

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, December 14, 11 AM to 2 PM.
WRITE FOR RIGHTS, Dog Haus Biergarten, 93 E. Green St., Pasadena. This special letter writing event replaces our usual Group 22 Tuesday evening letter writing at Caltech for the month of December.

Sunday, December 15, 4:00 PM. Holiday Potluck & Human Rights Book Discussion Group. For December we read a novel, "**Waiting for Eden**" by Elliot Ackerman.

NOTE: This month our book group meeting is combined with a holiday potluck and will be held at Joyce's house in Montrose. For information, email aigp22@caltech.edu or phone 818-249-4056 and leave a voicemail.

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hello all,

This is Joyce, once again substituting for Kathy, who's been extremely busy at work lately. She's managing to find time to organize Group 22's Write For Rights event on Dec. 14 at the Dog Haus in Old Town Pasadena (see above).

Group member Veronica arranged a previous W4R event spotlighting Uyghur human rights issues on Nov 23 at Dolan's Uyghur Cuisine in Alhambra. Kathy said that she and Robert attended and were "able to crank out a few letters and eat some of the yummy dishes. Veronica was right, the black mushrooms with celery were really tasty."

Best wishes to Veronica for a good recovery from surgery on her arm. She expects it may take six months for full recovery. Huge thanks to Veronica for all the awesome work she's done this year for Group 22 and other human rights groups! She managed our group's participation in two environmental fairs last spring, tabled at the Caltech community advocacy fair, and was a chief organizer of Visual Artists Guild's Tiananmen commemoration and exhibits. And that's just a partial list!

Hope to see you at Write For Rights. If you can't attend our Dec. 14 event, please consider attending another event or participating as an individual. <https://write.amnestyusa.org/>

Write A Letter! Change A Life!



Next Rights Readers Meeting

**Sunday, Dec. 15,
4:00 PM**

**Holiday Potluck at
private home in
Montrose
(aigp22@caltech.edu)**

***Waiting for Eden*
by Elliot Ackerman**

ABOUT THE BOOK

www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/535226/waiting-for-eden-by-elliott-ackerman

"Patiently, and unflinchingly, Ackerman is becoming one of the great poet laureates of America's tragic adventurism across the globe."
—Pico Iyer

Eden lies in a hospital bed, unable to move or speak. His wife Mary spends every day on the sofa in his room. We see them through the eyes of Eden's best friend, a fellow Marine who didn't make it back home—and who must relive the secrets held between all three of them as he waits for Eden to finally, mercifully die and join him in whatever comes after.

A breathtakingly spare and shattering novel that explores the unseen aftereffects—and unacknowledged casualties—of war, *Waiting for Eden* is a piercingly insightful, deeply felt meditation on loyalty, friendship, betrayal, and love.

"The Tim O'Brien of our era." —Vogue

"Devastating." —The Wall Street Journal

"Haunting. . . . Daring." —The Boston Globe

"Heart-wrenching." —NPR

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



ELLIOT ACKERMAN is a National Book Award finalist, author of the novels *Waiting for Eden*, *Dark at the Crossing*, and *Green on Blue*, and of the nonfiction book *Places and Names*. His work has appeared in *Esquire*,

The New Yorker, The Atlantic, The New York Times Magazine, and The Best American Short Stories, among other publications. He is both a former White House Fellow and a Marine, and he served five tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, where he received the Silver Star, the Bronze Star for Valor, and the Purple Heart. He divides his time between New York City and Washington, D.C.

www.penguinrandomhouse.com/authors/2133889/elliott-ackerman/

DEATH PENALTY NEWS

By Stevi Carroll

Rodney Reed

The year is 1996. The place is a small Texas town, Bastrop. The characters are a white woman, Stacey Stites; a white man, Jimmy Fennell; and a black man, Rodney Reed. Ms Stites lives with Mr Fennell who is a Bastrop police officer. Ms Stites and Mr Reed are having an affair. Ms Stites is raped and strangled. A year after her murder, Mr Reed becomes a suspect because his DNA is matched with some found on her body. While Mr Fennell is a person of interest, Mr Reed is arrested, tried, convicted, and sentenced to death. This is after Mr Reed was arrested and charged with kidnapping, beating, and attempting rape of another woman six months after Ms Stites' murder. Mr Reed's DNA was on file because he'd been accused of other rape cases. This is how the authorities were able to match Mr Reed's DNA to Ms Stites' case. While Mr Reed was considered a suspect in attacks of six women, he was not prosecuted in five of them and for the one he was charged with, he was acquitted; nonetheless, his DNA was on file.

Now about DNA. Ms Stites was strangled with a belt. Was that belt tested for DNA? No. Was hair found on Ms Stites' body Mr Reed's hair? No. Was the time of Ms Stites' death accurate? No. She may have been dead before she was supposed to leave home for her 3:30 AM shift at a grocery store thirty miles from her home.

In 2007, policeman Jimmy Fennell was accused of raping a woman he had in custody. He pleaded guilty to charges of kidnapping and improper sexual activity while the woman was

in custody. He was sentenced to ten years in prison and was released in March of 2018. According to an affidavit by Arthur Snow, a member of the Aryan Brotherhood who was in prison with Mr Fennell, Mr Fennell admitted he killed Ms Stites because of her affair with Mr Reed, remember - a black man. Another witness who submitted an affidavit, Jim Clampit, a former Sheriff's Deputy, said at Ms Stites' funeral, Mr Fennell looked at Ms Stites' body and said, "you got what you deserved."

Recently, Mr Reed received a stay of execution. How did he get this indefinite stay? On November 12, Bryce Benjet, Mr Reed's lawyer who has worked this case for 18 years, and the rest of Mr Reed's legal team filed an appeal to the Texas Court of Appeals with the affidavits and with statements from other witnesses who said the relationship between Ms Stites and Mr Fennell was not as 'loving' as was portrayed during Mr Reed's hearing. Also, on November 5, 26 Texas lawmakers wrote a letter to Texas Governor Greg Abbott and the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles in which they asked for a hold to be put on Mr Reed's execution so that the new leads could be examined. Celebrities including Beyonce, Rihanna, and Kim Kardashian West, and activist Shaun King brought attention to Mr Reed's case, and Ms Kardashian West asked (tweeted at) Governor Abbott to review the new evidence.

November 20 was to be the day Mr Reed would die. Instead Governor Abbott has given him a reprieve and the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles reviewed Mr Reed's clemency application and unanimously decided to recommend the delay. What this will bring we will wait to see.

And let us remember this is Texas, where Governor Greg Abbott has been governor since January 2015 and during which time, 48 people have been executed in Texas alone.

Federal Executions

Is US Attorney General William Barr jonesing to dust off the gurney and lethal injection protocol for Federal executions? His rationale is justice for the victims' family and friends but finding just the right lethal cocktail is problematic. Presently, four people who were scheduled for execution in December have received stays or reprieves.

A 1994 federal statute says federal executions shall be carried out "in the manner prescribed

by the law of the State in which the sentence is imposed." AG Barr said the Federal death penalty protocol would use a single drug, pentobarbital, rather than the three-drug cocktail used in the past because one of the problems is getting the drugs. While Justice Department attorneys argued that the use of lethal injection that was similar regardless of the drugs, US District Court Judge Tanya Chutkan ruled that since the 1994 federal statute says federal executions shall be carried out "in the manner prescribed by the law of the State in which the sentence is imposed, requiring the federal government to follow more than just the state's method of execution is consistent with other sections of the statute and with historical practices. For all these reasons, this court finds that the FDPA [Federal Death Penalty Act] does not authorize the creation of a single implementation procedure for federal executions. There is no statute that gives the [Bureau of Prisons] or DOJ the authority to establish a single implementation procedure for all federal executions."

In time, Federal executions will begin again. But then again, maybe not.

Conservatives and the Death Penalty

What do 250 politically active conservatives from 44 states have in common? They want to abolish the death penalty in their states. They belong to a group called The Conservatives Concerned About the Death Penalty and they have issued a signed statement. In part the statement they signed says, "We have come to the conclusion that the death penalty does not work and can't be made to work, not in spite of our conservative principles, but because of them. In light of its track record, we call on our fellow conservatives to reexamine the death penalty and demonstrate the leadership needed to end this failed policy."

Part of their reason for opposing the death penalty is their pro-life stance. Another reason is a mistrust of government, and as Jared Olsen, a state representative in Wyoming said, "...it blows my mind that any American would want to trust the justice system with matters of life and death."

Mr Olsen also believes that the US Justice Department's resumption of the Federal death penalty puts the US in the same category as nations such as North Korea and that this is "where we just simply don't stand when it comes to our values."

These conservative activists believe if the states lead, the Federal government may follow. Hannah Cox, the national manager for Conservatives Concerned About the Death Penalty said, "We don't need the death penalty. It's a bad, failed, big-government program, and we hope this list will help make headways on that."

I see some common ground here.

Recent Exonerations

Jack Sagin - State: CA

- Date of Exoneration: 10/10/2019

In 1986, Jack Sagin was sentenced to life in prison without parole for murder in Monterey County, California. He was exonerated in 2019 after DNA tests on evidence from the crime scene identified the profiles of five different men, none of whom was Sagin.

Richard Kussmaul, Michael Shelton, James Pitts, Jr. - State: TX

- Date of Exoneration: 10/16/2019

In 1994, Richard Kussmaul was sentenced to life in prison without parole for the murders of two teenagers in Moody, Texas. Kussmaul and three co-defendants who pled guilty to sexual assault in the case--Michael Shelton, James Pitts, Jr. and James Long--were exonerated in 2019 after testing excluded all four defendants and revealed DNA from two unidentified males.

Michael Shelton - State: TX

- Date of Exoneration: 10/16/2019

In 1994, Michael Shelton was sentenced to 20 years in prison after falsely confessing to sexually assaulting a 17-year-old woman who was murdered along with her 14-year-old companion in Moody, Texas. Shelton and three co-defendants--Richard Kussmaul, James Pitts, Jr. and James Long--were exonerated in 2019 after testing excluded all four defendants and revealed DNA from two unidentified males.

Kevin Warrior - State: OK

- Date of Exoneration: 10/18/2019

In 2016, Kevin Warrior was sentenced to life in prison without parole for murder in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He was granted a new trial and the charges were dismissed, after a gun recovered from another man who admitted the crime was linked to the murder.

Quintin Alonzo - State: TX

- Date of Exoneration: 11/1/2019

Quintin Alonzo of Dallas, Texas (pictured with his mother) was sentenced to life in prison for

murder and assault in 2003. He was exonerated in 2019, four years after the real killer confessed to the crime the day before he was executed for a different murder.

Stays of Execution

November

7 James Dailey FL
 13 Cleveland Jackson OH
 (rerieved until 10:00 AM January 13, 2021 unless he receives another reprieve)
 13 Patrick Murphy TX
 20 Rodney Reed TX
 30 Tim Jones, Jr SC
 (legally premature warrant — STAYED)

December

9 Daniel Lewis Lee FEDERAL
 Preliminary injunction granted - subject to appeal
 11 James Hanna OH
 (rerieved until 10:00 AM July 16, 2020 unless he receives another reprieve or clemency is granted)
 11 Lezmond Mitchell FEDERAL
 (oral argument will be heard on December 13, 2019, at 2:00 PM in Phoenix, Arizona)
 13 Wesley Ira Purkey FEDERAL
 Preliminary injunction granted - subject to appeal
 13 Jakeem Towles PA
 (legally premature warrant — STAYED)

Executions

November

4 Charles Rhimes SD
 Lethal Injection 1-drug (pentobarbital)
 Years From Sentence To Execution - 16
 6 Justen Hall* TX
 Lethal Injection 1-drug (pentobarbital)
 Years From Sentence To Execution - 14
 13 Ray Cromartie GA
 Lethal Injection 1-drug (pentobarbital)
 Years From Sentence To Execution - 22

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

PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

**Narges Mohammadi
 and Gao Zhisheng**

By Joyce Wolf

Group 22 continues to work for both imprisoned Iranian activist Narges Mohammadi and missing human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng in China. At our Write For Rights event on Dec. 14, you can sign petitions to government officials for these two prisoners of conscience. You will also have the opportunity to write cards of support to their families. (Gao's wife and children fled to the U.S. in 2009. Narges's husband and 12-year-old twins now live in exile in Paris.)

There has been no news of **Gao Zhisheng** since he went missing in August 2017. Amnesty marked the second anniversary of Gao's disappearance with a tribute by his friend and fellow activist Teng Biao.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/08/bravest-lawyer-china-gao-zhisheng/>

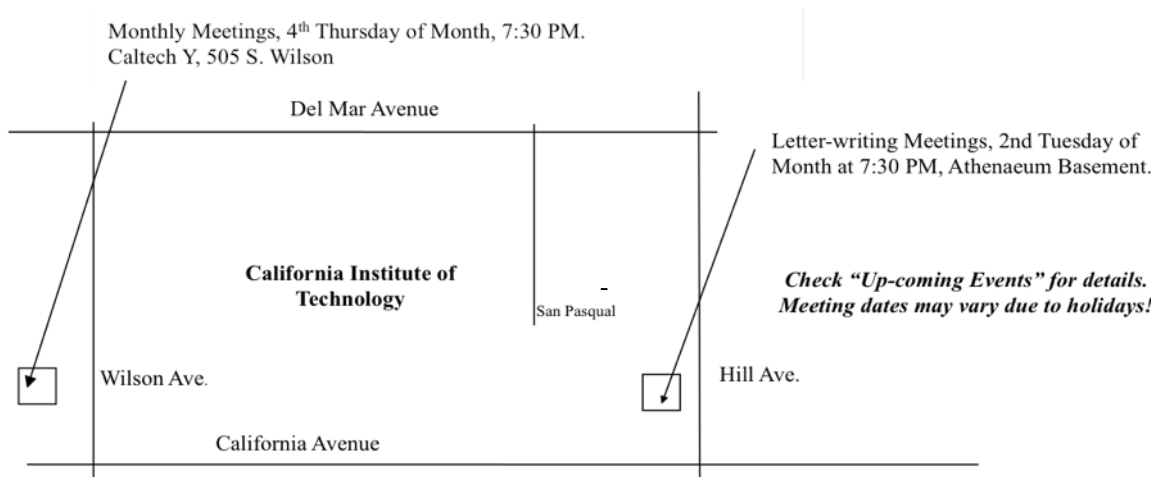
Jean-Christophe of Amnesty Belgium has been coordinating efforts for **Narges Mohammadi**. He put together a review of recent work by groups in Norway, Sweden, the USA, Denmark, Switzerland, and of course Belgium. I added a copy of his review to our website:

<http://www.its.caltech.edu/~aigp22/POC-Narges/2019-Sep-Oct-jcd.pdf>.

Congratulations to our fellow AIUSA group in Nashville on their work for Narges, and thanks to Stevi for taking the Group 22 photo at our September letter writing. #FreeNarges!

Group 22 November Letter Count

UAs	12
POC Narges Mohammadi (Iran)	9
Card for POC Gao Zhisheng (China)	1
Total	22



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.

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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.