

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, February 23, 7:30-9:00 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. Alexi will update us on work for Narges Mohammadi, our adopted prisoner of conscience. Please join us! Refreshments provided.

March 10-12, AIUSA Annual General Meeting, Albuquerque, NM. The agenda is available now on amnestyusa.org.

Tuesday, March 14, 7:30-9:00 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 19, 6:30 PM. *Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion Group.* This month we read a novel, *“Island of a Thousand Mirrors”* by Nayomi Munaweera.

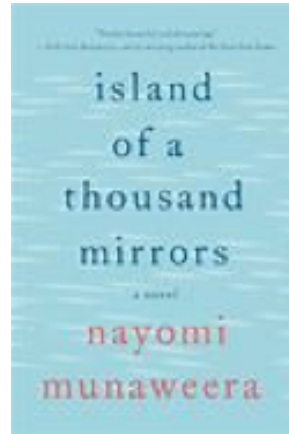
COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi everyone

Did you survive the deluge? Driving home from work I could hardly see and the wipers were going full blast! Is the drought finally over?! And for the skeptics out there, it's not just overly warm weather that can be caused by climate change but erratic and unusual weather patterns as well.

The recent actions by the administration have been alarming to say the least. I don't know what is going to happen next! Thank heavens the immigrant ban was (temporarily) halted by the courts. There are actions and activities on the AIUSA website against the Muslim ban, the Wall, and to protect human rights at Standing Rock. Go to <http://amnestyusa.org> for more info. We all need to do what we can to protect human rights that are being threatened right now.

Con Cariño,
Kathy



Next Rights Readers Meeting
Sunday, March 19
6:30 PM

Vroman's Bookstore
695 E Colorado Blvd.
Pasadena

Island of a Thousand Mirrors
by
Nayomi Munaweera

BOOK REVIEW (New York Times)

By Nadifa Mohamad, Sept. 26, 2014

Say You're One of Them

In one of the many startling scenes in “Island of a Thousand Mirrors,” Nayomi Munaweera’s first novel, a Sri Lankan girl riding the train to school is suddenly surrounded by a machete-wielding mob, who demand proof she isn’t Tamil. In her panic, she recites the Buddhist sutras “preaching unattachment, impermanence, the inevitability of death,” an unholy trinity that could apply to all civil wars. This chilling exchange reminded me of a conversation I once had on a London bus with a Somali refugee, who swerved from banal chitchat into dark reminiscence. He recalled a moment in Mogadishu when he was forced to recite his genealogy, the string of grandfathers’ names that place all Somalis within their clans, and he borrowed a school friend’s lineage, as his own would have marked him for death.

The weight of these humiliations, momentary yet everlasting, is the ballast of a narrative that ebbs and flows in time and space. From the maternal expanse of the Indian Ocean to the sterile swimming pools of Los Angeles, the lives of Munaweera’s characters are defined by bodies of water that reflect the state of their souls, including the corpse-clogged wells and lagoons of the Tamil north and the playful shores of the Sinhala south, alive with flying fish and ancient turtles.

Yasodhara Rajasinghe; her sister, Lanka; and their comrade-in-mischief, Shiva, grow up in the same house in Colombo — the Sinhala girls downstairs and the Tamil boy upstairs, in a partition that matches their island’s. A mango tree and its fruit are the focus of strife between

the Tamil patriarch and Sinhala matriarch, but the children float through the house and its garden, impervious to any divisions.

Before we are introduced to these three, however, we are marched through the machinations and changing fortunes that bring them to life, in a manner that seems breathless and unnecessarily hurried: Grandparents die, marriages are arranged and lovers betrayed. When the violence that has stayed latent finally explodes, the residents of the house are thrown to the wind, navigating difficult, self-consciously new lives in the United States. Munaweera describes how Yasodhara, growing into her Americanness, casts a disdainful glance at the newly arrived refugees gathered at her wealthy uncle's house for Christmas. She keeps her distance, "lest the aura of foreignness so laboriously shed" rubs off on her.

While the Rajasinghes buy a car, tend a lawn and make a home in Los Angeles, the story returns to Sri Lanka and to an anonymous village in the north, where Saraswathi, a Tamil teenager who finds beauty in mathematical equations, lives with her dancer mother, lame father and giddy little sister. The predations of the national army combine with those of the Tamil Tigers to slowly steal whatever happiness or comfort this family enjoyed. The uneasy relationship between "liberation movements" and those they seek to liberate is convincingly captured, as are the constant negotiations civilians have to make to survive in a war zone — take that child but leave me this one. Still, Saraswathi's voice never rings true; her experiences are heart-rending, but they seem to smother any glimpse of what distinguishes her from other girls weaponized by the Tamil Tigers.

The beating heart of "Island of a Thousand Mirrors" is not so much its human characters but Sri Lanka itself and the vivid, occasionally incandescent, language used to describe this teardrop in the Indian Ocean. Despite the bloody acts taking place on its soil, Sri Lanka remains a place where flower boys chase cars down mountain passes, "the buffalo stirs in the jade paddy fields" and life abounds restlessly, both on land and under the sea.

https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/28/books/review/island-of-a-thousand-mirrors-by-nayomi-munaweera.html?_r=1

About the Author



Nayomi Munaweera is a Sri Lankan American writer and author of *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, which won

Commonwealth Book Prize for the Asian Region in 2013.

Nayomi Munaweera was born in Sri Lanka, grew up in Nigeria and settled in Southern California. She holds bachelor's degree in Literature from the University of California, Irvine and a master's degree in South Asian Literature from the University of California, Riverside.

Island of a Thousand Mirrors was her debut novel and was published in South Asia in 2012. It went on to be nominated for many of the sub-continent's major literary prizes including Man Asian Literary Prize and won the Commonwealth Regional Prize for Asia in 2013. It was long listed for the International DUBLIN Literary Award and short listed for the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature. The novel was released in America by St. Martin's Press in 2014. It tells the story of the conflict between two main ethnic groups in Sri Lanka from the perspective of two girls who witness the horror. The civil war officially began in 1983 and continued until 2009.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nayomi_Munaweera

DEATH PENALTY NEWS

By Stevi Carroll

Proposition 66

As we remember, in November California voters passed Prop 66 which is intended to make death penalty cases a five-year journey from sentencing to execution. This result has gone to the California Supreme Court where in a closed session in December the court voted 5 to 0 to put a hold on the proposition.

Enacting the requirements of Prop 66 would require more lawyers. At this time, many years go by before the appeals process even begins.

One of the problems with these cases is that state appointed lawyers have only \$50,000 with which to work. That may sound like a lot of money, but when one looks into the amount of work it takes to secure the experts to investigate the crimes and the inmates' lives, the amount dwindles. Also, not enough lawyers are available to take these cases, which are not only time consuming but also emotionally challenging. Prop 66 requires lawyers who represent low-income inmates to represent condemned inmates in the automatic appeals. As we have learned from Bryan Stevenson (Equal Justice Initiative), defending capital cases takes a level of expertise not all lawyers have.

California has 749 death row inmates. We will have to see what happens over the coming months, and years.

To read an LA Times article on this, go to <http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-court-executions-20170108-story.html>.

Five States

What do Montana, Colorado, Kansas, Washington, and Georgia have in common? The governments of all of them are considering the death penalty to see if they think it's worth retaining both morally and financially. Four of the states have bills that would repeal the death penalty and replace it with life without parole.

Montana Republican Representative Adam Herts is on the record saying, "The death penalty system, like so many government programs, is wasteful, ineffective, and unjust."

We'll watch and see what happens in these states.

Stays of execution

January		
12	Ronald Phillips	OH
23	Gary Haugen	OH
25	Kosoul Chanthakoummane	TX
	- rescheduled for July 19, 2017	

February		
2	John Ramirez	TX
7	Tilon Lashon Carter	TX
19	Ramond Tibbetts	OH

Executions

January		
11	Christopher Wilkins	TX
	Lethal Injection 1-drug (Pentobarbital)	
18	Ricky Javon Gray	VA
	Lethal Injection 3-drug (midazolam)	
26	Terry Darnell Edwards	TX
	Lethal Injection 1-drug (Pentobarbital)	
31	Mark Christeson	MO
	Lethal Injection 1-drug (Pentobarbital)	

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE
Narges Mohammadi
 By Joyce Wolf

I have not been able to find any recent news about Narges after the Iranian court upheld her 16-year sentence on appeal in late September. We hope, of course, that her fragile health has not worsened in prison. We also hope that she is still permitted to have regular phone calls with her young children, a right she won at the cost of a three-week hunger strike.

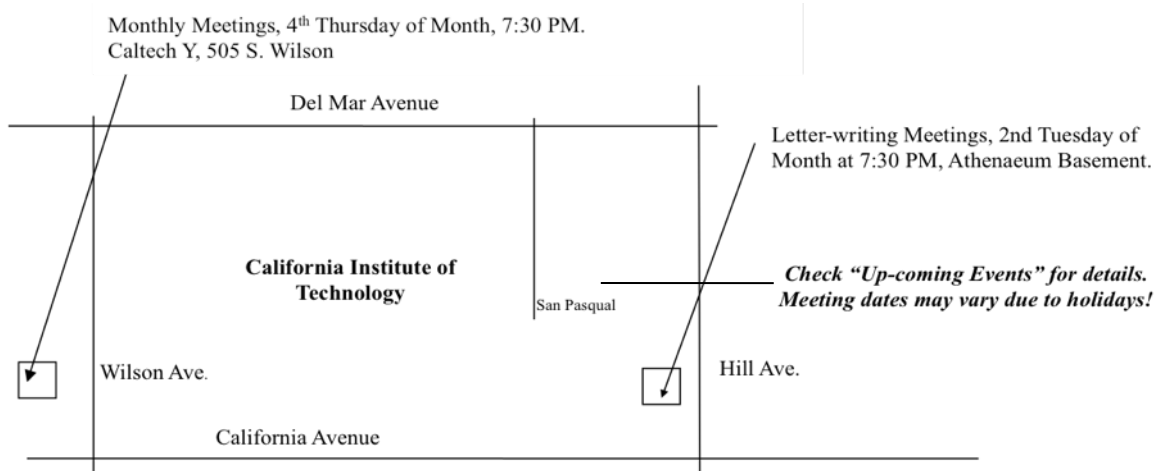
At our February letter-writing meeting, we signed the last five of the 100 postcards for Narges that we had printed last October. Alexi will discuss plans for future actions for Narges at this Thursday's monthly meeting. We will do something to mark Nowruz, the Iranian New Year celebration on March 20.

An Amnesty local group in Oregon is also working on Narges's case. They initiated a petition on Change.org. You can support their action at <https://www.change.org/p/supreme-leader-ali-khamenei-free-iranian-human-right-activist-narges-mohammadi>

GROUP 22 FEBRUARY LETTER COUNT

Urgent Actions	18
POC (postcards)	5
Total	23

To add your letters to our 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.