

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, February 25, 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.) We will be planning our activities for the coming months. Please join us! Refreshments provided.

Tuesday, March 8, 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, March 20, 6:30 PM. *Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion group.* This month we read **"If the Oceans Were Ink" by Carla Power.**

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi everyone

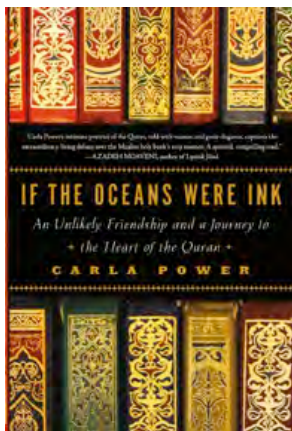
Group 22 member Alexi has been very active lately in support of our new POC, Narges Mohammadi. You can read about her advocacy efforts in Joyce's column in this newsletter.

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 March 20, 6:30 PM

Vroman's Bookstore
695 E. Colorado Blvd
Pasadena

If the Oceans Were Ink
by Carla Power

BOOK REVIEW

Kirkus Reviews Issue: Jan. 1st, 2015
"If the Oceans Were Ink" by Carla Power

An award-winning journalist's account of the year she spent probing the meaning of the Quran with a conservative Muslim religious scholar.

St. Louis native Power spent many years living in cities like Tehran, Kabul, Delhi and Cairo when she was a child and teenager. Eventually, she went on to study Middle Eastern societies in college and graduate school and file news reports about Islamic culture and politics for magazines like Time and Newsweek. But the more she wrote about the Middle East, the more she realized how little she really knew about "the piety [Muslims] claimed inspired them." So she went to a friend and Oxford professor of religion, Mohammad Akram Nadwi, and asked him to enlighten her on the Quran. The lively dialogue that ensued between them covered such hot-button Western obsessions as women's rights, polygamy and Sharia law. At the same time, it also delved into more personal topics, such as which Quranic themes her friend found the most important in his own life. The journalist and her friend debated each other in Oxford cafes, lecture halls and Indian madrassas and bonded over shared human experiences, like the deaths of their respective mothers. While Nadwi made God the center of his world, he also supported basic human rights and the importance of "individual conscience over state-mandated laws." His religious expansiveness had its limits, however, especially where women's domestic roles and homosexuality were concerned. Power eventually came to see that her friend's faith derived from understanding the letter of the Quran as bound to historical context and its spirit to evolving human truths. By the end of their year together, she realized that "opposition between [her] own post-Enlightenment worldview and [Nadwi's] Muslim one" was a false construction that not only prevented her from seeing her friend's world clearly, but also her own.

Intelligent and exceptionally informative.

AUTHOR BIO

A journalist specializing in Muslim societies, global social issues and culture, Carla Power is the author of *If the Oceans Were Ink: An Unlikely Friendship and a Journey to the Heart of the Quran*

(Henry Holt, 2015), an account of her year spent studying with the traditional Islamic scholar Sheikh Mohammad Akram Nadwi. She writes for *Time* and is a former



correspondent for *Newsweek*, where she produced award-winning stories, reporting from Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Her essays have appeared in a wide range of publications, from *Vogue* and *O: The Oprah Magazine* to *The New York Times Magazine*, *The Guardian*, and *Foreign Policy*.

Power holds an M.Phil. from St. Antony's College, Oxford University in Modern Middle Eastern Studies, as well as degrees from Yale and Columbia. Married, with two children, she lives in England.

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE

Narges Mohammadi

by Joyce Wolf (for Alexi Daher)

Alexi has been so busy this month with organizing and planning actions for Narges that she didn't have time to write for the newsletter, so I offered to summarize our current work and future plans.

At our letter-writing meeting on Feb. 9, we used the actions that Alexi brought and wrote 22 letters for Narges. We took time out to pose for a group photo with the colorful sign created by Alexi and her daughter Noor. (The sign is in Farsi and wishes a Happy New Year to Narges.)



L to R, front, Noor, Rosemary, Robert, Paul; back, April, Christine, Joyce, Alexi, Wen, Laura, Kathy, Arthur, Stevi. Not pictured, Paula. Photo by Stevi.

Group 22 is joining with Amnesty groups in Belgium, Denmark, and other countries in an international action to send photo greetings to Narges on Nowruz, the Iranian New Year celebration on the first day of spring, March 21. We hope it will lift her spirits to see all the people around the world who are working for her right to medical treatment in prison and for her freedom.

Last week Alexi submitted a detailed proposal to the international Amnesty groups for a worldwide action on Narges's birthday, April 21. With the help of Group 22 member Christine, Alexi outlined a social media campaign culminating in vigils for Narges on April 21. We plan to hold our vigil at Caltech. We will have a Twitter account for Group 22, probably named @AmnestyPasadena. We'll start tweeting about two weeks before the vigil, gradually increasing the frequency of our tweets, with the goal of getting our hashtag #UnitedforNarges to make the Twitter Trending list on April 21. We will also use Facebook and traditional methods such as press releases to publicize our event.

If this sounds like a lot of work, you're right! Alexi can't do it all by herself. At our monthly meeting on Thursday, Feb. 25, she'll be asking for volunteers to help with some of the tasks in her proposal. Also at the monthly meeting, Christine will be leading a Twitter workshop. You can bring your laptop and learn how to set up an account and tweet and retweet. I know some of you are already accomplished tweeters, and it would be wonderful if you could give some help to those of us who are total beginners.

One last tidbit: I didn't realize that Narges has a degree in Physics! She'd fit right in at Caltech! The Committee of Concerned Scientists wrote a letter about her to the President of Iran on Oct. 28.

<http://concernedscientists.org/2015/11/physicist-and-human-rights-activist-narges-mohammadi-arrested-again-in-iran/>

El Monte Resident Visited Group 22 Asking for Help for Her Sister in China

by Wen Chen

Group 22 has been working on Chinese POCs for many years with great success. Recently an El Monte resident, April Song, visited our group and brought the case of her sister Song Huichan, former AI POC Zhou Xiangyang and his wife Li

Shanshan. All three of them were arrested in China in March 2015 for practicing Falun Gong. They were tried in Nov. and Dec, respectively, and are now facing prison terms.

Falun Gong, also known as Falun Dafa (<http://falundafa.org>), is a peaceful body and mind practice based on the principle of Truthfulness-Compassion-Tolerance. Famous for its health benefits, Falun Gong is practiced by over 100 million people in more than 114 countries. Before the Chinese Communist Party started to persecute Falun Gong in 1999, it was estimated that there were ~70 million Falun Gong practitioners in China. The popularity of Falun Gong, and its independent ideology from Communism, are the main reasons of the persecution.

According to previous Amnesty International reports, Falun Gong practitioners occupy 60% - 80% of population in Chinese labor camps. It is the largest group of prisoners of conscience in China. Most of victims were severely tortured to give up their beliefs, and forced to do 12-16 hours of slave labor per day. Because of their healthy life style, Falun Gong practitioners are the major victims of state sanctioned forced organ harvesting in China (<http://stoporganharvesting.org/>)

Zhou Xiangyan used to be a railway designer. This is the third time that he was detained. During his previous detention, Amnesty International published a press release for his case, which may have contributed to his release in 2012: (<http://www.amnestyusa.org/news/news-item/china-local-residents-petition-for-falun-gong-releases>). You may find out more about this amazing couple from the following article: Young Couple Arrested Again after 10 Years Spent Trying to Rescue Each Other from Prison <http://en.minghui.org/html/articles/2015/6/2/150872.html>

April's sister, Song Huichan, was a caregiver for her elderly parents. Chinese police broke into her home and arrested her when she was watching her 2-year-old grandson. During the arrest, police broke the fingers of her 83-year-old mother. Song Huichan has been detained for more than 10 months, but her family were never allowed to visit her.

1. Elderly Couple Sue Police over Daughter's Arrest in Tianjin <http://en.minghui.org/html/articles/2015/7/3/151795.html>

2. Lawyer Demands Acquittal of Tianjin Woman Tried for Practicing Falun Gong <http://en.minghui.org/html/articles/2015/12/15/154099.html>

We contacted the China co-group of Amnesty International for an Urgent Action for Zhou Xiangyang, Li Shanshan and Song Huichan. Unfortunately the China co-group said they cannot have an UA for these three POCs due to their limited resources. They said Group 22 can work on these cases by ourselves.

April Song has mailed 54 holiday cards to her sister between Christmas and Chinese New Year. Stay tuned for more actions about these three Chinese POCs.

SECURITY WITH HUMAN RIGHTS

by Robert Adams

To be a Muslim in America Right Now

By Naureen Shah
February 20, 2016

To be a Muslim in America right now is to fear that your best days — your most ordinary days — are behind you. Anti-Muslim hate and fear-mongering is going mainstream, and the future is a startling unknown.

Many fear that the vicious rhetoric we are hearing is a harbinger of things to come: discrimination, harassment and violent attacks on Muslims, or people who look Muslim that spreads and even becomes a new normal. That could set the stage, one day in the not-so-distant future, for government policies like mandatory registration of Muslims and internment.

Could that really happen? Perhaps my background as an American Muslim makes me more sensitive to the possibility.

When I was growing up, pre-9/11, I felt the invisible minority. My struggle with identity, my sense of in-betweenness, was not reflected in any TV show or book that I knew of. Now, there are far more representations of Muslims on TV. **But Muslims are nearly always depicted as threatening. The post-9/11 genre of national security thriller builds suspense around the possibility that even the Good Muslim may turn into a violent one.**

But as many have pointed out, Muslims are not just these individual characters, they are an existential menace referenced over and over

again on the news and in politics. They are the latest in a long line of “foreigners” in the American imagination. Muslim men are among the brutes, in black and brown skin, whose appearance of civility hardly contains their capacity for violence and duplicity.

How did this happen? As Moustafa Bayoumi puts it in his new book This Muslim American Life:

“Absent ordinary personal contact, most Americans will get their views of Islam through television, cable news, talk radio, the Internet, and really bad action movies...Muslims themselves are often rendered mute or suspect.”

In this context, I am increasingly conscious that I don’t “look” Muslim because I don’t wear a headscarf. But instead of breaking the Dangerous Muslim stereotype, I wonder if outing myself as Muslim merely feeds the fear of a camouflaged, creeping threat.

Earlier this month, President Obama spoke eloquently about American Muslims and freedom of religion in what many hailed as a landmark address. In some ways, his speech tried to build a dam against the flood of anti-Muslim sentiment. But this sentiment is already undammed. It’s evident in the NYPD’s classification of mosques as “terrorist enterprises” without evidence of criminal activity. It underlies the insistence that waterboarding is not torture — and need not be prosecuted as a crime.

We are living through a frightening cultural moment. We all want security from attacks by armed groups, and we don’t want to have live in fear of terrorism.

Hate and fear are being offered as a way to make everyone feel safer. But it is all too likely that they will make some people — perhaps even me — less safe.

**ALBERT WOODFOX IS FREE!
(Breaking News from AIUSA)**

Today (2.19.16), Louisiana prisoner Albert Woodfox walked free, 44 years after he was first put into solitary confinement.

He was the United States’ longest serving prisoner held in isolation. Nearly every day for more than half of his life, Albert Woodfox woke up in a cell the size of a parking space,

surrounded by concrete and steel. Tomorrow morning, for the first time in more than four decades, he will be able to walk outside and look up into the sky.

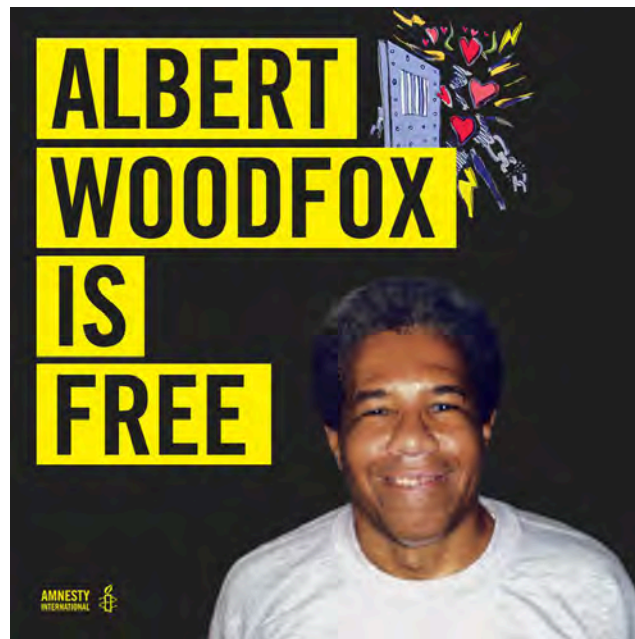
Over the course of nearly five years working on Albert Woodfox’s case at Amnesty, I heard many times that the odds were insurmountable.

But I always knew that Albert Woodfox would go home.

I have seen the incredible power of our movement when we work together.

I have seen the courage humility, and determination of so many of you who have played big and small roles to help this historic human rights victory come to fruition.

I have seen the unbelievable strength of the Angola 3: Robert King, Herman Wallace, and Albert Woodfox himself—all three of whom endured nightmares but persevered with humor, dignity, and resolve to wage a relentless fight against the cruel, inhuman and degrading practice of prolonged solitary confinement in the United States.



With the knowledge of his release, Albert had this message for those who have helped him secure his freedom:

“I want to thank my brother Michael for sticking with me all these years, and Robert King, who wrongly spent nearly 30 years in solitary. I could not have survived without their courageous support, along with the support of my dear friend Herman Wallace, who passed away in 2013. I also wish to thank the many

members of the International Coalition to Free the Angola 3, Amnesty International, and the Roddick Foundation, all of whom supported me through this long struggle. Lastly, I thank William Sothern, Rob McDuff and my lawyers at Squire Patton Boggs and Sanford Heisler Kimpel for never giving up. Although I was looking forward to proving my innocence at a new trial, concerns about my health and my age have caused me to resolve this case now and obtain my release with this no-contest plea to lesser charges. I hope the events of today will bring closure to many."

I'm carrying those words with me today as we celebrate this victory.

Today Albert Woodfox walks free—February 19, 2016, his 69th Birthday.

In Solidarity,
Jasmine Heiss
SENIOR CAMPAIGNER, INDIVIDUALS AT RISK PROGRAM
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA

DEATH PENALTY NEWS

By Stevi Carroll

The Justice That Works Act of 2016

I am still trying to find out how we can be involved in the effort to get *The Justice That Works Act of 2016* measure on the 2016 ballot. This past week James Clark gave me the name and email address of a contact person so perhaps by next month we can roll up our sleeves.

One concern about both the petition process and the day of the vote is that two competing initiatives may be on the ballot. If you are approached to sign a petition regarding the death penalty, be sure it's for *The Justice That Works Act of 2016* and not the pro-death penalty one.

To read Mike Farrell's letter to the initiative coordinator and the text of the initiative, go to [https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/initiatives/pdfs/15-0066%20\(Death%20Penalty\).pdf](https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/initiatives/pdfs/15-0066%20(Death%20Penalty).pdf)

Justice Antonin Scalia

Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia recently died. In a speech at Rhodes College on September 22, 2015, and again at the University

of Minnesota Law School on October 20, 2015, Justice Scalia said he "wouldn't be surprised" if the U.S. Supreme Court found the death penalty unconstitutional.

Now with that said, let's walk down a little death penalty memory lane with Justice Scalia.

Rather than have the evidence of Troy Davis' innocence explored in a new trial after seven of the nine witnesses in his trial either recanted or changed their testimony, Justice Scalia argued that "mere innocence is no reason not to carry out a death sentence." When Henry McCollum needed a new trial in the case of the rape and murder of an 11-year old girl, Justice Scalia voted against the petition and said that case was a 'prime reason' for the death penalty because it is a "quiet death by lethal injection" and an "enviable" fate. In 2014, DNA evidence proved Mr. McCollum innocent. After 30 years in prison, he was released.

In *Atkins v. Virginia* (2002), the Supreme Court ruled 6-3 that people who are "mentally retarded" (IQ 70 and below) cannot be executed. Justice Scalia dissented along with Justices Rehnquist and Thomas. In his dissent, Justice Scalia said, "seldom has an opinion of this court rested so obviously upon nothing but the personal views of its members."

In *Roper v. Simmons* (2005), the Supreme Court ruled 5-4 that it is unconstitutional to impose capital punishment for crimes that are committed by people under the age of 18. Justice Scalia was one of three Justices who dissented along with Justices Rehnquist and Thomas.

I am (perhaps) looking forward to who the new Justice will be to join the Supremes.

Recent Exonerations

Teshome Campbell - State: IL
Date of Exoneration: 1/29/2016
In 1998, Teshome Campbell was sentenced to 55 years in prison as one of a group that beat a man to death in Champaign, Illinois. He was exonerated in 2016 after witnesses testified that he was not involved in the crime.

Willie Donald - State: IN
Date of Exoneration: 1/27/2016
In 1992, Willie Donald was convicted of murder and robbery in Gary, Indiana, and sentenced to 60 years in prison. He was exonerated in 2016 after the robbery victim testified that she saw

the robber on the street at a time when police were talking to Donald at his work.

source: *The National Registry of Exonerations*
(<http://www.law.umich.edu/special/exonerations/Pages/about.aspx>)

Stays of Execution

February

- 11 Michael Ray Lambrix FL
- 19 Raymond Tibbetts OH ^^

Executions

January

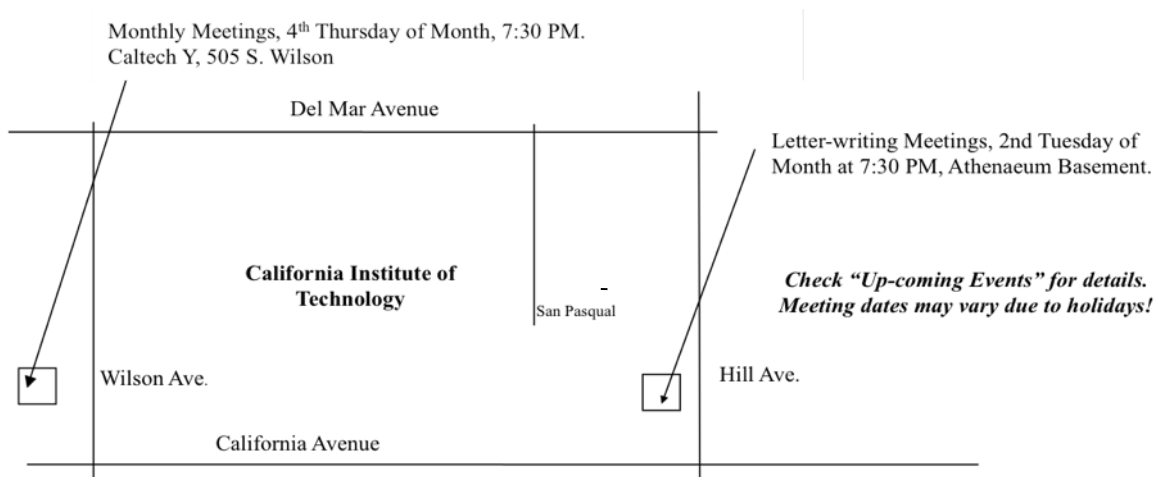
- 27 James Freeman TX
Lethal Injection 1- drug (Pentobarbital)

February

- 3 Brandon Jones GA
Lethal Injection 1- drug (Pentobarbital)
- 16 Gustavo Garcia TX
Lethal Injection 1- drug (Pentobarbital)
- 17 Travis Hittson GA
Lethal Injection 1- drug (Pentobarbital)

^^ On October 19, 2015 the Ohio Department of Corrections issued a statement that Gov. Kasich granted reprieves postponing all executions that the state had scheduled in 2016. Ohio has been unable to obtain the execution drugs required to conduct executions under state law. All execution dates have been rescheduled by the state.

GROUP 22 FEBRUARY LETTER COUNT	
POC	22
UAs	27
Total	49
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.