

# Welcome to AIUSA's 2009 Western Regional Conference

**W**elcome to Amnesty International USA's 2009 Western Regional Conference in beautiful San Francisco, California. The theme of our conference this year is *Free and Equal in Dignity and Rights*. It will focus on expanding the ranks of human rights activists, increasing their dedication to the cause and enhancing their skills in addressing the urgent global human needs of our time. This year's conference marks the year our nation elected its first Black president and the celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR).

Creating human rights awareness is central to Amnesty International's global advocacy work. Whether we are fighting to abolish the death penalty, pressuring the government to renounce the use of torture and restore the rule of law in its "war on terror," ending the gross humanitarian crisis in Darfur, or defending the basic rights of Yusak Pakage and Filep Karma in Indonesia, we often need to include basic education in order to mobilize our members and the public at large towards taking action.

The Regional Conference is a great opportunity for members to learn about AIUSA's priority campaigns and participate in the organizational governance process. Beyond that, it is a chance for members to reconnect and build enduring relationships as activists and friends in the social justice movement. We thank you all for choosing to spend this weekend with your fellow Amnesty International members. We hope that you will leave the conference informed, inspired and with a renewed commitment to continue

your extraordinary work of hope and justice for millions of people around the world.

In Solidarity,

The Staff and Interns of AIUSA's West Regional Office

Dear Amnesty International Members and Guests,

I would like to welcome you to this year's Western Regional Conference. The energy and creativity that you bring to this conference is what makes Amnesty International the world's most effective grassroots human rights organization. Together in the past year, we came to the aid of thousands of men and women at risk of human rights violations around the globe. Now, we are embarking on a bold new path to make a difference in the lives of people who are suffering from human rights violations that are connected to poverty. Needless to say, Amnesty International has reached a very exciting point after nearly 50 years of human rights work. Together, let us use our time at this conference to further that great work and forge ahead into the next 50 years.

Amnesty is now embracing the full spectrum of human rights, be they civil, political, economic, social, or cultural. In doing so, we bring the power of the largest and only grassroots global movement for human rights to bear on governments, private corporations, non-state actors, and the global community to make a priority of the irradiation of possibly the greatest human rights violation of our time: the violation of the right to live with dignity that results from a lack of food, access to clean water, decent and affordable housing, adequate and accessible healthcare and the active participation in the political process that would allow for these rights to be realized. Amnesty has launched a global campaign, *Demand Dignity*, to achieve this goal. All 150 sections of Amnesty will work on and prioritize it over the next decade. During the course of the next two days you'll learn more about how we hope to do this and what you can do with your local and student groups and as individual activists. This is an exciting time to be a part of this movement.

In the past year, we helped secure the release of prisoners of conscience such as Ma Khin Khin Leh, who was freed earlier from life imprisonment in Myanmar. We ratcheted up the pressure on U.S. and Georgia state authorities to give a new hearing to Troy Davis, who has remained on Georgia's death row for 18 years despite compelling evidence that he was wrongly convicted for murder. We worked alongside Native women's advocacy groups to help secure an astonishing \$1.3 billion in federal funds for the Indian Health Service (IHS) and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), as well as provisions in the appropriations bill that mandate the IHS and BIA to take specific steps to address gender violence. None of these victories could have been won without you and the work that you do.

We look forward to working with you at this conference to help you and your groups take action, educate the public and grow the movement. This weekend promises to educate, train and inspire us in our ongoing work on human rights both here at home and around the world.

In Solidarity,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gouri Sadhwani".

Gouri Sadhwani  
Deputy Executive Director  
Organizing, Membership, Campaigns Department  
Amnesty International USA

# Western Regional Conference

## Western Regional Staff

**Banafsheh Akhlaghi**, Regional Director

**Will Butkus**, Field Organizer

**Cindy Mathew**, Development Officer, Northwest Region

**Kalaya'an Mendoza**, Field Organizer

**Sara Schmidt**, Field Organizer

# Overview of Events

## FRIDAY

5:00pm-7:00pm - **Registration**

5:00pm-7:00pm - **Member Services Table: pick up your voting card or become a member of AIUSA**

5:00pm-7:00pm - **Ideas Fair**

7:00pm-9:00pm - **Launch of the Western Regional Conference with Reverend Cecil Williams at Glide Memorial Church**

## SATURDAY

8:00am-5:30pm - **Registration**

8:00am-5:30pm - **Member Services/Information Table**

8:00am-5:30pm - **Amnesty International Shop and Ideas Fair**

9:00am-9:30am - **Welcome and Keynote Speaker**

9:30am-10:30am - **Morning Plenary: *State of Human Rights in Iran: Crisis and Prisoners of Conscience***

10:30am-10:45am - **Break**

10:45am-12:00pm - **Concurrent Panel and Workshop**

**Panel: *Persuasive Voices on Abolition***

**Skills Building Workshops, *various locations***

12:00pm-1:30pm - **Lunch and Resolutions Working Parties**

1:30pm-2:30pm - **Local and Student Groups Caucus**

2:30pm-3:45pm - **Concurrent Panel and Workshop**

**Panel: *Human Security Can Yield National Security***

**Skills Building Workshops, *various locations***

3:45pm- 4:00pm - **Break**

4:00pm-5:30pm - **Concurrent Panel and Workshop**

**Panel: *Immigration Enforcement in Communities: Does Sanctuary Still Exist in San Francisco?***

**Skills Building Workshops, *various locations***

5:30pm-5:45pm - **Break**

5:45pm-6:45pm- **Evening Plenary: *Demand Dignity: Women's Right to Health as a Human Right***

7:00pm-9:00pm - **Screening of the movie "The Visitor"**

9:30pm-11pm - **American Radio concert**

## SUNDAY

9:00am-11:30am - **Amnesty International Shops and Ideas Fair**

9:00am-11:30am - **Member Services and Information Table**

9:00am-11:00am - **Resolutions Voting Plenary**

## Friday, November 6

### 5:00pm-7:00pm – **Registration and Information Table**

Please visit the registration table upon your arrival to pick up your WRC registration packet with detailed schedule information. Those who have not yet registered for the conference can register on-site.

The Registration and Information Table will be located in the Yosemite Foyer Area.

### 5:00pm-7:00pm – **Member Services Table**

Become a member of Amnesty International if you are not already one, and join more than 2.2 million people around the world as part of an effective independent organization fighting to free prisoners of conscience, abolish the death penalty, stop violence against women, and ensure that everyone has full access to human rights.

The Member Services Table will be located in the Yosemite Foyer Area.

### 5:00pm-7:00pm – **Ideas Fair**

Amnesty International groups, members, and staff display a range of panels, presentations, art, and other information at the Ideas Fair. When visiting the Ideas Fair, participants are encouraged to discuss the panels, share their knowledge, and take action with a range of petitions.

The Ideas Fair will be located in the Yosemite Foyer Area.

### 7:00pm-9:00pm - **Reverend Cecil Williams at Glide Memorial Church**

Located at Ellis and Taylor in the Tenderloin, one of San Francisco's harshest urban environments, Glide Foundation is an oasis that has served the poor and disenfranchised for 45 years. From serving nearly one million meals a year, to holiday programs helping over 80,000, to operating a professional medical clinic, to youth job training, to offering weekly spiritual celebrations at Glide Church and much more – Glide is many things to many people. Glide has helped thousands of disenfranchised and poor people get back on their feet and find their way to jobs, housing and spiritual fulfillment. Glide Memorial Church is located across the street from the Hilton: 300 Ellis Street, San Francisco, CA 94102. The phone number is (415) 674-6000.

## Saturday, November 7

### 8:00am-5:30pm – **Registration and Information Table (Foyer)**

Please visit the registration table upon your arrival to pick up your WRC registration packet with detailed schedule information. Those who have not yet registered for the conference can register on-site.

The Registration and Information Table will be located in the Yosemite Foyer Area.

### 8:00am-5:30pm – **Member Services Table (Foyer)**

Become a member of Amnesty International if you are not already one, and join more than 2.2 million people around the world in an effective independent organization fighting to free prisoners of conscience, abolish the death penalty, stop violence against women, and ensure that everyone has full access to human rights.

The Member Services Table will be located in the Yosemite Foyer Area.

### 8:00am-5:30pm – **Ideas Fair (Foyer)**

Amnesty International groups, members and staff display a range of panels, presentations, art and other information at the Ideas Fair. While visiting the Ideas Fair participants are encouraged to discuss the panels, share their knowledge, and take action with a range of petitions.

The Ideas Fair will be located in the Yosemite Foyer Area.

### 9:00am-9:30am – **Welcome and Keynote Speaker (Imperial Ballroom)**

**Banafsheh Akhlaghi**, Western Regional Director

**Larry Cox**, Amnesty International Executive Director

### 9:30am-10:30am – **Morning Plenary: *State of Human Rights in Iran: Crisis and Prisoners of Conscience***

#### **(Imperial Ballroom)**

Iran's latest presidential election on June 12, 2009, took place against a backdrop of discrimination, worsening repression of dissent and violent unrest. Amnesty International continues to document serious human rights violations including detention of human rights defenders and other prisoners of conscience, unfair trials, torture and mistreatment in detention, deaths in custody and the application of the death penalty. Iran has one of the highest number of recorded executions of any country in the world.

**Nazanin Boniadi**, Moderator and Official Spokesperson for Amnesty International

**Elahe Amani**, is a human rights, gender equality, and peace activist.

**Esha Momeni**, Iranian-American activist for women's rights and a member of the One Million Signatures campaign

**Banafsheh Akhlaghi**, Amnesty International Western Regional Director

10:30am-10:45am- **Break**

## **Panel**

10:45am-12:00pm – **Panel: *Persuasive Voices on Abolition***

### **(Imperial Ballroom)**

The panelists will share their unique personal stories and perspectives on the death penalty.

**Elizabeth Zitrin**, Moderator and Amnesty International USA SDPAC

**Darryl Stallworth**, Former Prosecutor of Alameda County

**Juan Melendez**, Exoneree, spent 17 years on Florida's death row

**Judy Kerr**, Murder Victims Family Member

## **Skill Building Workshops**

### **1. AI 101 and Human Rights**

**(Franciscan A)**

### **2. Protecting People at Risk: Activists Get Creative and Get Results (Yosemite A)**

### **3. Poverty and the Right to Maternal Health: Demand Dignity (Yosemite C)**

### **4. Grassroots Feedback: Membership Engagement Team (Franciscan B)**

### **5. Student Organizing**

**(Franciscan C)**

### **6. Crisis Response: AIUSA's Response to the Crisis in Sri Lanka (Yosemite B)**

12:00pm-1:30pm - **Lunch and Resolutions Working Party**

**(Yosemite A and B )**

### **Resolutions**

A resolution is a means by which AIUSA members can affect policy decision-making at regional, national, and international levels. Votes on resolutions during Working Parties and the Conference Voting Plenary can be cast by individual members or representatives of local or student groups. First-time and return Conference attendees are encouraged to attend Working Parties and the Resolutions Plenary to see how resolutions from the regional conferences are dynamically worked through, discussed, passed, or defeated.

1:30pm-2:30pm - **Student and Local Groups Caucuses**

**(Yosemite B and C respectively)**

## Panel

2:30pm-3:45pm - ***Human Security Can Yield National Security***

### **(Imperial Ballroom)**

Our CTWJ campaign works to end human rights violations committed by the U.S. government in the name of opposing terror and to ensure accountability for these abuses. Torture, rendition, indefinite detention, unfair trials, and other violations are not only immoral; they are also illegal under U.S. and international law. This panel will bring us up to date on efforts by the Obama Administration to close Guantanamo and to cope with the legacy of torture and unlawful detention.

**Njambi Good**, Moderator and CTWJ Campaign Director

**Tom Parker**, AIUSA's Policy Director on Terrorism Counterterrorism and Human Rights

**John McCary**, Former Military Interrogator

**Bob (Robert) Baer**, Former CIA Operative

### **Skill Building Workshops**

#### **7. Death Penalty 101**

**(Yosemite A)**

#### **8. Write for Rights: Mobilize Your Community for Global**

**Write-a-Thon 2009**

**(Yosemite C)**

#### **9. Fighting for the Dignity and Freedom of All Individuals (Yosemite B)**

#### **10. Diversifying our Movement: Anti-Oppression Strategies for Activists**

**(Franciscan A)**

#### **11. Strategic Planning for your Groups**

**(Franciscan B)**

3:45pm- 4:00pm - **Break**

## Panel

***4:00pm-5:15pm - Immigration Enforcement in Communities:  
Does Sanctuary Still Exist in San Francisco***

### **(Imperial Ballroom)**

This panel will explore how local immigration enforcement policies can undermine the basic rights of immigrants, their families, and communities. The panel will discuss human rights concerns raised by the actions of local enforcement throughout the U.S., and focus on Mayor Gavin Newsom's decision this past summer to reverse San Francisco's longstanding sanctuary policy. This change instructs local police to notify immigration officials whenever they encountered youth suspected of felony conduct - regardless of whether the youth was prosecuted or convicted of a crime. Learn how members of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, local NGOs, and impacted communities organized and responded to this unprecedented reversal in San Francisco policy.

**Sarnata Reynolds**, Moderator and Amnesty International Policy Director, Refugee and Migrant Rights

**David Campos**, San Francisco Board of Supervisors and sponsor of youth sanctuary legislation

**Sin Yen Ling** of the Asian Law Caucus, NGO deeply involved in immigrant legal and community organizing

**Eleazar Juarez**, AIUSA youth activist

### **Skill Building Workshops**

**12. Skills Building for Death Penalty Abolition**  
(Yosemite A)

**13. Lobby Congress to Support the Closure of Guantanamo**  
(Yosemite C)

**14. Fighting for the Dignity and Freedom of All Individuals**  
(Yosemite B)

**8. Write For Rights! Mobilize Your Community for Global Write-a-thon 2009**  
(Franciscan C)

**10. Diversifying our Movement: Anti-Oppression Strategies for Activists**  
(Franciscan A)

**11. Strategic Planning for your Groups**  
(Franciscan B)

5:30pm-5:45pm –**Break**

5:45pm-6:45pm- **Evening Plenary: Demand Dignity: *Women's Right to Health as a Human Right***

**(Imperial Ballroom)**

AI is launching a global campaign on poverty and human rights. Among our principal themes will be the right to health care and the fight against maternal mortality. Human rights are indivisible. Those in need are often trapped in a vicious cycle of deprivation, insecurity, exclusion, and powerlessness. Highlighting the connection between poverty and human rights can help to protect the livelihoods and freedoms that need to advance.

**Banafsheh Akhlaghi**, Moderator and Western Regional Director

**Sameer Dossani**, Amnesty International USA's Director of the Demand Dignity Campaign

**Debra Bingham**, Executive Director of the California Maternal Quality Care Collaborative

**Krishanti Dharmaraj**, founding Executive Director of Women's Institute for Leadership Development for Human Rights (WILD for Human Rights).

7:00pm-9:00pm - Screening of the movie "The Visitor"

**(Imperial Ballroom)**

9:30pm-11pm – *American Radio* concert

**(Imperial Ballroom)**

# Description of Workshops

**1. AI 101 and Human rights** - Come to this workshop to learn about the history and goals of Amnesty International and the different ways to get involved in the organizations' work in defense of human rights.

**Facilitator:** Kala Mendoza, Western Regional Field Organizer

**2. Protecting People at Risk: Activists Get Creative and Get Results**

People are at the heart of Amnesty International's work. Making a positive impact on the lives of people at risk of human rights abuse has long been one of AI's key contributions to the human rights movement. Amnesty groups play a key role in this campaigning through their work to free prisoners of conscience, protect human rights defenders, and aid other people at risk. Whether you are a member of a local group working on a Case Dossier or you're a student working on one of AIUSA's priority cases, the creativity and drive you bring to your casework can lead to outcomes that help real people who are in real danger.

In this workshop, we'll learn how to get involved in AI's ongoing casework and explore campaigning techniques that can be used in all your Amnesty work. Using these techniques, we'll brainstorm on the Western Region's Special Focus Case – Shi Tao, a journalist sentenced to 10 years in prison in China for sending an email.

**Facilitators:** Michael O'Reilly, Amnesty International's Campaign Director

**3. Poverty and the Right to Maternal Health: Demand Dignity** - This workshop offers an in-depth look at AIUSA's groundbreaking new campaign on poverty and human rights: Demand Dignity. Topics will include an overview of Amnesty's approach to working on the link between poverty and a lack of human rights, with specifics about maternal health in the USA and around the world. Participants will be encouraged to develop their messaging skills through participatory skills-building activities.

**Facilitators:** Director of Demand Dignity Campaign Sameer Dossani and Amnesty Campaigner Jason Disterhoft

**4. Grassroots Feedback: Membership Engagement Team** - The Membership Engagement Team (MET) is a volunteer committee of AIUSA activists and staff members tasked with developing recommendations for ways in which AIUSA can streamline its structure and ways of working to maximize volunteer involvement and leadership. We are seeking feedback from all AIUSA members on the following issues: 1) Conflict-Resolution process, 2) the State Leadership model, 3) Regional Planning Groups, 4) Internal member communication, and 5) Training opportunities within AIUSA. Each of these issues is important to the health and growth of our organization, and **we need your help** to identify the key issues in each of these topics. At this meeting we will review the work MET has already accomplished and encourage your feedback for our remaining work (until AGM 2010). Please join us so that together we can help build a stronger movement.

**Facilitators:** Jeff Bachman, Chairman of the Board of Amnesty International, USA

**5. Student Organizing** - So you're a student. You've had various roles and event planning responsibilities within your high school or university's chapter of Amnesty International. You've probably tabled, done chalking, recruited new leaders, done outreach and fundraising, all to make your student group's human rights work more successful. But, have you ever stopped to wonder if there is a BETTER way to apply your skills to achieve better results? Come visit this workshop designed for student activists ready to share and build on their organizing talents. You'll leave the workshop with the tricks of the trade necessary to motivate human rights defenders and bring about change at your school.

**Facilitators:** Sara Schmidt, Western Field Organizer and A.J. Fay Idaho Student Area Coordinator

**6. Crisis Response: AIUSA's Response to the Crisis in Sri Lanka** - The goal of this workshop is to demonstrate how AIUSA responds to international human rights crises, focusing on the recent conflict in Sri Lanka. Emphasis will be on how AIUSA is using both traditional and innovative tools and strategies in its crisis work. We will address the current conditions in Sri Lanka and discuss AIUSA's response to the recent war and its aftermath, and ways in which activists can get involved. This will include our use of satellite and aerial photographs of IDP camps and the former war zone for our advocacy and campaigning efforts. Participants will gain in-depth knowledge on the crisis in Sri Lanka in smaller break-out groups. These will contain various formats, including mock lobbying/tabling and learning of the pros and cons of satellite/aerial photos taken during the conflict in Sri Lanka.

**Facilitators:** Christoph Koettl, Crisis Prevention and Response Campaigner and Jim McDonald Sri Lanka Country Specialist

**7. Death Penalty 101** - This interactive workshop will address arguments for and against the death penalty and reasons that make it an important Amnesty issue. We will talk about how to get involved in death penalty abolition activism and some basics for starting coalitions.

**Facilitators:** Elizabeth Zitrin and Terry McCaffrey, Amnesty International USA SDPACs

**8. Write for Rights: Mobilize Your Community for Global Write-a-Thon** – Last year, more than 7,000 people across the U.S. – and many more around the world – participated in Amnesty's Global Write-a-thon, the world's largest letter-writing event. Hundreds of thousands of appeal letters helped bring about the release of prisoners of conscience in Burma and Iran. In this year's Write-a-thon, Amnesty will again mobilize people around the world to take action to help 10 cases of individuals at risk. During the week of International Human Rights Day (December 10), the Global Write-a-thon brings people together – in classrooms, churches, homes, workplaces, and more – to make a difference in the lives of prisoners of conscience, human rights defenders, and other individuals at risk. It's a great opportunity to engage your school or wider community in simple, but effective, human rights activism. Whether your goal is a big event or a small one, this workshop will help you organize a great Write-a-thon event. Last year, AIUSA members organized more than 700 Write-a-thon events. Get in on the action this year! Write a letter – Save a life.

**Facilitators:** Michael O'Reilly, Amnesty International Campaign Director and Ellen Moore, Urgent Action Program Coordinator

**9. Fighting for the Dignity and Freedom of All Individuals: The International Vision for AI and AIUSA's Human Rights Agenda** - In August 2009, AI's International Council Meeting (ICM) adopted a new strategic plan that charts a course for the international movement's next six years. Within that framework, AIUSA's new Human Rights Agenda will guide our work as a section, alongside our colleagues in the global movement. Join members of the ICM delegation and the AIUSA Board of Directors to find out more about these plans and how they might affect your local work, and to advise the Board on how the plans can evolve as we move forward together. The workshop will include a substantive Q&A around ideas for implementing the priorities.

**Facilitators:** Jeff Bachman, Chairman of the Board of Amnesty International, USA and Heidi Evans

**10. Diversifying our Movement: Anti-Oppression Strategies for Activists** - This interactive workshop is designed to explore individual and group identities and their relevance to and impact on building an effective human rights movement. We will be highlighting various systems of oppression as well as strategies to combat the "'isms" (i.e. racism, sexism, etc) in our work as Amnesty International activists and organizers. Participants will engage in examining biases, personal and institutional assessments, and cultural awareness activities in a respectful and safe environment.

**Facilitators:** Amira Elkashef, former student activist at CSU Channel Island and Kalaya'an Mendoza, Western Regional Field Organizer

**11. Strategic Planning For Your Groups** - As anchors in our communities AI local groups work on specific human rights issues while mobilizing the greater public to become aware of these issues and provide opportunity to take direct action. This workshop is about creating a strategic plan for your group so you can achieve your campaign goals. The strategic plan will help your group apply pressure on targeted public officials to support Amnesty International issues. Participants will discuss how to build a strategic plan by incorporating effective advocacy tactics, goal setting, organizational considerations and coalition building.

**Facilitator:** William Butkus, Western Regional Field Organizer

**12. Skills Building for Death Penalty Abolition** - This workshop will teach skills necessary for effective coalition building, legislative work, interactive methods, accessing and working with databases, and media work.

**Facilitators:** Natasha Minsker, Death Penalty Policy Director of the ACLU of Northern California and Sara Bolder, Progressive Jewish Alliance

**13. Lobby Congress to Support the Closure of Guantanamo** - Federal legislative advocacy is one of the key tactics that Amnesty International USA (AIUSA) uses to advance its human rights agenda and effect policy change. This workshop is for activists interested in getting more involved in AIUSA's campaign to close the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay Naval Base in a way that respects human rights. You'll learn tried and true lobbying skills, and prepare to use them this fall to convince your members of Congress to support the closure of Guantanamo and reject military commissions and

indefinite detention. We assume that participants have experience with AIUSA activism and general knowledge of AIUSA's *Counter Terror With Justice* Campaign (CTWJ).

**Facilitator:** Njambi Good CTWJ Campaign Director and Robert Pearson, Legislative Coordinator

## Sunday, November 8

### 9:00am-11:30am – **Amnesty International Shop and Ideas Fair**

Amnesty International groups, members, and staff display a range of panels, presentations, art, and other information at the Ideas Fair. While visiting the Ideas Fair, participants are encouraged to discuss the panels, share their knowledge, and take action with a range of petitions.

Have a couple of minutes to shop for the newest official AIUSA apparel? Browse through new publications? Stop by the WRC shop to get your official AIUSA gear!

The Amnesty International Shop and Ideas Fair will be located in the Yosemite Foyer Area.

### 9:00am-11:30am – **Member Services and Information Table**

Become a member of Amnesty International if you are not already one, and join more than 2.2 million people around the world in an effective independent organization fighting to free prisoners of conscience, abolish the death penalty, stop violence against women, and ensure that everyone has full access to human rights.

The Member Services and Information Table will be located in the Yosemite Foyer Area.

### 9:00am-11:00am – **Resolutions Voting Plenary**

#### **Resolutions**

A resolution is a means by which AIUSA members can affect policy decision-making at regional, national, and international levels. Votes on resolutions during Working Parties and the Conference Voting Plenary can be cast by individual members or representatives of local or student groups. First-time and return Conference attendees are encouraged to attend Working Parties and the Resolutions Plenary to see how resolutions from the regional conferences are dynamically worked through, discussed, passed, or defeated.

This is the final step in the resolutions process at the WRC. All resolutions, which have first passed through the Working Parties, will be discussed, possibly amended, and voted upon.

The Resolutions Voting Plenary will be taking place at the Golden Gate 6-8.

## Speaker Bios



Larry Cox was appointed executive director of Amnesty International USA (AIUSA) in January 2006. A veteran human rights advocate, he came to AIUSA after serving 11 years as senior program officer for the Ford Foundation's Human Rights unit, where he focused on the promotion of international justice and the advancement of domestic human rights.

In assuming leadership of AIUSA, Cox's career has come full circle. In 1976 he joined the organization as its first press officer. During the next nine years he quickly ascended through the ranks, establishing the AIUSA Program to Abolish the Death Penalty and then taking on the role as its first communications director and deputy executive director. He then spent five years as deputy secretary general at Amnesty International's world headquarters in London.

Cox also served as an AI delegate on several international missions, examining pressing human rights concerns in Australia, Guinea-Bissau, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Sierra Leone, Tunisia, the United Kingdom and Vietnam.

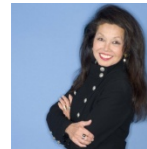
In 1990, Cox became the executive director of the Rainforest Foundation, an international organization that works with indigenous peoples in the Brazilian Amazon to protect their rights. During his time at the Rainforest Foundation, Cox dedicated much of his time to the issue of demarcation of indigenous territories in Brazil.

While at the Ford Foundation, Cox co-edited and co-wrote the introduction to the report, *Close to Home: Case Studies of Human*

*Rights Work in the US*. The report examines the traditional human rights tools—such as fact-finding, litigation, organizing and advocacy—that U.S. human rights organizations use to reduce poverty, promote workers' rights and environmental justice, abolish the death penalty and end discrimination.



**Reverend Cecil Williams** is a pillar of San Francisco's activist community, and a nationally recognized human rights advocate. He served as pastor to the Glide Memorial Church for 37 years where he currently resides as the Founder and Minister of Liberation. A long-term civil rights advocate, Williams created a welcoming, vibrant community at Glide Memorial. He is the recipient of the National Caring Award from the Caring Institute in Washington DC, and was personally appointed by Coretta Scott King to head the Northern California Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Observance Committee. He and the church were featured in the Academy Award-Winning film, *The Pursuit of Happyness*.



**Janice Mirikitani** is recognized as a visionary, community activist, leader, poet, and editor. Mirikitani is the Founding President of the Glide Foundation where she in partnership with her husband, Reverend Cecil Williams, have achieved worldwide recognition. Mirikitani is San Francisco's second Poet Laureate, appointed in 2000. She has authored four books of poetry -- *AWAKE IN THE RIVER*; *SHEDDING SILENCE*; *WE, THE DANGEROUS*, and *LOVE WORKS* -- and is the editor of nine landmark anthologies which provide platforms for writers of color, women, youth and children. She is the recipient of over 40 awards

and honors, including the Governor and First Lady's Conference on Women and Families' "Minerva Award. "Medal of Honor Award".

### Crisis and Prisoners of Conscience: The State of Human Rights in Iran



**Elahe Amani** is a human rights, gender equality and peace activist. She works closely with UN and has served in many leadership positions at local and global levels such as Chair Women Intercultural Network, a global organization, advisory to the Stop Stoning Forever Campaign in Iran, and an active member of Mediators Beyond Borders. She has been awarded the Human Rights Award from Soroptimist international and Lillian Robles inaugural award from Cal State Long Beach.



**Esha Momeni** is an Iranian-American activist for women's rights and. On October 15, 2008 she was arrested in Tehran while working on her Master's thesis project on the Iranian women's movement and the One Million Signatures campaign. Esha was charged with "acting against national security" and "propaganda against the state" and was held in Tehran's Evin Prison, which is managed by the Intelligence Ministry. She was incarcerated for 28 days, 25 of those in solitary confinement. After Esha was eventually released on bail, the Iranian government imposed a travel ban on her, preventing her from leaving the country until this past August. She is still awaiting trial.



**Banafsheh Akhlaghi** is the Amnesty International Western Regional Director. Ms. Akhlaghi founded the National Legal Sanctuary for Community Advancement (NLSCA), a non-profit organization dedicated to ensuring the human rights and dignity of Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian (MEMSA). Throughout the years she has been honored and recognized with numerous awards, such as the "Top 100 Most Influential Lawyers" in California in 2005 by the Daily Journal and "Top 100 Leading Lawyers" in 2006 and 2007.



**Nazanin Boniadi** is Official Spokesperson for Amnesty International USA, and has also appeared on numerous international TV and radio programs to campaign for the rights of disenfranchised populations across the world. Nazanin received a degree from University of California Irvine, where she won the competitive "Chang Pin Chun" Undergraduate Research Award, and earned her Bachelor's Degree, with Honors, in Biological Sciences. Actress Nazanin Boniadi is rapidly making her mark in both film and television, garnering praise in both the industry and media. She appeared as reporter Amira Ahmed in the 2008 Marvel blockbuster **Iron Man**, directed by Jon Favreau and starring Robert Downey Jr.

## Rhetoric to Reality : Immigrants Rights Denied



**David Campos** is a Guatemalan-American attorney and member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors representing District 9. The district consists of Bernal Heights and the Inner Mission, which elected him on November 4, 2008 in the 2008 San Francisco elections.



**Eleazar Juárez** Eleazar Juarez has been involved with AI USA as a Student Area Coordinator, National Youth Advisory Committee Member, OUTfront Coordinator, Seattle Group 4 Member, and currently serves on the AGM Planning Committee as The Western Representative. Eleazar was born and raised along the US Mexico border and is passionate about immigrant rights. He is currently working to raise awareness on Immigration Detention practices and the "DREAM Act."



**Sin Yen Ling** Sin Yen Ling is a staff attorney at the Asian Law Caucus focusing on immigrants rights. She is a former staff attorney at the New York-based Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund. She is a graduate of New York University and City University of New York School of Law. Ms. Ling managed AALDEF's Immigrant Access to Justice Project which has been at the forefront

of providing direct representation to South Asian, Arab, Filipino and Muslim immigrant detainees facing indefinite detention after September 11 and has been a leading advocate for the defense of civil liberties and civil rights of immigrants and their families.

**Sarnata Reynolds** is the Refugee Program Director of Amnesty International USA, where she promotes the enforcement of international human rights standards pertaining to refugees and asylum seekers. Before serving as Director, Sarnata represented asylum seekers and migrants before the Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, United States District Courts, and Executive Office for Immigration Review. She served in volunteer leadership positions in a variety of organizations, including the Northern California chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights, and AIUSA. In 2005, she was a founding member of the Bay Area Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform. She regularly testifies before Congress.

## Counter Terror With Justice : Human Security Yields National Security



**John McCary** is a Former Military Interrogator. He was serving in a HUMINT (Human Intelligence) Team attached to Task Force 1-34 Armor, 1st Infantry Division in the Al-Anbar province of Iraq. McCary survived his tour of duty and returned home in September 2004. He was honorably discharged from the Army in April 2005, and is now working toward his Master's in Security Studies at the Georgetown University Center for Peace and Security Studies.



**Robert "Bobby" Baer** is the author of three New York Times bestsellers: a memoir, *See No Evil*, which recounts his years as a top CIA operative and reveals how the spying game is really played; *Sleeping with the Devil*, a startling account of the Saudi royal family and its oily relationship with the United States; and *The Devil we Know*, a bold examination of the emerging Iranian superpower and the best course of action for the United States. Baer has become one of the most authoritative voices of the war on terror, appearing on all major news outlets. *See No Evil* was the basis for the acclaimed film "Syriana"; George Clooney's portrayal of 'Bob' won him a supporting actor Oscar.



**Tom Parker** Tom Parker is the Policy Director for Terrorism, Counterterrorism and Human Rights at Amnesty International USA. From 2006-2008 Tom was Executive Director of the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center in New Haven, Connecticut. He has also worked in the past five years as a consultant on post-conflict projects in Darfur, Iraq, Sri Lanka and South Ossetia. In 2003-2004 Tom served as the United Kingdom's Special Adviser on Transitional Justice to the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in Baghdad, Iraq and as Head of the CPA's Crimes against Humanity Investigation Unit. Tom has taught undergraduate courses on trends in international terrorism and counter-terrorism at Yale University and Bard College.

**Njambi Good** is a long-time employee of Amnesty International. As Director of the Denounce Torture Campaign, Good mobilizes AI members and student groups to raise awareness and fight for a government that respects human rights. One of her most high-profile campaigns is the closure of Guantanamo Bay. In addition to organizing rallies and marches in Washington DC, Good has written and spoken widely against the prison, and has made significant suggestions as to how to facilitate its closure. Good received her BA from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

#### Death Penalty : Persuasive Voices on Abolition



**Juan Roberto** spent 17 years, 8 months and one day on Florida's death row for a crime he did not commit. Since his release from death row on January 3, 2002, he has traveled the United States, Canada and Europe, sharing his extraordinary story. He is a board member of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty and Witness to Innocence, a steering committee member of the New Mexico Coalition to Repeal the Death Penalty, and international spokesperson for the Association in Defense of the Wrongfully Convicted. Juan's story is featured in the documentary "Juan Melendez 6446" which has been screened at the New York International Latino Film Festival.



**Darryl Stallworth** is a former Deputy District Attorney for Alameda County from 1992 to 2007. During his career he prosecuted over 50 cases mostly for felonies and 18 murder cases. He was the Prosecutor for the high profile death penalty case of Demarcus Rolls, who had engaged in a 3 month journey of murder and terror. Darryl Stallworth now realizes that he can no longer argue for the death of another human being. Darryl Stallworth is a graduate of University of California Martin Luther King Jr. School of Law. He is currently in private practice, specializing in Criminal Defense and Personal Injury.



**Judy Kerr's** was born and raised on the East Coast. She has lived and worked in the East Bay since coming to California in 1976. She holds a master's degree in health services administration from St. Mary's College in Moraga and has worked for 28 years in various positions as a registered nurse. In 2003 Judy's brother Robert Kerr was murdered. In 2004 she reached out to Murder Victims for Family Reconciliation and began to solidify her activism in opposition to the death penalty. Much of her opposition to the death penalty is founded in her experiences working as a nurse with survivors of violent crimes.



**Elizabeth Zitrin** is an attorney and the International Outreach and Communications Coordinator for Death Penalty Focus, the nation's largest membership-based organization dedicated exclusively to the abolition of capital punishment. Elizabeth chairs working groups on the USA and on Corporate Responsibility, on the Steering Committee of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty. She serves of the Board of Directors and Executive Committee of the ACLU of Northern California. She serves Amnesty USA as California SDPAC. Elizabeth began practicing criminal defense law in San Francisco in 1980. She holds a B.A. from Oberlin College and a J.D. from Northeastern University School of Law.

Demand Dignity: Women's Right to Health as a Human Right



**Sameer Dossani** is the Director of Amnesty International's Demand Dignity Campaign. Prior to joining Amnesty in 2009, Sameer served as Director of 50 Years Is Enough: U.S. Network for Global Economic Justice, which campaigns for the radical reform of international financial institutions including the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.



**Debra Bingham** has a Doctorate of Public Health and is a Registered Nurse. She has authored articles on leading change and quality improvement, and has over 30 years of leadership experience in Maternal-Child Health where she has helped develop, implement, and evaluate hospital-based and public health quality improvement initiatives in both rural and urban settings. Currently Debra is the Executive Director of the California Maternal Quality Care Collaborative (CMQCC), which is a state-wide initiative with approximately 300 hospitals where 560,000 births a year occur

organization dedicated to ensuring the human rights and dignity of Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian (MEMSA). Throughout the years she has been honored and recognized with numerous awards, such as the “Top 100 Most Influential Lawyers” in California in 2005 by the Daily Journal and “Top 100 Leading Lawyers” in 2006 and 2007.



**Krishanti Dharmaraj** is the Principal of the SamasaMdhi Initiative, focusing on realizing a just and equitable world through the progressive measurement of human rights. SamasaMdhi refers to “peace on equal terms”. She is also the co-founder of Children’s Fund for Peace, an organization providing resources to children affected by armed conflict in South Asia. Ms. Dharmaraj is the former founding Executive Director of Women’s Institute for Leadership Development for Human Rights (WILD for Human Rights). Ms. Dharmaraj holds Master’s degrees in International Relations and Business Administration, and currently resides in the San Francisco Bay Area with her family.



**Banafsheh Akhlaghi** is the Amnesty International Western Regional Director. Ms. Akhlaghi founded the National Legal Sanctuary for Community Advancement (NLSCA), a non-profit

## Western Regional Field Organizers Bios



Will Butkus joined AIUSA with 11 years of progressive political organizing and advocacy experience. Prior to Amnesty International, Will served as Campaign Manager for Jerry Hill for State Assembly, Program Coordinator for the Alliance for Justice, National Campaign Coordinator at the National Parks Conservation Association, Field Organizer for Al Gore's Presidential Campaign and Staff Assistant to Congresswoman Barbara Lee (CA-9). Will is excited to collaborate with local groups and activists and hopes to focus his energies on pushing through significant legislative wins.



**Kalaya'an Mendoza** has spent his 15-year activist career working for various issues ranging from Queer rights to Tibetan independence to anti-racist organizing and beyond. Most recently he served as the Grassroots Coordinator for Students for a Free Tibet International during the Beijing 2008 Olympics campaign. Kalaya'an strongly believes that grassroots organizing and non-violent direct action in conjunction with other tactics can be used to empower our communities and put power back into the hands of the people.



Sara Schmidt comes to AIUSA with 5 years of social justice, public health and international development experience, as well as a Master of Social Work and Public Health from the University of Michigan. As a Lead Organizer for the Social Welfare Action Alliance, Sara built vigorous student advocacy movements and designed countless creative and impactful actions. Sara joins AI with a passion for creative, community-based activism and mobilization and hopes to foster and support local and student AI groups.

# A-Z Guide

## **About San Francisco**

San Francisco is often called “Everybody’s Favorite City,” a title earned by its scenic beauty, cultural attractions, diverse communities, and world-class cuisine. While attending the Western Regional Conference 2009, don’t miss out exploring the beautiful city of San Francisco and its famous landmarks.

The San Francisco Visitor’s Center is located at 900 Market Street. They can be reached at 415-391-2000.

## **Western Regional Conference Site**

This year’s Conference is being held at the Hilton San Francisco Union Square at 333 O’Farrell Street. With its premier location in the heart of city, you will find yourself within walking distance to famous San Francisco Neighborhoods like Chinatown, Nob Hill, the famous Cable Cars, shopping, dining, and much more. Also blocks away is the BART transit line - Powell Street Station which is a great transportation alternative to and from the San Francisco or Oakland Airports

### Contact Information:

Hilton San Francisco Union Square  
333 O’Farrell Street  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
Phone: (415) 771-1400

## **San Francisco Program Commitment**

The Western Regional Conference is organized by the AIUSA Western Regional Office in San Francisco, along with national AIUSA staff.

## **San Francisco Services**

Registration, resolution voting cards, media desks, information, and membership information will be located in the mezzanine.

## **Airport Transport**

### **San Francisco International Airport**

BART (Bay Area Rapid Transportation) system – rapid rail service to San Francisco directly from SFO. BART is easily accessed from any terminal by riding SFO's AirTrain to the Garage G/BART Station stop. There is no charge to board AirTrain. Exit BART at the Powell Station. Walk up Powell Street from Market Street, turn left at O'Farrell. The Hilton is just past the Mason and O'Farrell intersection. Total cost: \$8.10.

Shuttle – A shuttle bus is available near the luggage terminal of the airport. \$15 (approximate).

### **Oakland International Airport**

BART (Bay Area Rapid Transportation) system – rapid rail service from Oakland to San Francisco. The AirBus picks up BART bound passengers from OAK for \$4 and goes directly to the Coliseum BART station. Enter BART and exit at Powell Station. Walk up Powell Street from Market Street, turn left at O'Farrell. The Hilton is just past the Mason and O'Farrell intersection. Total cost (Airbus + BART): \$7.80.

Shuttle (Super Shuttle) - \$30 (approximate) 877.300.4826

## **Cheap and Quick Eats/Snacks**

**Starbucks** – 333 O'Farrell Street

**Ben & Jerrys** – 170 O'Farrell Street

**Blondie's Pizza** – 63 Powell Street

**Coldstone Creamery** – 119 Ellis Street

**Subway** – 125 Ellis Street

**Supremo Pizza** – 491 O'Farrell Street

**Quiznos** – 422 Geary Street

**Happy Donuts** – 299 Ellis Street

## **Dining**

Tian Sing (Chinese) – 138 Cyril Magnin Street

Abu Marrakech (Moroccan) – 419 O'Farrell Street

New Delhi Restaurant (Indian) – 160 Ellis Street

Zingari Ristorante (Italian) – 501 Post Street

Anzu Restaurant (Euro-Japanese) – 222 Mason Street

Kuleto's Restaurant (Italian) – 225 Powell Street

Grand Café (French) – 501 Geary Street

## **Disability access**

Hotel meets certified compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Accessible facilities available to the blind, hearing impaired and wheelchair users.

## **Driving Directions to Hilton**

### **From East Bay:**

Highway 880 (West then North) towards San Francisco. Follow signs to S.F. and cross the Bay Bridge. Exit after Bridge on 5th Street. 5th becomes Cyril Magnin. Turn left on Ellis and follow to Mason. Garage entrance is on Ellis.

### **From South Bay:**

Take Highway 101 North and exit at 7th Street. Turn right onto Folsom, then left onto 5th Street. Left onto Ellis and follow to Mason. Garage entrance is on Ellis.

### **From North Bay:**

Take 101 South and go across the Golden Gate Bridge. Use the Lombard Street exit. Turn right onto Van Ness. Turn left onto O'Farrell Street and drive to 300 block of O'Farrell (cross streets:

Mason and Taylor). The hotel will be on the right. Garage entrance is on Ellis-make a right on Mason and right on Ellis after passing entrance of hotel.

### **Hospitals**

#### **Saint Francis Memorial Hospital**

900 Hyde Street, San Francisco, CA 94109

Phone: (415) 353-6000

Available 24 Hours/day

Travel time from the hotel is about 10 minutes.

### **Ideas Fair**

The ideas fair is a forum in which to share your accomplishments and ideas with other Amnesty members from across the country. Space will be set up for pre-registered participants to display photos, documents, flyers, and other materials submitted by AIUSA local and campus chapters, individual activists, task forces, steering committees, and staff.

### **Information and Media Table**

There will be an information and media table at the Western Regional Conference where you can access additional information about San Francisco and the Conference, and where press can receive press kits and get in touch with Amnesty International Media staff.

### **Public Transportation to Hilton San Francisco**

BART – Take BART train to Powell Bart Station. Walk up Powell Street from Market Street, turn left at O’Farrell. The Hilton is just past the Mason and O’Farrell intersection.

### **Religious Services**

#### **Baptist** - First Baptist Church

22 Waller Street, (415) 863-3382

#### **Catholic** - St. Patrick

756 Mission @ 3rd & 4<sup>th</sup>, (415) 421-0547

#### **Methodist** – Glide Memorial Church

330 Ellis Street, (415) 674- 6000

#### **Episcopal** - Grace Cathedral

California @ Taylor, (415) 749-6300

#### **Masjid** - Muslim Community Center

850 Divisadero, (415) 563-9397

#### **Synagogue** -Congregation Beth Sholom

301 – 14th Avenue (Clement), (415) 221-8736