

# Amnesty International Group 22 Pasadena/Caltech News

Volume XXIV Number 10, October 2016

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Thursday, October 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.

**Friday-Sunday, October 28-30.** *Amnesty International USA Western Regional Conference.* DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Los Angeles - Westside (near LAX).

**Tuesday, November 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, November 20, 6:30 PM.** *Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion Group.* This month we read "**Mastering the Art of Soviet Cooking: A Memoir of Food and Longing**" by Anya von Bremzen.

## COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hello everyone,

Happy Halloween!

The Western Regional Conference is this weekend and you may still be able to register at the door. Here's the link:

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/events/regional-conferences/western>

Group 22 will have a display featuring our POC Narges Mohammadi. Hope to see you there!

For those of you who live in Pasadena, our September Rights Readers selection, "The Sympathizer" by Viet Thanh Nguyen is the One City, One Story book for this year!

This novel is the winner of several literary awards, including the Pulitzer Prize for fiction.

Kathy

### GROUP 22 OCTOBER LETTER COUNT

UA for POC	6
Other UAs	13
Total	19

To add your letters to the total contact [aigp22@caltech.edu](mailto:aigp22@caltech.edu)



Next Rights Readers meeting:

Sunday, November 20  
6:30 PM

Vroman's Bookstore  
(upstairs)  
695 E. Colorado Blvd  
Pasadena

*Mastering the Art of  
Soviet Cooking*

by  
Anya von Bremzen

## REVIEW

The New York Times Sunday Book Review

### Beyond Borscht

'Mastering the Art of Soviet Cooking,' by Anya von Bremzen

By SARA WHEELER

SEPT. 13, 2013

The culinary memoir has lately evolved into a genre of its own, what is now known as a "foodoir." But Anya von Bremzen is a better writer than most of the genre's practitioners, as this delectable book, which tells the story of postrevolutionary Russia through the prism of one family's meals, amply demonstrates.

The author and her mother arrived in Philadelphia in the winter of 1974, stateless refugees with no warm coats. They were also, von Bremzen says, "thoroughly gentrified Moscow Jews," abandoned some years earlier by the infant Anya's father. But to tell their story, von Bremzen goes back to her maternal grandparents in the 1920s, interspersing historical material with flash-forwards and commentary as she works her way to the present. When, for example, von Bremzen returns to Moscow in 1987, the reader is offered a disquisition on Russia's "long-soaked, -steeped and -saturated history with vodka" — or, failing vodka, with *politura* ("wood varnish").

An award-winning food writer, von Bremzen is also the author of "Please to the Table" (1990), a cookbook featuring the various cuisines of the former Soviet Union. To confect this latest volume, she and her mother (now 79) used their overheated American kitchen and dining room "as a time machine and an incubator of memories." Deploying the hallowed 1939 "Book of Tasty and Healthy Food," known to Soviet

citizens simply as “the Book,” they recreate old dissident get-togethers, preparing a Stalin’s Deathday Dinner and even brewing their own kvass.

Not surprisingly, there’s much that’s harrowing in “Mastering the Art of Soviet Cooking,” especially the sections dealing with World War II. Here von Bremzen moves artfully between historical longshots (minefields being cleared “by sending troops attacking across them”) and intimate details, like her schoolgirl mother’s lunch ration of *podushechka*, a candy the size of a fingernail. More amusingly, the chapter on the 1950s includes a short essay on living in a culture of perpetual shortages: “Your average *Homo sovieticus* spent a third to half of his nonworking time queuing for something.” A bit later, von Bremzen reaches her own birth, in 1963, a year also remembered for one of the worst crop failures in post-Stalin history.

The descriptions of meals are delightful, despite the anomaly at the heart of her book: during the Soviet period, there was almost nothing decent to eat, unless you were a party official. After the revolution, she explains with characteristic elegance, “in just a bony fistful of years, classical Russian food culture vanished.” Inevitably, therefore, “a story about Soviet food is a chronicle of longing.” But von Bremzen makes the best of her material, conjuring the whiff of fermenting sauerkraut in an enameled bucket, the sight of sinews and fat glistening in a cheap goulash “with an ivory palette” and the sharp and creamy taste of the ubiquitous *salat Olivier* in the “kitschy, mayonnaise-happy ’70s.” The gunky Olivier, she writes, “could be a metaphor for a Soviet émigré’s memory: urban legends and totalitarian myths, collective narratives and biographical facts, journeys home both real and imaginary — all loosely cemented with mayo.”

When the Soviet Union implodes, von Bremzen is tucking into wild duck with a fiery sauce in the rebellious Georgian subrepublic of Abkhazia. The 21st-century chapter, excruciatingly titled “Putin on the Ritz,” is brief, and she rounds off the book with a collection of recipes, one per decade. In homage, I made her version of *kulebiaka* (fish, rice and mushrooms in pastry). As she says, “the sour cream in the yeast dough . . . adds a lovely tang to the buttery casing.” *Priyatnogo appetita.*

*(Sara Wheeler is the author of “O My America!: Six Women and Their Second Acts in a New World.”)*

## AUTHOR BIO



Anya von Bremzen is a two-time James Beard Award-winning culinary writer. She was born in 1963 in Soviet Russia, and her works include *The New Spanish Table*, *The Greatest Dishes: Around the World in 80 Recipes*, and *Please to the Table: The Russian*

*Cookbook* (coauthored by John Welchman). *Mastering the Art of Soviet Cooking: A Memoir of Food and Longing* from 2013 is a culinary autobiography and compact Soviet history in one, its title obviously ironic.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anya\\_von\\_Bremzen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anya_von_Bremzen)

## Security with Human Rights

By Robert Adams

### Fighting the Demonization of Ordinary American Muslims – Like Me

[By Ali Albassam, Security with Human Rights volunteer](#)  
July 16, 2016

Newt Gingrich recently [proposed that American Muslims be tested](#) and questioned on their religious beliefs—and face deportation. Gingrich told Fox News:

*“The first step is you have to ask them the questions. The second step is you have to monitor what they’re doing on the Internet. The third step is, let me be very clear, you have to monitor the mosques.”*

Gingrich’s comments are the latest in this trend: After horrific terrorism attacks, pundits take to cable news to offer discriminatory, anti-Muslim proposals and rhetoric.

For me, it hits home. I was twelve years old when the 9/11 attacks, a crime against humanity, occurred. A wave of discrimination followed—for me, and for many other American Muslims.

**In my eyes, I was as American as anyone else my age.** I celebrated the Fourth of July with my family, played high school sports and shared many of the same interests as my peers.

But after 9/11, I was frequently bullied in school and harassed in public, especially when I was with a relative who wore a headscarf. These

changes made me paranoid, and I struggled with an identity crisis. Seemingly overnight, I went from being a regular American, to public enemy number one—by virtue of my faith.

I kept telling myself that things would get easier, that the feeling of being “othered” **would eventually fade away**, and that my faith would no longer be defined by the heinous actions of a few.

Unfortunately, the political and social climate for American Muslims has only worsened over time. Anti-Muslim discrimination is now mainstream and heavily ingrained within U.S. culture. We see it on TV news and Hollywood movies that continuously depict Muslims as terrorists.

Violence [against American Muslims and mosques](#) continues to be reported in the aftermath of attacks in the U.S. and Western Europe. Most frighteningly, it’s not just rhetoric – we’re seeing proposals to change U.S. law and law enforcement practices to target law-abiding American Muslims.

Gingrich joined other public figures in suggesting widespread monitoring of mosques—without suspicion of a crime. In fact, the NYPD has in the past done so—designating entire mosques as “terrorism enterprises” in order to justify the use of invasive surveillance measures.

These policies demonize Muslim Americans and falsely portray the entire community as complicit in terrorism. In actuality, according to one study, two out of every five disrupted terrorism attacks between 2001 and 2011 were based on information provided by Muslim community members.

Another example is a [Senate hearing on “Radical Islam”](#) held a few weeks ago, as a response to the mass shooting in Orlando. As a volunteer for Amnesty International USA in Washington, D.C., I felt compelled to attend.

During my commute to the Senate building, I became overwhelmed with anxiety, afraid that I would somehow feel betrayed by my own government. But upon arrival, my anxieties quickly diffused. I noticed a long line of diverse attendees that wrapped around the building. Many showed up to protest the hearing and found creative ways to get their message across. Code Pink’s posters read, “Islamophobia is un-American”, and activists handed out

“[Islamophoben](#)” pills to “cure irrational fear of Muslims.”

**A handful of those who participated in the hearing conveyed a similar message.**

Senator Coons (Del.) and Senator Durbin (Ill.) spoke out against anti-Muslim bigotry during the hearing. “We can and must defeat terrorism without sacrificing our constitutional principles,” Coons said.

**“And to sacrifice these principles and blame over a billion Muslims ... only serves to divide Americans, to alienate the Muslim world and legitimate the murderous groups.”**

“We are being called upon like many generations have in the past, to respond to a legitimate fear of terrorism in a way that is consistent with our American values and when we lapse into this notion that we are going to condemn a faith I think we’ve gone too far, ”

Michael German, a fellow at the Brennan Center for Justice and a former undercover FBI agent of 16 years, testified that using terms like “radical Islam” actually “puts us on a path to perpetual war with predictable consequences to civil liberties, human rights and the rule of law.” He added, “[this language] only serves to stoke public fear, xenophobia and anti-Muslim bigotry.”

Amnesty International USA, in this [statement for the record](#), said that for U.S. law enforcement to single out American Muslims would be blatant religious discrimination, and fly in the face of U.S. commitments to support religious freedom at home and around the world:

*“The U.S. should not join the dubious company of governments and armed groups that single out religious minorities for discriminatory treatment—including on the grounds of security. Examples include China, where [Zhang Kai](#), a lawyer supporting churches resisting the removal of crosses, was placed under “residential surveillance” and accused of endangering national security in August 2015 ; and Iran, where in 2013 an [Iranian-American Christian pastor](#) was sentenced to eight years’ imprisonment for “forming house churches with intent to harm national security.”*

The U.S. government must not respond to terrorism by betraying the very values it was founded on. By ensuring that American Muslims are treated with dignity and without discrimination in civic and political life, the U.S. can set an example of an effective counter terrorism strategy that doesn’t abandon its core values.

# DEATH PENALTY NEWS

By Stevi Carroll

## YES ON 62

Saturday, October 1, Trevor and I hawked the YES on 62 message to folks who were at the farmers market for their fresh fruits and veggies. We had a great time and had some wonderful conversations. One of my favorites was with a woman who said, "I'm voting for this, and I'm the mother of a murder victim. Two wrongs don't make a right."

Candy, Trevor, and I hit the asphalt of the Pasadena farmers market Saturday, October 22 to spread the YES message some more. Lots of people said they'd already voted, and others said they were registered and aware of the propositions. Many others expressed interest in learning about Prop 62 and said they thought they would vote yes on it. We also filled them in on Prop 66 and our suggestion to vote no on 66. One man, Paul, early in the day said, "That's ridiculous" to Prop 66. As the day wore on, this sentiment was expressed in a variety of forms.



*Trevor explains Yes on 62 (and in the background we can see our 'Make America Great Again' friends there to register voters).*



*Candy with brochures at the ready*

We are going to table again on November 5, so if you'd like to spend some time in the fresh air and make new friends, please let us know.

If you are a person who likes to talk with strangers on the phone, you can phone bank for the Yes on 62 campaign. You can participate remotely from the comfort of your own home - you just need a computer with internet access and a phone. The remaining days are Tuesday, November 1 and Thursday, November 3 from 6-9 PM PT. To sign up, go to <http://go.justicethatworks.org/page/s/phone-bank-for-yes-on-62>.

The campaign can still use some cash, so to donate, go to <https://secure.actblue.com/contribute/page/jtw-home>.

## Anthony Ray Hinton

What's it like to spend almost 30 years on death, be exonerated, and return to freedom? Anthony Ray Hinton knows. Like so many people who end up this nation's death row, Mr. Hinton had a court appointed lawyer. Also like so many people on death row, he'd seen his lawyer only three times in the two years before his trial. And when he told his lawyer he was innocent, his lawyer replied, "All of y'all always say you didn't do something."

When he was arrested in 1985, he told the arresting officers that he did not have a gun and that his mother did. The State's expert ballistics witness said the bullets that killed someone in a robbery matched his mother's gun. But even before the trial when he told the detective interviewing him that he was the wrong man, he was told, "I don't care whether you did it or not. You will be convicted."

In 1995 after seeing Bryan Stevenson on TV, Mr Hinton contacted him and the Equal Justice Initiative. A new ballistics expert examined the bullets and said they didn't match. The attorney general of Alabama refused to re-examine the case, a one-hour investment of time, because he said he it would be a "waste of taxpayers' money", so Mr. Hinton spent 16 more years on death row.

While Mr. Hinton was on death row, his cell was 30 feet from the death chamber. During his years there, he watched 54 men walk to their executions, during which he could smell their burning flesh. Also during this time, 22 men committed suicide.

Upon his release, he bought himself a king-size bed because while he was in prison, he'd dreamed of being able to sleep stretched out rather than curled up. He also goes outside to see the stars at night.

To read an interview that 60 Minutes did with Mr. Hinton, go to [www.cbsnews.com/news/60-minutes-life-after-death-row-exoneration/](http://www.cbsnews.com/news/60-minutes-life-after-death-row-exoneration/).

## Ohio

For months now, we've seen stays of execution for inmates on the Ohio death row. The problem is not that the State does not want to execute, but rather that it's not had the lethal cocktail to do the deed. Ohio now may be able to get the needles ready because the State intends to use a three-drug cocktail that is very similar to the one used in Oklahoma. The drugs are midazolam, rocuronium bromide, and potassium chloride, all of which are FDA approved and do not come from a compounding pharmacy. While finding companies that will sell their products to be used in State-sponsored deaths has been problematic, officials in Ohio have said they have found a new (unnamed) source for the drugs from a large manufacturer. While the FDA approves drugs, it does not approve the ways in which corrections departments choose to use them.

## Recent Exonerations

Mark Maxon - State: IL

Date of Exoneration: 9/27/2016

In 1994, Mark Maxon was convicted of the rape and murder of a 6-year-old boy in Chicago and sentenced to life in prison. He was exonerated in 2016 when DNA on the victim's clothing was

linked to a convicted murderer who confessed to the crimes.

Nelson Ortiz, Jose Caro, and Nelson Ruiz  
- State: PR

Date of Exoneration: 9/27/2016

In 1994, Nelson Ortiz, Jose Caro and Nelson Ruiz were convicted of murder, rape, kidnapping, robbery, and illegal use of a weapon in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. They were exonerated after the prosecution's two chief witnesses recanted and DNA tests excluded them as the perpetrators.

## Stays of Execution

October

19	Robert Van Hook	OH	^^
19	Terry Darnell Edwards	TX (Date changed to January 26, 2017)	

November

2	Ramiro Gonzales	TX	
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(The execution date was removed from the Texas Department of Corrections schedule without comment.)

16	Jeffery Wogenstahl	OH	^^
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^^ (All 2016 Ohio executions granted a reprieve because new execution drugs could not be obtained)

## Executions

October

5	Barney Ronald Fuller, Jr*	TX	
	Lethal injection	1-drug (Pentobarbital)	
19	Gregory Paul Lawler	GA	
	Lethal injection	1-drug (Pentobarbital)	

\* volunteer - an inmate who waived ordinary appeals that remained at the time of his or her execution

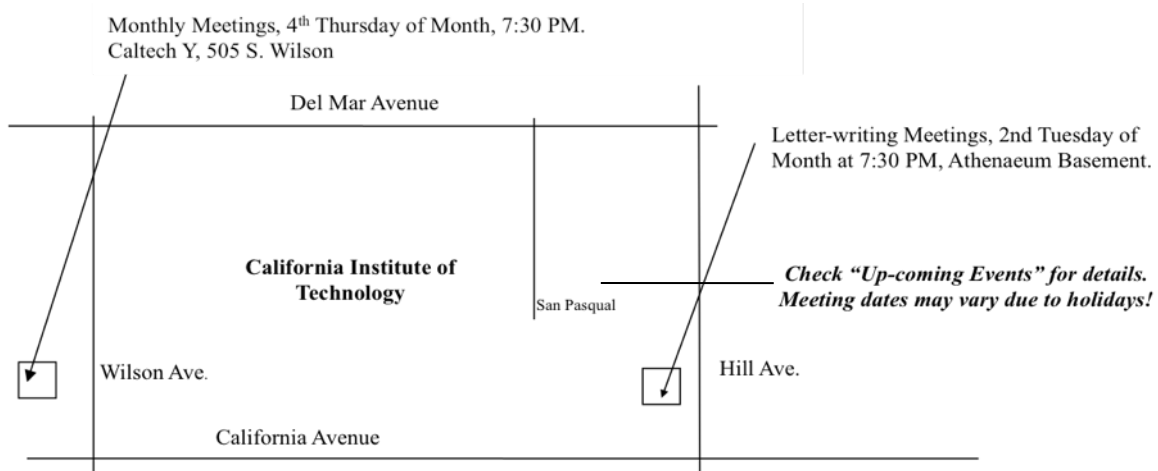
## Documentary: 13TH

If you access to Netflix (or have a friend who does), you might consider watching *13TH*.

"The title of Ava DuVernay's extraordinary and galvanizing documentary *13TH* refers to the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, which reads "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States." The progression from that second qualifying clause to the horrors of mass criminalization and the sprawling American prison industry is laid out by DuVernay with bracing lucidity. "

You can watch the trailer at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V66F3WU2CKk>



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://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.