

Amnesty International Group 22 Pasadena/Caltech News

Volume XXIV Number 4, April 2016

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, April 28, 8:00 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.) Please join us for a discussion with **special guest Jim Waterhouse from Citizens Climate Lobby.** Refreshments provided.

Tuesday, May 10, 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 15, 6:30 PM. *Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion group.* This month we read **"Ghettoside: A True Story of Murder in America"** by Jill Leovy.

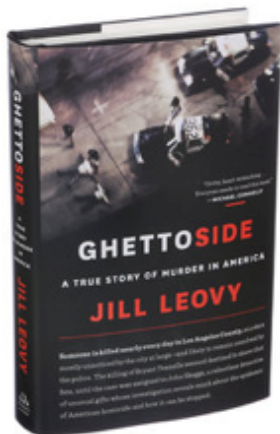
COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi everyone

Group 22 members Paula, Joyce, Laura and Ted Brown and Alexi went to the rally for Narges Mohammadi this past Thursday, April 21, in Westwood. They were joined by members of the Iranian community and other groups. Old friends Tracy, Ali and Ann Lau were also there. See Alexi's email report and photos in this newsletter.

Hopefully this local action and others worldwide will draw attention to her case, and put pressure on the Iranians to let her go.

Con Cariño,
Kathy



Next Rights Readers meeting:

**Sunday, May 15
6:30 PM**

**Vroman's Bookstore
695 E. Colorado Blvd
Pasadena**

***Ghettoside: A True Story
of Murder in America***

by Jill Leovy

RIGHTS READERS

**Human Rights Book Discussion
Group**

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

AUTHOR BIO



Jill Leovy has been a reporter and editor for the *Los Angeles Times* since 1993 and is currently assigned to the features desk in Los Angeles. She is the author of the nonfiction book "Ghettoside: A True Story of Murder in America." [www.latimes.com/la-bio-jill-leovy-staff.html]

BOOK REVIEW

Putting 'Black Lives Matter' Into Action
Jill Leovy's 'Ghettoside,' a South Los Angeles Murder Case

By DWIGHT GARNER JAN. 22, 2015
[www.nytimes.com]

The true-crime podcast "[Serial](#)" was a phenomenon, in part, because it was told in the first person. The narrator, Sarah Koenig, all but whispered the story into our ears, and her brainiac sensibility was as interesting as the killing at her story's core. Her uncertainty was fetching on an existential level.

Jill Leovy's powerful new book, "Ghettoside," also relates the story of a murder, this time of a young black man in South Los Angeles. It's possible to admire "Serial" while praising Ms. Leovy as the anti-Koenig. The depth of the reporting and analysis in "Ghettoside" makes "Serial," by comparison, resemble a book of poetry.

"Ghettoside" is old-school narrative journalism, told strictly in the third person. It's as square as a card table. Yet the book is a serious and kaleidoscopic achievement, from a reporter for The Los Angeles Times who's spent most of her career covering cops and thinking about what their work means.

Nestled inside the story of one gang-related killing is a well-made and timely argument — especially in the wake of the protests in Ferguson, Mo., and over the death of Eric Garner — that transcends a single death. Ms. Leovy suggests, six decades after the start of the civil rights movement, that the "impunity for the murder of black men" remains America's great and largely ignored race problem.

We've allowed black lives to become cheap. "This is a book about a very simple idea," she declares. "Where the criminal justice system fails to respond vigorously to violent injury and death, homicide becomes endemic."

Like an orchestra, "Ghettoside" needs time to warm up. There are a few squawks early on. Yet once it gets rolling, it is tidal in its force.

The first few chapters introduce us to characters we'll come to know intimately: beat cops, detectives, parents, young men and women. We are introduced as well to life in largely black South Los Angeles — the "boxy apartments, chain-link fences, converted garages, bad dogs with no collars, and [Chevy Caprices](#)" — and to the parameters of the murder problem one detective refers to as "the Monster."

The early parts of "Ghettoside" also introduce us to Ms. Leovy's greatest gift as a journalist: her ability to remain hard-headed while displaying an almost Tolstoyan level of human sympathy. Nearly every person in her story — killers and victims, hookers and soccer moms, good cops and bad — exists within a rich social context.

She traces the families of most of the black men and women she writes about back to their roots in the American South. She's interested not merely in who people are but also in what made them so. One black detective puts this kind of imaginative sympathy somewhat differently when he says about a murdered prostitute: "She ain't a whore no more. She's some daddy's baby."

Ms. Leovy, we learn in an author's note, spent years embedded with the Los Angeles Police Department, her desk in the detectives' squad room. For two years, on her newspaper's website, she kept track of every murder in Los Angeles County on a blog called the [Homicide Report](#).

Only in this author's note does this book slip into first person. The author frequently worked out of her car, a 2001 Ford Escort. "I carried a police radio, went to crime scenes, talked up people I met on the street and got to know police officers." She adds, "I was watching the statistics unfold in real time."

The detectives she most admired scorned elite L.A.P.D. divisions and worked the bleakest parts of Los Angeles, devoting themselves to, as she puts it, "making black lives expensive." The complicated hero of "Ghettoside" is one such detective, John Skaggs.

He's Irish-American; he votes Republican; he goes at his work like a highly caffeinated master carpenter. You get the sense he could have solved the mystery in "Serial" in a long afternoon. About having him work a case, a woman whose husband was murdered said, "It was like how your own brothers would go and look for the guy, you know?" He was a rarity.

The central murder in "Ghettoside" is that of Bryant Tennelle, a sweet if troubled 18-year-old who was in the wrong place at the wrong time and wearing a baseball cap that covertly linked him to the wrong gang. He was shot on a sidewalk not far from his home. A black S.U.V. peeled away from the scene.

It was the kind of case that's often not solved in South Los Angeles. People are afraid to testify; "snitches" are often shot. There was so much fear about speaking to authorities, Ms. Leovy writes, "that the \$25,000 rewards offered for help on cases were virtually never collected."

A few things made the Tennelle case different. Bryant's father, Wallace Tennelle, was an L.A.P.D. detective, one of the rare ones who raised children in South Los Angeles. The case was different, too, because Detective Skaggs was involved.

Ms. Leovy is excellent on the street-level detective work that went into fingering Bryant Tennelle's killers. Listened to on audio, "Ghettoside" would, I suspect, come over like a "Law & Order" episode of the highest caliber. She is just as excellent on the resulting court proceedings.

This story moves swiftly, but Ms. Leovy pauses frequently, like a judge calling defense lawyers over for sidebars, to frame and reframe larger issues. These pauses are mostly seamless. She is pointed about the ways progressives (and many researchers) don't like to dwell on black-on-black crime, for fear of being considered racist. The subject is "like incest," one activist says. She explores why black murder rates are higher than those of Hispanics.

Her answers are complex and persuasive. "The Monster's source was not general perversity of mind in the population that suffered," she writes. "It was a weak legal apparatus that had long failed to place black injuries and the loss of black lives at the heart of its response when mobilizing the law, first in the South and later in segregated cities."

Ms. Leovy's narrative has its share of clichés and mildly soggy moments, yet on the whole she's a crisp writer with a crisp mind and the ability to boil entire skies of information into hard journalistic rain.

"The detective story is not about murder," P. D. James has written, "but the restoration of order." This case at the center of this book suggests that the legal authority, so longed for by the citizens of South Los Angeles and elsewhere, would not be that hard to introduce and make permanent. "But you had to be willing to pay the cost, to put in the effort," Ms. Leovy writes. "You had to be *very persistent*."

Her book is persistent as hell.

Security With Human Rights

By Robert Adams

Torture Is Not the Answer

By Elizabeth Beavers

April 20, 2016

Too little, and much too late. CIA Director John Brennan this week declared that the CIA would refuse to engage in waterboarding in the future, even if ordered to do so.

This was the latest in a recent string of headline-grabbing proclamations from current and former U.S. officials insisting that, if faced with the dilemma between following orders or rejecting torture, they would reject torture.

As welcome as these promises are, they ring hollow. That's because the same U.S. intelligence community was already faced with that exact dilemma, and **they got it wrong.**

John Brennan is exactly right that interrogators should refuse orders to carry out torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, but he's wrong that it's a viable option in the first place.

As a reminder, torture is illegal under both domestic and international law. But the senior officials responsible for devising, authorizing, and ordering unlawful detainee abuse have so far evaded investigation or prosecution by the U.S. government. Free from fear that they may face justice, those same individuals actually churn out memoirs detailing and justifying the torture that they oversaw, unconcerned with the possibility of criminal prosecutions.

It's a dangerous precedent to set. It sends the message that torture is an option that some officials may nobly choose not to exercise, instead of a hard line that law and morality forbid in all cases without exception.

Thankfully, there have been meaningful changes to help protect against a future return to torture. Landmark legislation was passed last year to strengthen changes already made through executive order. But until there are consequences for the crimes that were committed, policymakers may regard torture as a policy option that's ready to be dusted off and put back to use in the future, if circumstances seem to justify it.

"We tortured some folks."

That's how **President Obama memorably summarized the systematic abuse of detainees carried out in his predecessor's "war on terror."** [Waterboarding](#) may be the most iconic symbol of the era, but there was more. The treatment included sexual abuse, other injury, and even death.

This is not a secret – human rights organizations have documented the crimes and lack of justice for years. A landmark Senate report last year spelled out the torture in excruciating detail. If one wanted to learn about CIA and military detainee torture practices, there are thousands upon thousands of pages available to read.

From the mountains of documentation, a pattern emerges: **when faced with the choice to defy orders or to embrace torture, the U.S. government embraced torture.** And it provided cover for all who did the same. Both through a CIA-run secret detention and rendition program, and through military prisons in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. government constructed a powerful infrastructure that not only delivered immoral and unlawful acts of torture, but also provided built-in impunity for the abusers.

The recent promises not to return to torture are a welcome development, but arrive too late for the individuals who already suffered at the hands of the U.S. torture regime.

The death, injury, and psychiatric damage endured by those who were tortured must never be repeated. As the news cycle continues to place torture squarely on the national debate stage, it is crucial that the actual lives impacted by torture not be forgotten.

As fear and hate continue to seep into the public consciousness, and the global war continues to prove itself endless, it is more important than ever to draw firm boundaries. Each person has a right to be free from torture simply by virtue of their humanity, and it's a right that requires constant vigilance. No amount of fear can justify returning to torture, and only real consequences for past actions can protect against future abuses.

Words aren't enough – there must be a shift from impunity to accountability. Only then can the United States truly avoid repeating its tortured past.

**APRIL 21 RALLY
for Narges Mohammadi
by Alexi Daher**

[Here is Alexi's email report about the rally.]

Thank you Elise and Ali for all your support!
and thank you Group 22!!

It was such a thrill to be standing besides Group 22 and the Iranian community in support of our prisoner of conscience Narges Mohammadi. Our efforts really paid off every time we heard so many cars honking for Narges.

Ann Lau (from Group 146 and Visual Artists Guild) and Tracy Gore were also there; thank you so much for your support!

Paula, Laura and her husband, and I attended the UCLA event right after our rally. Signs for #UnitedForNarges were visible in support of our campaign. Nazanin Boniadi addressed the audience about Narges and her work in Iran and spoke about her experience as a refugee. At the UCLA event, I read Dr. Edadi's statement on Narges.

Many members of the Intercultural Circle of Women and members of the Iranian community joined us. Elahe Amani, Chair of the Global Circles of Women's Intercultural Network wrote an article and promoted our rally. We plan to work together in the future to continue our work to bring human rights in Iran.

On social media, Madison Group 139, UnitedForIran, and Amnesty International groups in Canada, Australia, Denmark and Belgium conducted actions for #UnitedForNarges and supported our action as well. Many campaign for Narges but it was awesome uniting our efforts.

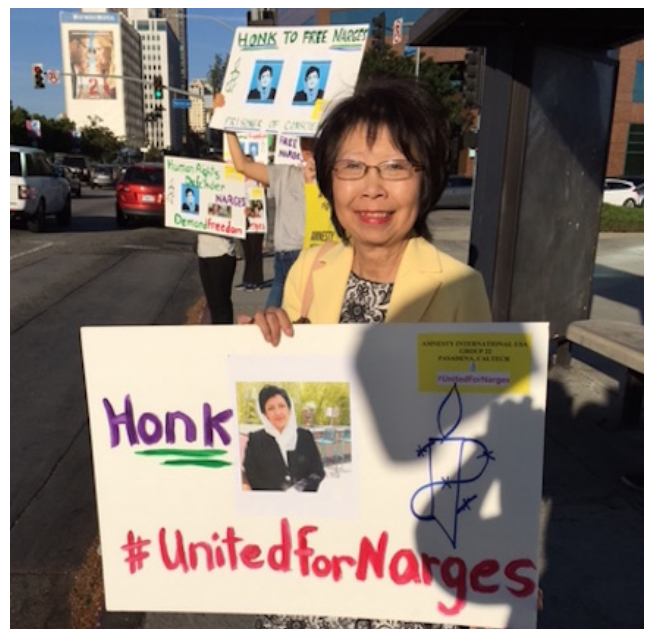
Warmly,
Alexi



Laura, Paula and Alexi



Sidewalk at the Federal Building in Westwood



Ann Lau, Group 146 and Visual Artists Guild



Amnesty Los Angeles Gathering at UCLA

DEATH PENALTY NEWS

By Stevi Carroll

Public Comments About the One-Drug Protocol

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has once more extended the date for public comments about the State's adopting a one-drug protocol for executions. This time the extension is to May 15, 2016. Perhaps the Department is running out the clock until Californians get to vote to change the death penalty to life without possibility of parole in November after which a State sanctioned method for killing will be null and void. Let's hope, and work for, justice that works instead of having to speak out in opposition to any protocol for executions.

"Any person may submit written comments about the proposed regulations to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Regulation and Policy Management Branch (RPMB), P. O. Box 942883, Sacramento, CA 94283 - 0001, by fax to (916) 324-6075, or by e-mail to LI.comments@cdcr.ca.gov."

Justice That Works

April 12th, I attended a meeting with Terry McAffrey, the California Amnesty International point person for the Justice That Works campaign, at the Archdiocese of LA's offices. After a lively discussion among Terry and the four other men there regarding the local bishops and whether or not the bishops will give their permission to collect signatures after Masses, the bottom line possibility the measure will be on the ballot was brought up. The consensus was that yes, it will be on the ballot.

The other ballot measure that wants to speed up the appeals process to clear the way to execution may not. People working on that petition started collecting signatures later than the Justice That Works folks and the cost for paid signature collectors has risen from 50¢ per signature to about \$5.00 per signature. Of course we have to wait to see what happens.

Thanks to all who signed the petition and to those AI members who took petitions into the community for signatures. As you can tell, the signatures we were able to collect are valuable not only for getting this on the ballot but also for saving money.

Once we know the Justice That Works measure is on the ballot, I will find out ways for us to be involved. One way we can now be involved is to donate some cold hard cash. Here's a link to the Justice That Works webpage: <http://www.justicethatworks.org/>.

Another takeaway from Tuesday's meeting was the reminder of Pope Francis' February 21st call for a worldwide abolition of the death penalty: "I appeal to the consciences of those who govern to reach an international consensus to abolish the death penalty," Pope Francis told tens of thousands of people in St Peter's Square in the Vatican on Sunday.

James Clark's Op-Ed in U.S. News & World Report

"Time's Up on the Death Penalty: Capital punishment is barely used anymore, and should be repealed" reads the headline of James Clark's Op-Ed in the April 13, 2016, online edition of U.S. News & World Report. James talks about how the US is in top five nations that still employ the death penalty and then points out that "in 2015 the United States was responsible for the fewest number of death sentences since 1977, and the fewest executions since 1991."

He closes his piece reminding his readers that most other countries have abolished the death penalty, and while the US wants to be seen as a supporter of human rights, "By stubbornly holding on to the death penalty, the United States undermines its claim that it stands for human rights. There can be no "improving the system" – the system is broken beyond repair and must be abandoned once and for all."

To read James' entire Op-Ed, go to <http://www.usnews.com/news/the-report/articles/2016-04-13/put-the-death-penalty-out-of-its-misery?int=a39d09>.

James Clark is the senior campaigner on the death penalty at Amnesty International USA.

The Personal Reality of the Death Penalty

David Kaczynski

We might remember the Unabomber, Ted Kaczynski. His brother, David, has become a death penalty abolitionist, not because Ted was

sentenced to death but because David has had insights into the death penalty that most of us have never been privy to. To see a talk by David, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3jUEvQ7qAM>.

Bud Welsh

We've talked about Bud Welsh before. His daughter, Julie Marie, was killed in the Murrah Federal Building bombing in Oklahoma City. Although he initially wanted nothing more than swift and deadly revenge, he later became aware that Timothy McVeigh also had a father who was grieving. To see Bud Welsh discuss this, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9VNJe7snS2k>.

Daniel Anthony Lucas

Daniel Anthony Lucas is scheduled to be executed in Georgia on April 27th and there is still time for you to help halt this execution. This would be the fifth execution in Georgia of 2016, and the 13th nationwide.

To send Georgia Governor Nathan Deal an email to ask to stop this execution, go to <http://gov.georgia.gov/webform/contact-governor-domestic-form>.

And you can get this reply: "Thank you very much for making your views known. Your message will be shared with Governor Deal." Somehow this falls short of what one might desire.

Recent Exonerations

March

30 Mario Casciaro IL

In 2013, Mario Casciaro was sentenced to 26 years in prison for murder in McHenry County, Illinois. In 2014, the chief witness against him recanted; in 2016, the murder conviction was vacated and the case was dismissed.

April

7 Keith Harward VA

In 1986, Keith Harward, a member of the U.S. Navy, was convicted of murder and rape and sentenced to life in prison in Newport News, Virginia. He was exonerated in 2016 by DNA tests which identified the real criminal who by then was deceased.

source: The National Registry of Exonerations <http://www.law.umich.edu/special/exoneration>

Stay of Execution

April

13 Ivan Teleguz VA

Executions

March

22 Adam Ward TX
1-drug lethal injection (Pentobarbital)

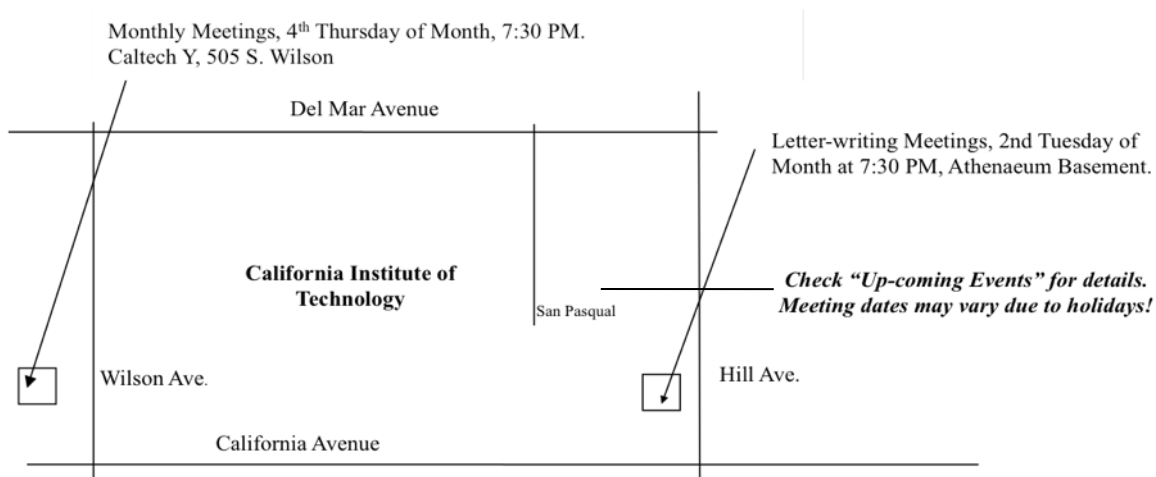
31 Joshua Bishop GA
1-drug lethal injection (Pentobarbital)

April

6 Pablo Vasquez TX
1-drug lethal injection (Pentobarbital)

12 Kenneth Fults GA
1-drug lethal injection (Pentobarbital)

GROUP 22 APRIL LETTER COUNT	
UA for POC	29
Other UAs	6
Total	37
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.