

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Note: there is no monthly meeting on the fourth Thursday in April** as several Group 22 members were planning on attending the SoCal local groups meeting April 28. Now we've heard that that meeting has been cancelled.

**Tuesday, May 8, 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, May 20, 6:30 PM. Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion Group.** This month we read "**The Underground Railroad**" by Colson Whitehead.

**Thursday, May 24, 7:30-9:00 PM. Monthly Meeting.** We meet at the Caltech Y, Tyson House, 505 S. Wilson Ave., Pasadena. For the May meeting, we plan to watch a video on a human rights topic, title to be announced later.

## COORDINATOR'S CORNER

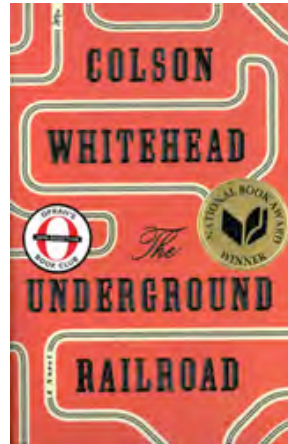
Hi all

Robert and myself were planning to attend the SoCal local group planning meeting downtown next Saturday the 28th, but I received an email that our Eventbrite "tickets" were invalidated and that the meeting will be rescheduled. This was last week and I haven't heard anything since...

Hopefully this meeting will take place as it will be helpful to see what the other groups are doing, and to network and strategize.

The book group has been reading some great books lately. I enjoyed "American War" by Omar el Akkad, "Divided We Stand" by Marjorie Spruill, and look forward to reading this month's book, which has been on the bestseller list.

Con Cariño,  
Kathy



**Next Rights Readers Meeting**

**Sunday, May 20  
6:30 PM**

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

***The Underground Railroad***

**by Colson Whitehead**

[This book won the 2016 National Book Award for fiction. The following is taken from <http://www.nationalbook.org>]

## JUDGES' CITATION

*The Underground Railroad* confirms Colson Whitehead's reputation as one of our most daring and inventive writers. A suspenseful tale of escape and pursuit, it combines elements of fantasy and the counter-factual with an unflinching, painfully truthful depiction of American slavery. Whitehead revisits the grotesque barbarities of our nation's history in the interest of our common stake in freedom and dignity. He has given us an electrifying narrative of the past, profoundly resonant with the present.

## ABOUT THE BOOK

Cora is a slave on a cotton plantation in Georgia. Life is hell for all the slaves, but especially bad for Cora; an outcast even among her fellow Africans, she is coming into womanhood—where even greater pain awaits. When Caesar, a recent arrival from Virginia, tells her about the Underground Railroad, they decide to take a terrifying risk and escape. Matters do not go as planned—Cora kills a young white boy who tries to capture her. Though they manage to find a station and head north, they are being hunted.

In Whitehead's ingenious conception, the Underground Railroad is no mere metaphor—engineers and conductors operate a secret network of tracks and tunnels beneath the Southern soil. Cora and Caesar's first stop is South Carolina, in a city that initially seems like a haven. But the city's placid surface masks an insidious scheme designed for its black

denizens. And even worse: Ridgeway, the relentless slave catcher, is close on their heels. Forced to flee again, Cora embarks on a harrowing flight, state by state, seeking true freedom.

Like the protagonist of *Gulliver's Travels*, Cora encounters different worlds at each stage of her journey—hers is an odyssey through time as well as space. As Whitehead brilliantly re-creates the unique terrors for black people in the pre-Civil War era, his narrative seamlessly weaves the saga of America from the brutal importation of Africans to the unfulfilled promises of the present day. The Underground Railroad is at once a kinetic adventure tale of one woman's ferocious will to escape the horrors of bondage and a shattering, powerful meditation on the history we all share.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Colson Whitehead** is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Noble Hustle*, *Zone One*, *Sag Harbor*, *The Intuitionist*, *John Henry Days*, *Apex Hides the Hurt*, and one collection of essays, *The Colossus of New York*. A Pulitzer Prize finalist and a recipient of MacArthur and Guggenheim fellowships, he lives in New York City.

### Security with Human Rights

By Robert Adams

#### ATHLETE AND ACTIVIST COLIN KAEPERNICK HONORED WITH TOP AWARD FROM AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

04/21/2018

Athlete and activist Colin Kaepernick has been honored with Amnesty International's Ambassador of Conscience Award for 2018, the human rights organization announced today.

The award was officially presented at a ceremony in Amsterdam, Netherlands, on April 21, to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the

opening of Amnesty International's national section in the country.

"The Ambassador of Conscience award celebrates the spirit of activism and exceptional courage, as embodied by Colin Kaepernick. He is an athlete who is now widely recognized for his activism because of his refusal to ignore or accept racial discrimination," said Salil Shetty, Secretary General of Amnesty International.

"Just like the Ambassadors of Conscience before him, Colin Kaepernick chooses to speak out and inspire others despite the professional and personal risks. When high profile people choose to take a stand for human rights, it emboldens many others in their struggles against injustice. Kaepernick's commitment is all the more remarkable because of the alarming levels of vitriol it has attracted from those in power."

During the 2016 pre-season of the National Football League, Kaepernick knelt during the national anthem, as a respectful way of calling for the country to protect and uphold the rights of all its people. The bold move was a response to the disproportionate numbers of black people being killed by police. It sparked a movement that follows a long tradition of non-violent protests that have made history.

While the polarized response to the "take-a-knee" protest has ignited a debate about the right to protest and free speech, Kaepernick has remained focused on highlighting the injustices that moved him to act. His charity, the [Colin Kaepernick Foundation](#), works to fight oppression around the world through education and social activism, including through free "Know Your Rights" camps which educate and empower young people.

"I would like to thank Amnesty International for the Ambassador of Conscience Award. But in truth, this is an award that I share with all of the countless people throughout the world combating the human rights violations of police officers, and their uses of oppressive and excessive force. To quote Malcolm X, when he said that he, 'will join in with anyone — I don't care what color you are — as long as you want to change this miserable condition that exists on this earth,' I am here to join with you all in this battle against police violence," said Kaepernick.

"While taking a knee is a physical display that challenges the merits of who is excluded from the notion of freedom, liberty, and justice for all,

the protest is also rooted in a convergence of my moralistic beliefs, and my love for the people.”

Eric Reid, professional football player and Kaepernick’s former teammate, continued to show his support, as he presented Kaepernick with the Ambassador of Conscience award. The Ambassador of Conscience Award is Amnesty International’s highest honor, recognizing individuals who have promoted and enhanced the cause of human rights through their lives and by example.

## DEATH PENALTY NEWS

By Stevi Carroll

### California and Executions

As we know, Proposition 66 passed in 2016. The citizens of California voted to speed up the execution process. Perhaps these voters thought this would clear out the nearly 750 people currently on California’s death row. Lethal injection is the execution method for California. Also as we know, some lethal-injection executions have not gone well.

The LA Times; KQED, public media in San Francisco; and the San Francisco Progressive Media Center, a nonprofit that publishes the website 48hills.com have joined forces to challenge some changes on death row at San Quentin State Prison.

San Quentin now has a new death chamber. This chamber shields the public from the preparation of the chemicals and their use in executions. According to an article in the *LA Times* April 12, 2018, “The lethal injection regulations also require a curtain on the viewing [window](#) to the execution room to be closed and the public address system turned off if the inmate does not die after receiving three doses of the lethal chemicals.

“The public is thereby prevented from observing defendants’ response when the execution does not proceed as intended,” the suit said.”

In January, California Department of Corrections decided to use a one-drug protocol and determined two drugs, pentobarbital or thiopental, would now be used to kill people. The warden decides which one will be used, and he is not required to divulge what he’s chosen.

Now here’s the rub: “Food and Drug Administration-approved manufacturers of pentobarbital have prohibited its use in executions, and thiopental is not available domestically, nor can it be lawfully imported into the country.” So just how will the California Department of Corrections obtain the chemicals to kill people on death row?

Kent Scheidegger, the legal director for the Criminal Justice Legal Foundation, which supports the death penalty, said his group is fine with the curtain staying open even if the person being executed needs medical treatment for a botched execution, and he sees this lawsuit “as an attempt to prevent executions.”

So will we in California begin to execute, or will we continue the trend from 2006 and not resume this practice?

### Kevin Cooper

In 1985, Kevin Cooper was convicted of murdering Doug and Peggy Ryen; their 10-year old daughter, Jessica; and her 11-year-old friend, Christopher Hughes. Josh Ryen, then 8 years old, survived. Kevin Cooper was sentenced to death, and when California begins once again executing, the State intends to execute him.

At Mr. Cooper’s trial, evidence that might have exonerated him was withheld from the defense. Additionally in 2009, five federal judges of the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals signed an opinion that begins, “The State of California may be about to execute an innocent man.” Six more 9th Circuit judges have joined the dissent. They believe Mr. Cooper did not have a fair hearing.

Mr. Cooper’s legal counsel has sent Governor Jerry Brown a clemency petition. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights received a petition from Mr. Cooper in 2011 and after reviewing this petition, the IACHR requested ‘precautionary measures’ for Mr. Cooper not to be executed while members of the commission investigated case. The United States ignored this letter. (To see the IACHR’s full report, go to <https://kevincooper.org/2015-iachr-petition-on-rights/>)

In August 2016, Bryan Stevenson, executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative, said, “Based on my decades of experience representing condemned prisoners, Mr. Cooper’s case presents exactly the situation for which clemency is intended—to avoid the ultimate injustice of executing an innocent

person whom the criminal justice system has failed. ... I have represented scores of condemned men and women, all of whom are poor and who are disproportionately people of color. We now know that for every nine persons executed in the United States, one innocent person is exonerated and released from death row. This error rate in our capital system is unacceptable, yet it continues because so many people on death row were subjected to racial bias and did not have the means to defend themselves."

In May 2017, Sister Helen Prejean stated, "This brings me to the case of Kevin Cooper, which is currently before you on his Petition for Executive Clemency. The law enforcement abuses and other misconduct by the San Bernardino sheriff's department and prosecutors in the '80s and 90s and mishandling of evidence subject to DNA testing in the early 2000s as well as the actions of a Republican appointed District Court Judge in San Diego that prevented Mr. Cooper from a fair opportunity to prove his innocence, are well set forth in detail in the Petition, the May, 2009 opinion of 9th Circuit Judge William Fletcher and the book "[Scapegoat: The Chino Hills Murders and the Framing of Kevin Cooper](#)" by J. Patrick O'Connor and articles and news videos by several others who have reviewed and studied the case.

These organizations and individuals include the most prominent and well-respected civil rights and human rights observers, commentators and participants, both nationally and internationally. I join them, most of whom have written personally to you regarding Kevin Cooper's wrongful conviction."

To sign Amnesty International USA's petition, go to [https://act.amnestyusa.org/ea-action/action?ea.client.id=1839&ea.campaign.id=40574&ea.tracking.id=Country\\_USA~MessagingCategory\\_DeathPenalty~MessagingCategory\\_PrisonersandPeopleatRisk](https://act.amnestyusa.org/ea-action/action?ea.client.id=1839&ea.campaign.id=40574&ea.tracking.id=Country_USA~MessagingCategory_DeathPenalty~MessagingCategory_PrisonersandPeopleatRisk)

To learn more about this case, go to <https://kevincooper.org/>.

### ***The Sun Does Shine: How I Found Life and Freedom On Death Row***

Anthony Ray Hinton spent decades on death row for murders he did not commit. According

to a description of his book on the Vroman's Bookstore website:

"In 1985, Anthony Ray Hinton was arrested and charged with two counts of capital murder in Alabama. Stunned, confused, and only twenty-nine years old, Hinton knew that it was a case of mistaken identity and believed that the truth would prove his innocence and ultimately set him free.

But with no **money and** a different system of justice for a poor black man in the South, Hinton was sentenced to death by electrocution. He spent his first three years on Death Row at Holman State Prison in agonizing silence--full of despair and anger toward all those who had sent an innocent man to his death. But as Hinton realized and accepted his fate, he resolved not only to survive, but find a way to live on Death Row. For the next twenty-seven years he was a beacon--transforming not only his own spirit, but those of his fellow inmates, fifty-four of whom were executed mere feet from his cell. With the help of civil rights attorney and bestselling author of *Just Mercy*, Bryan Stevenson, Hinton won his release in 2015.

With a foreword by Stevenson, *The Sun Does Shine* is an extraordinary testament to the power of hope sustained through the darkest times. Destined to be a classic memoir of wrongful imprisonment and freedom won, Hinton's memoir tells his dramatic thirty-year journey and shows how you can take away a man's freedom, but you can't take away his imagination, humor, or joy."

In an interview with Isaac Chotiner, Mr. Hinton says in answer to a question about his mother, Beulah Hinton, and forgiveness, "Well you know that's where I learned forgiveness—from my mother. My mother used to sit me down for whatever reason, and she used to always tell me, *always remember, you are not responsible for how people treat you. But you are responsible for how you treat others.* My mom would tell me, *there are going to be some people.* She didn't say white. She didn't say black. She didn't Mexican or whatever. She said, "There will be people that dislike you simply because of the color of your skin. You haven't done anything to them. They just don't like you because of the color of your skin. These are the people that you are still to pray for. These are the people that you are still to love, regardless of how they treat you."

And I couldn't understand that as a young boy, but as I got older and older and as I sat on death

row, I finally understood what my mother was saying. I have learned in the years that I've been on this earth, you don't have to do anything to people. You just have to be of a different race, of a different gender, and people will dislike you. But you have to go on, and you have to live your life. You can't worry about why this person don't like you. You just have to continue to believe in the words that my mother gave me. Pray for them."

To read the entire interview, go to <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2018/03/how-anthony-ray-hinton-survived-death-row.html>.

I am hopeful our Rights Readers will read *The Sun Does Shine: How I Found Life and Freedom On Death Row*. I look forward to the discussion.

*Thank you, and let me say that I give all credit for who I am and what I am to my mother. I just want the world to know that my mother didn't raise and bring up a killer.* - Anthony Ray Hinton

### Recent Exonerations

Ralph Lee and Eric Kelley  
State: NJ - Date of Exoneration: 4/6/2018  
In 1996, Eric Kelley and Ralph Lee were sentenced to life in prison after falsely confessing to murdering a video store clerk in Paterson, New Jersey. They were exonerated in 2018 by DNA tests that identified the real killer.

Richard Phillips  
State: MI - Date of Exoneration: 3/29/2018  
In 1972, Richard Phillips was sentenced to life in prison without parole for a murder in Detroit, Michigan. He was exonerated in 2018 after a co-defendant admitted that he and the prosecution's primary witness committed the murder and that Phillips was not involved.

Ru-El Sailor  
State: OH - Date of Exoneration: 3/28/2018  
In 2003, Ru-El Sailor was sentenced to 25 years to life in prison for a murder in Cleveland, Ohio. He was exonerated in 2018 when three witnesses, including the real killer, said Sailor was not involved in the crime.

Ricardo Rodriguez  
State: IL - Date of Exoneration: 3/27/2018  
In 1997, Ricardo Rodriguez was sentenced to 90 years in prison for a drive-by shooting that killed a homeless man in Chicago, Illinois. He was exonerated in 2018 based on evidence that a corrupt police detective coerced witnesses to identify him.

Calvin Buari  
State: NY - Date of Exoneration: 3/21/2018  
In 1995, Calvin Buari was sentenced to 50 years to life in prison for a double murder in the Bronx, New York. He was exonerated in 2018 after the real killer admitted to the crime and three witnesses identified the real killer as the gunman.

Hattie Tanner  
State: MI - Date of Exoneration: 3/19/2018  
In 2000, Hattie Tanner was sentenced to life in prison without parole for the murder of a bartender in Battle Creek, Michigan. She was exonerated in 2018 because her conviction was based on inaccurate testimony from the state's forensic expert.

Alfred Swinton  
State: CT - Date of Exoneration: 3/1/2018  
In 2001, Alfred Swinton was sentenced to 60 years in prison for a murder in Hartford, Connecticut based on testimony that his teeth matched bite marks on the victim. He was exonerated in 2018 by DNA testing that excluded him as the perpetrator.

### Stays of Executions

#### March

20 Russell Bucklew MO  
**Stay granted by the U.S. Supreme Court**  
on March 20, 2018, pending resolution of his petition for writ of certiorari on the question of whether his medical condition makes it unconstitutionally cruel to execute him by means of lethal injection.

#### April

11 Melvin Bonnell OH  
**Rescheduled** for February 12, 2020 by Gov. John Kasich on September 1, 2017.

### Executions

#### March

27 Rosendo Rodriguez III TX  
Lethal Injection 1-drug (Pentobarbital)  
Years from sentence to execution - 9

#### April

19 Walter Leroy Moody AL  
Lethal Injection 3-drug (Midazolam)  
Years from sentence to execution - 22

## PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE

### Narges Mohammadi

By Joyce Wolf

On April 21, human rights defender Narges Mohammadi marked another birthday in Evin Prison in Iran. Group 22 members signed a birthday card for her, which we sent in care of the Amnesty International Iran Team in London. I posted an image of the card on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/joycewolf/status/987921990714470400>

We learned a few months ago that Narges was a 2018 recipient of the Andrei Sakharov Prize awarded by the American Physical Society. (The prize recognizes outstanding leadership and/or achievements of scientists in upholding human rights.) Narges sent an acceptance speech to be read at the award ceremony on April 16. Following are excerpts from this article: <https://www.iranhumanrights.org/2018/04/imprisoned-rights-defender-narges-mohammadi-gives-message-of-hope-and-strength-in-accepting-2018-andrei-sakharov-prize/>

April 15, 2018 — Prisoner of conscience Narges Mohammadi was unable to accept the 2018 Andrei Sakharov Prize in person in Columbus, Ohio where the American Physical Society (APS) awarded it to her but she sent a message of hope and strength in a powerful speech.

“The path to democracy in Iran lies not through violence, war, or military action by a foreign government, but through organizing and strengthening civil society institutions. The government knows this only too well,” said Mohammadi in a speech obtained by the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI) that will be read on April 16, 2018, by Iranian American academic Nayereh Tohidi, who accepted the award on Mohammadi’s behalf.

“Sitting here in the prison, I am humbled by the honor you have bestowed on me and I will continue my efforts until we achieve peace, tolerance for a plurality of views, and human rights,” added Mohammadi, who is serving a 16-year prison sentence in Tehran’s Evin Prison.

Mohammadi, 45, has a physics degree from Iran’s Imam Khomeini University. In 2009, she was dismissed from her job as an engineer with the Iran Engineering Inspection Corporation and

imprisoned due to her public advocacy of women’s and human rights.

...

### Letter by Prisoner of Conscience Narges Mohammadi From Evin Prison

For me, as a civil rights and human rights activist, it is a great honor to be recognized by esteemed scientists like you in my field of physics and to be awarded the Andrei Sakharov Prize at the same time that another physicist Mr. Ravi Kuchimanchi is being awarded as well. His advocacy for human development, and specifically for the poor and disadvantaged in India has inspired many people world-wide.

I was filled with joy when studying quantum physics at the university as a means to understand the universe. But at the same time, I was preoccupied with the oppressive conditions in my country and the tyranny suffered by our universities, intellectuals, and the media. Like many others in our universities, I felt compelled to join the struggle for freedom. What we experience is a decades-old tyranny, that cannot tolerate freedom of speech and thought. In the name of religion, it restricts and punishes science, intellect, and even love. It labels as a threat to national security and toxic to society whatever is not compatible with its political and economic interests. It considers punishing unwelcome ideas as a positive thing.

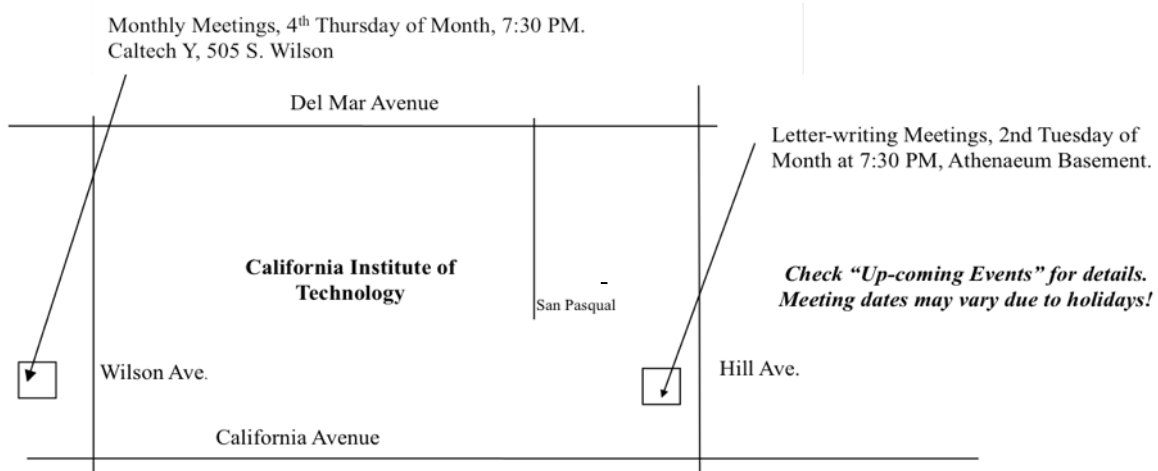
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[Narges ends her speech with this paragraph.]

Thoughts and dreams don’t die. Belief in freedom and justice does not perish with imprisonment, torture or even death and tyranny do not prevail over freedom, even when they rely on the power of the state. Sitting here in the prison, I am deeply humbled by the honor you have bestowed on me and I will continue my efforts until we achieve peace, tolerance for a plurality of views, and human rights.

#### GROUP 22 MARCH LETTER COUNT

UAs	19
Birthday card for POC Narges	1
Total	20



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.