

# Amnesty International Group 22 Pasadena/Caltech News

Volume XXVI Number 5, May 2018

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Thursday, May 24, 7:30-9:00 PM. *Monthly Meeting.*** We meet at the Caltech Y, Tyson House, 505 S. Wilson Ave., Pasadena. This month we will watch a film from the Gacaca Trilogy, a set of documentaries about the aftermath of the Rwanda genocide and efforts for reconciliation among neighbors. The film is 54 minutes long, and we will have some time for discussion afterward.

**Tuesday, June 12, 7:30-9:00 PM. *Letter writing meeting*** at Caltech Athenaeum, corner of Hill and California in Pasadena. In the summer we meet outdoors at the "Rath al Fresco," on the lawn next to the building. This informal gathering is a great way for newcomers to get acquainted with Amnesty.

**Sunday, June 17, 6:30 PM. *Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion Group.*** This month we read "**Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the F.B.I.**" by David Grann.

**Note:** We're taking a summer break and won't have any Thursday monthly meetings in June, July, or August. Letter writing and book group meetings will continue as usual.

## COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi everyone,

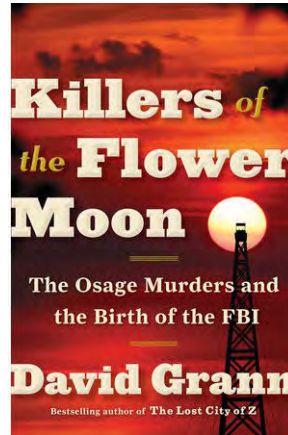
Kathy didn't have time to write the column this month, so here's a short note from me (Joyce).

Thanks to Group 22 member Paula for providing the film for our Thursday meeting. "**Gacaca, Living Together Again in Rwanda?**" is the title. More information about the film is at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gacaca,\\_Living\\_Together\\_Again\\_In\\_Rwanda%3F](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gacaca,_Living_Together_Again_In_Rwanda%3F)

"The name Gacaca is derived from the Kinyarwanda word *umucaca* meaning "a plant so soft to sit on that people prefer to gather on it". Originally, Gacaca gatherings were meant to restore order and harmony within communities by acknowledging wrongs and having justice restored to those who were victims."

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gacaca\\_court](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gacaca_court)

It sounds like a very interesting and thought-provoking film. Hope you can come and watch it with Group 22 on Thursday!



**Next Rights Readers Meeting**

**Sunday, June 17  
6:30 PM**

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

***Killers of the  
Flower Moon***

**by David Grann**

## REVIEW

By Dave Eggers

April 28, 2017

[[www.nytimes.com/2017/04/28/books/review/killers-of-the-flower-moon-david-grann.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/28/books/review/killers-of-the-flower-moon-david-grann.html)]

## KILLERS OF THE FLOWER MOON

The Osage Murders and the Birth of the F.B.I.

By David Grann

In 1804, President Thomas Jefferson hosted a delegation of Osage chiefs who had traveled from their ancestral land, which Jefferson had recently acquired — from the French, not the Osage — in the Louisiana Purchase. The Osage representatives were tall, many of them over six feet, and they towered over most of their White House hosts. Jefferson was impressed, calling them the "finest men we have ever seen." He promised to treat their tribe fairly, telling them that from then on, "they shall know our nation only as friends and benefactors."

Over the next 20 years, the Osage were stripped of their land, ceding almost 100 million acres, and were forced onto a parcel in southeastern Kansas that measured about 50 by 125 miles (four million acres). This land would be theirs forever, the United States government told them.

And then — as David Grann details early in his disturbing and riveting new book, "Killers of the Flower Moon" — this promise, too, was broken. White settlers began squatting on Osage territory, skirmishes ensued and eventually the tribe had to sell the land for \$1.25 an acre. Looking for a new home, the Osage found an area of what was to become Oklahoma that no one else wanted. It was hilly and unsuited to cultivation. The Osage bought the parcel for

roughly a million dollars, later adding a provision that the land's "oil, gas, coal or other minerals" would be owned by the Osage, too. Thus they owned the land above and whatever was below, as well.

No one argued the point at the time. No one but the Osage knew there was oil under that rocky soil. The Osage leased the land to prospectors and made a fortune. "In 1923 alone," Grann writes, "the tribe took in more than \$30 million, the equivalent today of more than \$400 million. The Osage were considered the wealthiest people per capita in the world." They built mansions and bought fleets of cars. A magazine writer at the time wrote: "Every time a new well is drilled the Indians are that much richer. ... The Osage Indians are becoming so rich that something will have to be done about it."

Indeed. The federal government, ostensibly concerned about the Osage Indians' ability to manage their windfall, required many Osage Indians — those it classified as "incompetent" — to have a guardian oversee the management and spending of their money. Full-blooded Indians could expect to be deemed "incompetent" and in need of oversight, whereas those of mixed blood were allowed to manage their own affairs. Not surprisingly, the Osage became popular targets for theft, graft and mercenary marriage. A white woman sent a letter to the tribe, offering herself to any willing Osage bachelor: "Will you please tell the richest Indian you know of, and he will find me as good and true as any human being can be."

Grann approaches his narrative by way of Mollie Burkhart, a full member of the Osage tribe and one of four sisters who all became wealthy and married white men. But despite their windfall, their lives were fraught and ended too soon. Her sister Minnie died at 27 of what doctors ruled a "peculiar wasting illness." A few years later, her sister Anna, who was known to enjoy speakeasies and whiskey, left one night and never came home. Her body was found a week later in a ravine. She had been shot in the head.

Another Osage member, Charles Whitehorn, was found shot within days of the discovery of Anna's body. Both he and Anna had been killed with small-caliber bullets. "Two Separate Murder Cases Are Unearthed Almost at Same Time," a newspaper headline declared. Two months after Anna's body was found, her mother, Lizzie, also died of the same vague

wasting "disease" that had claimed Minnie. When another sister turned up dead in a suspicious fire, leaving Mollie as the last of her family alive, she was terrified. Someone or something was killing not just the members of her family but Osage Indians en masse — hence the first half of Grann's subtitle, "The Osage Murders and the Birth of the F.B.I."

Nine months after the deaths of Anna Brown and Charles Whitehorn, a champion Osage steer roper named William Stepson died of an apparent poisoning. Two more Osage died in the ensuing months, both of suspected poisonings. A couple was blown up by a nitroglycerin bomb while they slept in their bed. The killing continued, with more than two dozen people — not just Osage Indians but also white investigators sent to look into the crimes — killed between 1920 and 1924. It became known as the Osage Reign of Terror.

The second part of Grann's subtitle nods to the fitful investigation into the killings and their role in shaping the modern F.B.I. In the 1920s, law enforcement was typically conducted by a patchwork of sheriffs, private detectives and vigilantes. The sheriff of Osage County at the time was Harve M. Freas, 58, who weighed 300 pounds and was rumored to cavort with bootleggers and gamblers. He had done nothing to determine who was killing the Osage Indians, so the tribe asked Barney McBride, a white oilman they trusted, to go to Washington, D.C., to insist the federal government intervene. A day after he arrived, McBride's body was found in a Maryland culvert. He was naked and had been stabbed over 20 times. "Conspiracy Believed to Kill Rich Indians," The Washington Post's headline read.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation was created by Theodore Roosevelt in 1908, to fill in gaps in jurisdiction and assist where local enforcement was overmatched. By the 1920s, though, it was still relatively small, with only a few hundred agents and a handful of offices around the country. Most important, the bureau's agents were not trusted. Known for bending laws and getting cozy with criminals, the Department of Justice, Grann writes, "had become known as the Department of Easy Virtue."

That changed in 1924, when J. Edgar Hoover was appointed the director of the F.B.I. He was not a likely choice. He had been deputy director under Burns, but was only 29 and had never been a detective. He was diminutive, struggled

with a stutter and a fear of germs, and lived with his mother. But he was zealous and organized, and had a vision for the bureau. He insisted that all agents have some background in law or accounting; that they wear dark suits and ties; that they abstain from alcohol and be models of personal propriety; and that they use new, scientific methods of sleuthing, including fingerprint identification, ballistics, handwriting analysis and phone-tapping.

The Osage murders would be Hoover's first significant test of the new F.B.I.'s abilities. Given that so many investigators had already failed or had been murdered in pursuit of the killers, Hoover needed the sturdiest and most incorruptible of agents to head up the investigation. He chose Tom White, a Texan myth of a man. White's father was the local sheriff in Austin, so Tom grew up in a home attached to the county jail. He and two brothers eventually became Texas Rangers. Looking for a more stable life, White became an F.B.I. agent.

White was empowered to put his own team together, most of whom would insinuate themselves into Osage undercover. One older agent entered town as an elderly cattle rancher. Another agent, a former insurance salesman, set up a real insurance office in town. And John Wren, part Ute Indian — one of the F.B.I.'s few Native Americans — arrived as an Indian medicine man hoping to find his relatives.

If this all sounds like the plot of a detective novel, you have fallen under the spell of David Grann's brilliance. In his previous two books, "The Lost City of Z," about the search for the golden Amazonian city of El Dorado, and "The Devil and Sherlock Holmes," a varied collection of journalism, Grann has proved himself a master of spinning delicious, many-layered mysteries that also happen to be true. As a reporter he is dogged and exacting, with a singular ability to uncover and incorporate obscure journals, depositions and ledgers without ever letting the plot sag. As a writer he is generous of spirit, willing to give even the most scurrilous of characters the benefit of the doubt.

Thus, when Tom White and his men solve the crime, and the mastermind behind the murders is revealed, you will not see it coming. You will feel that familiar thrill at having been successfully misdirected, but then there are about 70 pages left in the book. And in these last pages, Grann takes what was already a

fascinating and disciplined recording of a forgotten chapter in American history, and with the help of contemporary Osage tribe members, he illuminates a sickening conspiracy that goes far deeper than those four years of horror. It will sear your soul. Among the towering thefts and crimes visited upon the native peoples of the continent, what was done to the Osage must rank among the most depraved and ignoble. "This land is saturated with blood," says Mary Jo Webb, an Osage Indian alive today and still trying to understand the crimes of the past. "History," Grann writes in this shattering book, "is a merciless judge."

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



David Grann is a #1 *New York Times* bestselling author and an award-winning staff writer at *The New Yorker* magazine. His latest book, *Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI*, was released in 2017. Based on years of

research, it explores one of the most sinister crimes and racial injustices in American history.

His first book, *The Lost City of Z: A Tale of Deadly Obsession* in the Amazon, became a #1 *New York Times* bestseller and has been translated into more than twenty-five languages. *The Lost City of Z* has been adapted into a major motion picture, which will be released in theaters in April 2017.

Before joining *The New Yorker* in 2003, Grann was a senior editor at *The New Republic*, and, from 1995 until 1996, the executive editor of the newspaper *The Hill*. He holds master's degrees in international relations from the Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy as well as in creative writing from Boston University. After graduating from Connecticut College in 1989, he received a Thomas Watson Fellowship and did research in Mexico, where he began his career in journalism. He currently lives in New York with his wife and two children.

[https://www.bookbrowse.com/biographies/in dex.cfm/author\\_number/1662/david-grann](https://www.bookbrowse.com/biographies/in dex.cfm/author_number/1662/david-grann)

## Security with Human Rights

By Robert Adams

### US EMBASSY MOVE TO JERUSALEM REWARDS ISRAEL'S ILLEGAL ANNEXATION AND SETTLEMENT POLICY SAYS AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

05/14/2018

Reacting to the opening of the United States embassy in Jerusalem, Raed Jarrar, Advocacy Director for the Middle East and North Africa at Amnesty International USA stated:

"Today, on the eve of Palestinians' commemoration of the Nakba, the displacement and dispossession of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians 70 years ago from their homes and towns, the United States has chosen to reward the illegal annexation of occupied territory by moving its embassy and recognizing unified Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

"The Trump administration may portray this action as simply hauling desks from one building to another. But in reality this move intentionally undermines Palestinian rights and in effect condones decades of violations by Israel, including the creation of illegal settlements, which constitute war crimes.

"This U.S. action comes in the midst of a brutal crackdown by the Israeli government against Palestinians in Gaza who have been protesting, in the vicinity of the Israel-Gaza fence, against their unbearable living conditions and calling for the right to return. Israeli soldiers have used weapons — some made in the U.S. and designed to cause maximum harm — against individuals who were not posing an imminent threat to them, injuring thousands, and killing 37, including some in what appear to have been willful killings.

"As Israel's main supplier of military equipment and technology, the U.S. must finally realize that it is fueling serious human rights abuses and consistently allowing Israeli authorities to remain unaccountable for their actions.

"Rather than showing contempt for international law yet again, the U.S. must take concrete steps to stop the delivery of arms and military equipment to Israel, and demand independent, impartial investigations into reports of violations."

Responding to reports that dozens of Palestinians have already been killed and hundreds injured by the Israeli military, Philip Luther, Research and Advocacy Director for the Middle East and North Africa at Amnesty International, said:

"This is another horrific example of the Israeli military using excessive force and live ammunition in a totally deplorable way. This is a violation of international standards, in some instances committing what appear to be willful killings constituting war crimes.

"Today's footage from Gaza is extremely troubling, and as violence continues to spiral out of control, the Israeli authorities must immediately rein in the military to prevent the further loss of life and serious injuries.

"Only last month, Amnesty International called on the international community to stop the delivery of arms and military equipment to Israel. The rising toll of deaths and injuries today only serves to highlight the urgent need for an arms embargo.

"While some protestors may have engaged in some form of violence, this still does not justify the use of live ammunition.

"Under international law, firearms can only be used to protect against an imminent threat of death or serious injury."

Early medical reports from Gaza today indicate that dozens of people have been shot in the head or chest. Amnesty International last month documented research from the Gaza Strip that showed the Israeli military were killing and maiming demonstrators who pose no imminent threat to them.

[<https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/us-embassy-move-to-jerusalem-rewards-israels-illegal-annexation-and-settlement-policy-says-amnesty-international/>]

## DEATH PENALTY NEWS

By Stevi Carroll

### A Look at Proposition 66's Possible Impact - Just Name One

The final name this month in recent exonerations is Vicente Benavides. He began his stay on California's death row in 1993. It was not until 2018 that he was exonerated. Had the law

that 51% of the California voters approved in 2016 been in effect in 1993 Vicente Benavides may be dead today. Mr. Benavides exoneration should be the proof Governor Jerry Brown needed in 2012 when he dismissed the possibility of innocent people being on death. Governor Brown said, "I know people say, 'Oh, there have been all these innocent people.' Well, I have not seen one name on death row that's been told to me."

Okay Governor Brown, here's one name:  
Vicente Benavides.

### **A New Book**

"Death Row: The Final Minutes: My Life as an Execution Witness in America's Most Infamous Prison" by Michelle Lyons

IN 12 YEARS, MICHELLE LYONS WITNESSED NEARLY 300 EXECUTIONS.

First as a reporter and then as a spokesperson for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Michelle was a frequent visitor to Huntsville's Walls Unit, where she recorded and relayed the final moments of death row inmates' lives before they were put to death by the state.

Michelle was in the death chamber as some of the United States' most notorious criminals, including serial killers, child murderers and rapists, spoke their last words on earth, while a cocktail of lethal drugs surged through their veins.

Michelle supported the death penalty, before misgivings began to set in as the executions mounted. During her time in the prison system, and together with her dear friend and colleague, Larry Fitzgerald, she came to know and like some of the condemned men and women she saw die. She began to query the arbitrary nature of the death penalty and ask the question: do executions make victims of all of us?

An incredibly powerful and unique look at the complex story of capital punishment, as told by those whose lives have been shaped by it, *Death Row: The Final Minutes* is an important take on crime and punishment at a fascinating point in America's political history. (from Amazon)

### **New Hampshire**

New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu will have a bill to rid the state of the death penalty on his desk. He has promised to veto it.

Who supports this repeal?

Representative Richard O'Leary, D-Manchester believes the over 200 studies that have shown that the death penalty does not deter murders to make communities safer. The state would need to build a new death chamber, and a group of retired police and corrections officials think the millions of dollars needed for this task could be better spent. Former Assistant Commissioner of Corrections Bill McGonagle is concerned that executions do not always proceed as planned and that watching just one botched execution should convince people that this is not a humane thing to do. Retired Derry police Lt. Paul Lutz believes, "the psychological threats to the lives of those engaged in this field are far greater than what is posed by an armed criminal."

Despite these comments from people who have been directly involved in the criminal justice system, Governor Sununu's position on this bill has remained steadfast.

We'll see.

### **Recent Exonerations**

Marquis Jackson State: CT

Date of Exoneration: 5/3/2018

In 2000, Marquis Jackson was sentenced to 45 years in prison for murder and robbery at a New Haven, Connecticut delicatessen. He was exonerated in 2018 after cell phone evidence concealed by police was discovered that showed he was not involved.

Jean Dorval State: NJ

Date of Exoneration: 4/30/2018

In 1996, Jean Dorval and Duquene Pierre were sentenced to 60 years in prison for murder and aggravated assault in Union County, New Jersey. Pierre was acquitted at a retrial in 2016 based on evidence that he and Dorval were out of state at the time of the murder and in 2018, the prosecution dismissed the charges against Dorval.

Anthony Jakes State: IL

Date of Exoneration: 4/30/2018

In 1993, Anthony Jakes was sentenced to 40 years in prison after falsely confessing at age 15 to a murder in Chicago, Illinois. He was exonerated in 2018 based on evidence that police kicked and beat him until he confessed.

Vernon Horn State: CT

Date of Exoneration: 4/25/2018

In 2000, Vernon Horn was sentenced to 70 years in prison for murder and robbery at a New Haven, Connecticut delicatessen. He was exonerated in 2018 after cell phone evidence concealed by police was discovered that showed he was not involved.

Vicente Benavides State: CA

Date of Exoneration: 4/19/2018

In 1993, Vicente Benavides was sentenced to death for murdering his common-law wife's 21-month-old daughter by sexual assault. He was exonerated in 2018 after ten medical experts who had testified at his trial recanted their testimony, and new evidence showed that no sexual assault occurred.

### Stays of Execution

April

11 William Montgomery OH  
**Commutation granted.** On March 16, the Ohio Board of Pardons voted 604 to recommend that Montgomery's death sentence be commuted by Ohio Governor John Kasich. Gov. Kasich commuted Montgomery's death sentence to life without parole on March 26, 2018.

May

7 Marcel Johnson PA  
 Stay granted by the Bucks County Court of Common Pleas on March 28, 2018 to provide Johnson the opportunity to pursue state post-conviction challenges that are available to all Pennsylvania criminal defendants.

9 James Hawkins TN  
 Stay granted on April 12, 2018 to provide Hawkins the opportunity to pursue state post-conviction challenges that are available to all Tennessee criminal defendants.

30 Stanley Fitzpatrick OH  
 Rescheduled

### Executions

April

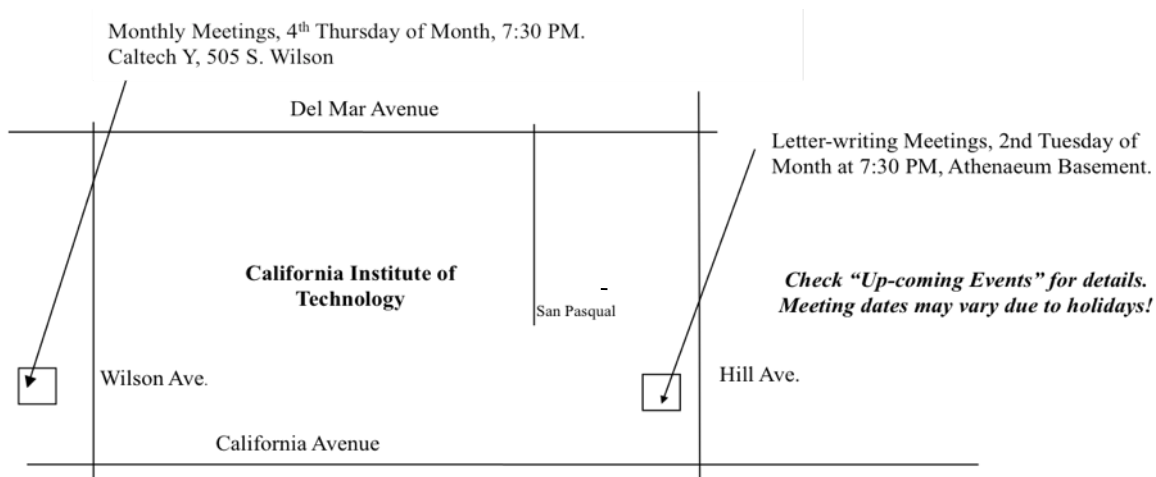
25 Erick Daniel Davila TX  
 Lethal injection  
 1-drug Pentobarbital  
 years from sentencing and execution = 9

May

4 Robert Earl Butts, Jr GA  
 Lethal injection  
 1-drug Pentobarbital  
 years from sentencing and execution = 19

16 Juan Castillo TX  
 Lethal injection  
 1-drug Pentobarbital  
 years from sentencing and execution = 22

<b>GROUP 22 MAY LETTER COUNT</b>	
UAs	15
POC	5
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.