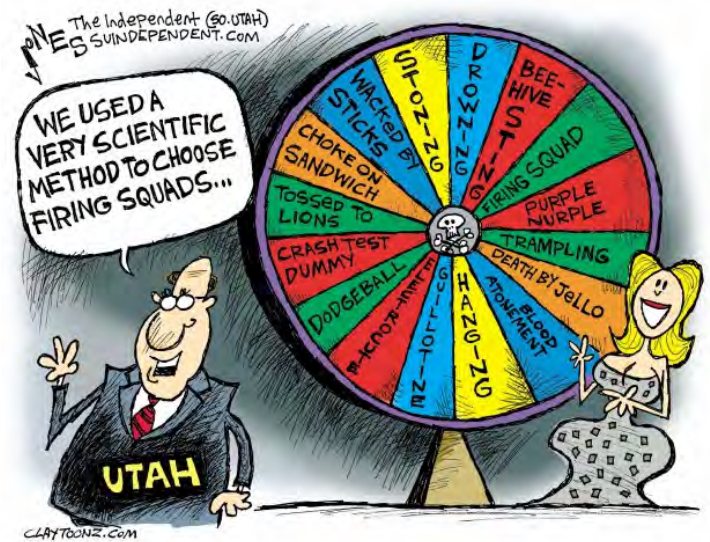
To read more about exonerated people, go to *10 Astonishingly Cruel Tales of the Exonerated in America* <http://www.alternet.org/civil-liberties/10-astonishingly-cruel-tales-exonerated-america>.

What to Do?

We love our choices. Pepsi or Coke? Compact car or SUV? Vegan or Paleo? Condo or free standing home? Our lists of choices are long. The world of choice has entered the means of dispatching those among us who have been sentenced to death.

As we know, those pesky Europeans decided they did not want their drugs used to kill people, so they stopped supplying the people who run our death chambers. This led us to the compounding pharmacies where the pharmacists mixed up brews that could 'mercifully' put to death the convicted man or woman. Problems arose when some of these people writhed and groaned and took their time dying. The good news for Texas is that they have enough lethal injection drugs to kill their April offerings to Justice. The bad news for Texas is that the flow of drugs will not continue thus what to do?

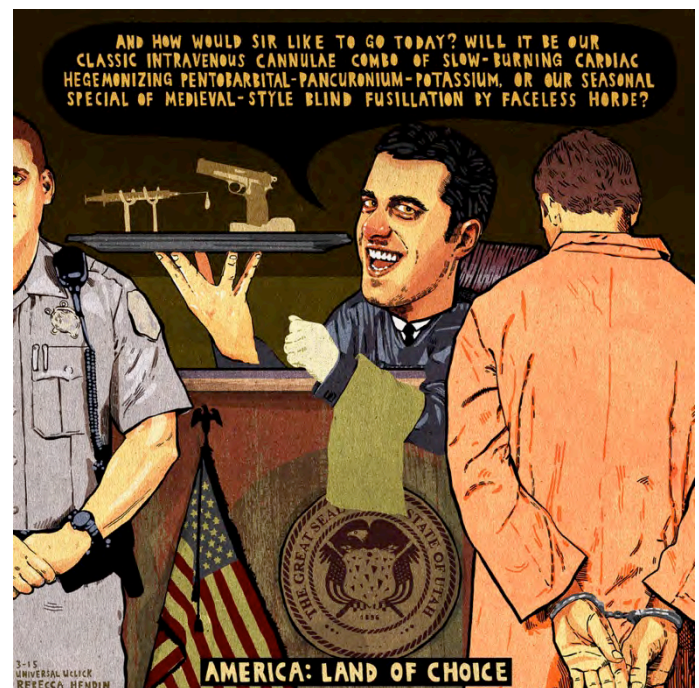
Other states shine the light on options. In 2004, Utah's Department of Corrections (DOC) stopped offering the firing squad for people sentenced to death (of course, someone convicted before that date still could request the firing squad). In March 2015 since the shortage of drugs might prevent the Utah DOC from executing people, Governor Gary R. Herbert signed a bill reinstating the firing squad.



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<http://claytoonz.com> - <http://suindependent.com>

Oklahoma becomes the first state to approve the use of nitrogen gas because executions in the state are on hold while the US Supreme Court considers whether or not the state's three-drug protocol is constitutional. Apparently, what happens with nitrogen gas is it induces hypoxia. This means a "deficiency in the amount of oxygen reaching the tissues" and is thus "a humane and painless method of execution that requires no medical expertise to perform" (Oklahoma governor signs bill allowing nitrogen in executions - AP - April 17, 2015).

Old Sparky, the electric chair, has been dusted off in a number of states: Alabama, Florida, South Carolina, and Virginia. So choice abounds in America.



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www.rebeccahendin.com

Even though the authorities in Tennessee have reawakened Old Sparky, they now have decided to delay executions scheduled for this year. Other states are doing the same. The Nebraska legislature has a bill that would replace the death penalty with life sentences. Senate lawmakers in Delaware have voted to repeal the death penalty and face opposition from the House; although, the 15 death row inmates would still face execution.

So choice does abound in America, and it might be a choice other than just how we execute.

Least Number of Executions in the US in 20 Years

In 2014, the US saw ‘only’ 35 executions, the lowest number in 20 years. Now with that said the US still ranks fifth for executions worldwide behind China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq. We also have seen fewer states carrying out executions and a number of people exonerated of their capital crimes. To read more on this, go to *Did Death Sentences in US Increase or Decrease Last Year?* By James Clark at <http://blog.amnestyusa.org/us/did-death-sentences-in-us-increase-or-decrease-last-year/>.

Life on Death Row

Of course, we think of the men and women who spend their lives in prison on death row. But what about the people who work on death row? “This Is What It feels like to Spend Your Life Working on Death Row” lets us know what this experience has been for four of these people: The Warden, The Bureaucrat, The Chaplain, and The Executioner.

The Warden: “I grew up in the civil rights era, in a time when civil rights workers were being murdered. I worked in law enforcement, reluctantly fundamentally supporting the death penalty, until I became a superintendent of prisons. I’m not a softie on crime. Capital punishment was embedded in my psyche as an appropriate sanction.”

The Bureaucrat: “I witnessed 32 executions. As regional director, I was on site in the control room. During that time period, I was often asked my opinion on the death penalty. My response was, ‘It’s the law of the state, and I’m going to carry it out to the best of my ability.’”

The Chaplain: “Standing by the gurney almost 100 times, and watching innocent men killed, watching repentant men killed, and seeing the pain among families and men and my employee friends, cannot leave my memories.”

The Executioner: “One of your main jobs at the prison is to save lives. You’re keeping them safe, preventing suicides. When I had to do executions, I would transform myself into a person who would take a life.”

To read the rest of these stories, go to http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/04/13/death-row-stories_n_7043620.html.

Exonerations

March

23 Debra Milke AZ
23 years on death row

April

3 Anthony Hinton AL
30 years on death row

Stays of Execution

April

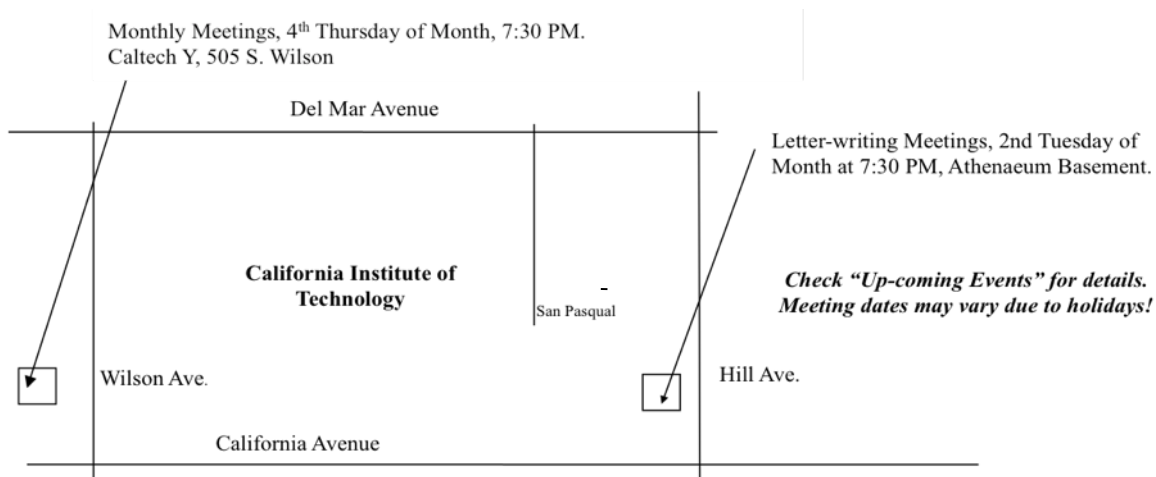
17 Lance Arrington PA
17 Albert Perez PA

Executions

April

9 Kent Srpouse TX
Lethal Injection 1-drug
14 Andre Cole MO
Lethal injection 1-drug
15 Manuel Garza TX
Lethal injection 1-drug

GROUP 22 MONTHLY LETTER COUNT	
UAs	29
POC (Birthday Card)	1
Total	30
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
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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.