



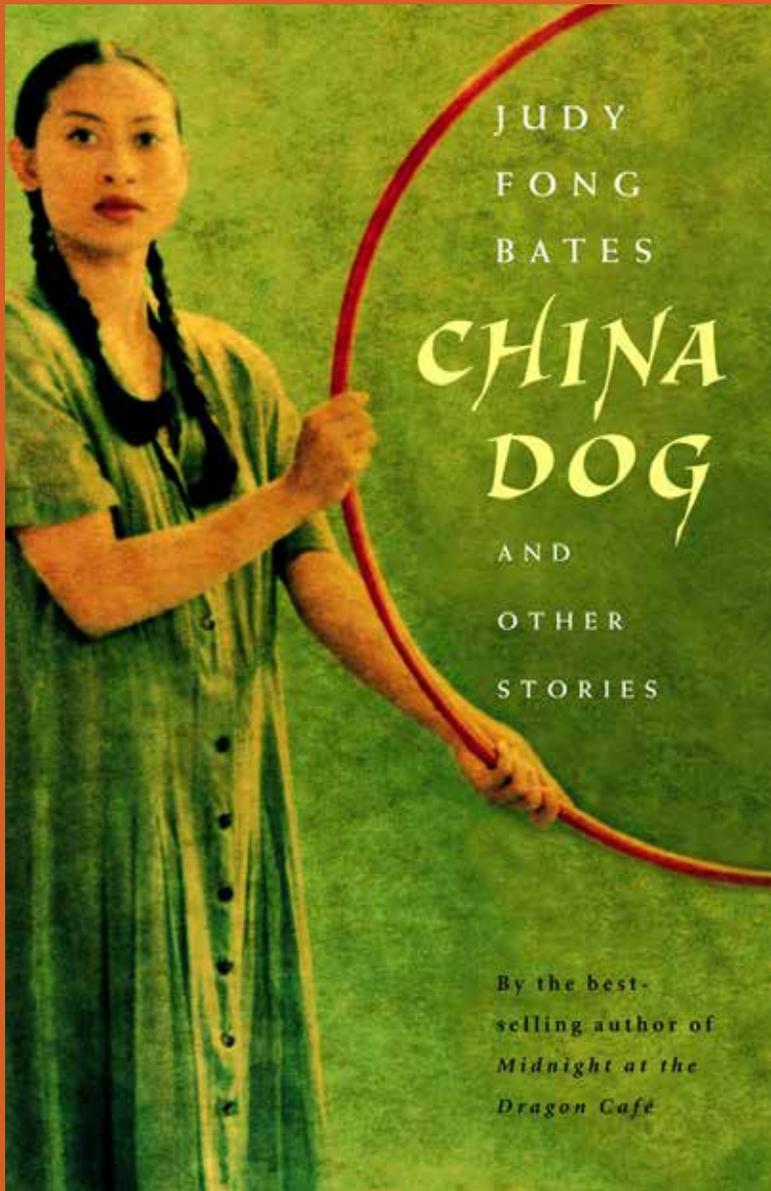
AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL 
BOOK CLUB

**JUNE 2015
DISCUSSION
GUIDE**

*China Dog and
Other Stories*

By Judy Fong Bates

Recommended by
Shyam Selvadurai



A nation shaped by immigration

As we celebrate Canada Day on July 1, it's worth remembering just how many Canadians are either immigrants themselves or can trace their ancestry back to those who came to this country as immigrants.

It is also worth remembering the hardships and obstacles those immigrants faced – from clearing land of first growth forest in order to farm in the early days, to the racism and adjustment to a new culture that many immigrants face today. However promising the new country may seem, it has never been easy.

Another setback that many immigrants face is a longing for their homeland. Some were forced from their countries of birth due to war, other forms of violence, dispossession of land, ethnic cleansing and many other violations of their human rights.

But even those who leave their countries in search of economic gain retain fond memories of the family, culture and traditions they left behind. They often remain torn or stranded between the traditions of the past and their hopes for the future.

Judy Fong Bates captures that ambiguity beautifully in *China Dog and Other Stories*, her debut short story collection. With a focus on the Chinese community in Canada, the eight stories in *China Dog* evoke the role that home and memory play in our lives. Bates' characters are caught between the life they left behind in China and the harsh realities of their new life in Canada. Bates describes these characters with compassion and insight and reminds us of the universal longing for understanding and acceptance.

In keeping with our focus on China, the action this month centres on Huseyin Celil, a Canadian citizen and ethnic Uighur originally from the Xinjiang region of China. He has been wrongfully imprisoned in China. We hope you will take action on his behalf on page 11.

Thank you for being part of the Amnesty International Book Club. If you have any questions, suggestions or comments, we'd love to hear from you. Just send us an email at bookclub@amnesty.ca.

– The Book Club Team

Still time for reader's choice

Do you have a favourite Canadian book that you would like to see featured in the Amnesty Book Club?

Then send us an email at bookclub@amnesty.ca. Let us know the title and author, and your selection could become the Reader's Choice selection for November/December of this year.

Let us know your choice by July 31, 2015. We'll review your suggestions then create a shortlist of the most popular books you can vote for. We'll email you the short list and you can vote for your favourite by the end of August 2015.



About Amnesty International

Amnesty International is a global movement of more than three million supporters, members and activists in over 150 countries and territories who campaign to end grave abuses of human rights.

Our vision is for all people to enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards.

We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion, and are funded mainly by our membership.

Until everyone can enjoy all of their rights, we will continue our efforts. We will not stop until everyone can live in dignity; until every person's voice can be heard; until no one is tortured or executed.

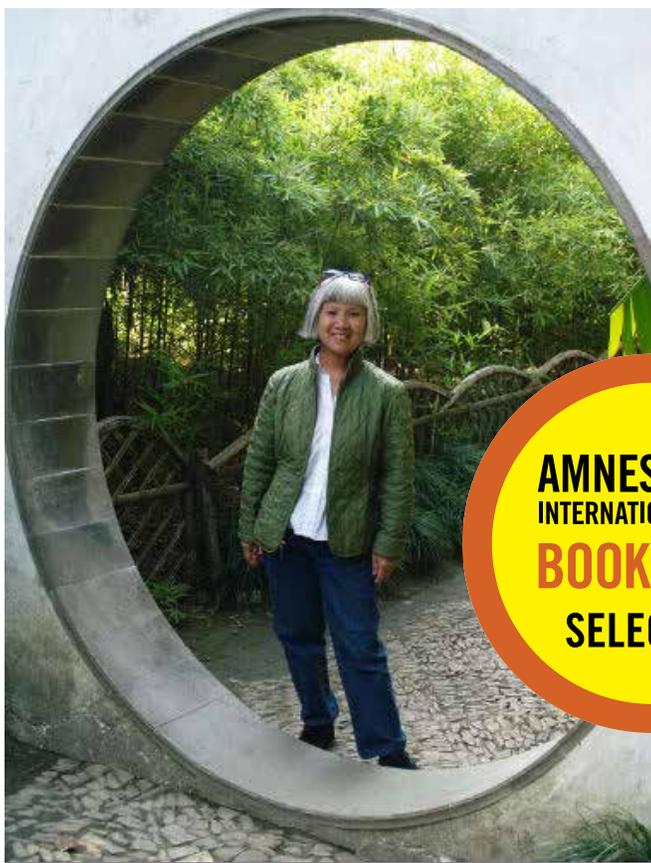
Our members are the cornerstone of these efforts. They take up human rights issues through letter-writing, online and off line campaigning, demonstrations, vigils and direct lobbying of those with power and influence.

Locally, nationally and globally, we join together to mobilize public pressure and show international solidarity.

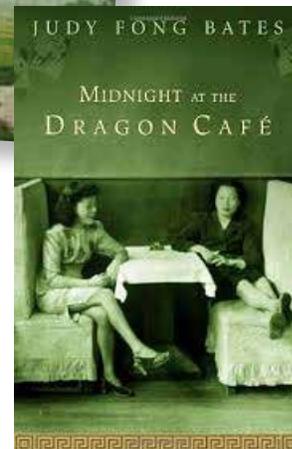
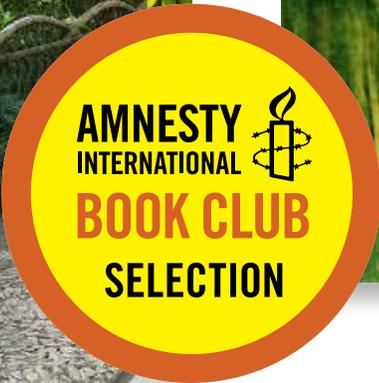
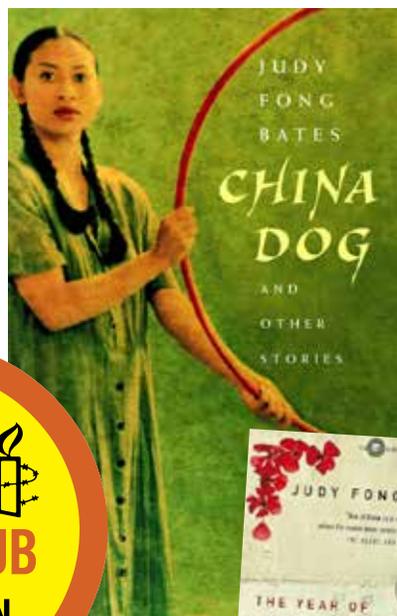
Together, we make a difference.

For more information about Amnesty International visit www.amnesty.ca or write to us at: **Amnesty International, 312 Laurier Ave. E., Ottawa, ON K1N 1H9.**

JUNE 2015 BOOK: *China Dog and Other Stories*



Judy Fong Bates in Suzhou China
(Photo by Michael Bates from cbc.ca)



About this month's author **Judy Fong Bates**

Judy Fong Bates came to Canada from China as a young child and grew up in several small Ontario towns. She is a writer, storyteller and teacher. She taught elementary school in the city of Toronto for more than 20 years. While teaching, she honed her skills as a storyteller, relating folktales and original stories at schools and festivals throughout southern Ontario. Judy has also taught and mentored students in creative writing through the University of Toronto, Trent University and Diaspora Dialogues.

Her first novel, *Midnight at the Dragon Café* was the 2011 One Book Community Read for the city of Toronto, the Everybody Reads selection for Portland, Oregon and an American Library Association Notable Book for 2006.

Her stories have been broadcast on CBC radio and published in literary journals and anthologies. She has written for *The Globe and Mail* and *The Washington Post*. Her family memoir, *The Year of Finding Memory*, was published in April, 2010 by Random House of Canada.

Judy has two daughters and two grandchildren. She lives with her husband on a farm outside of Toronto. They are both devoted gardeners and enthusiastic hikers.



About this month's guest reader: **Shyam Selvadurai**

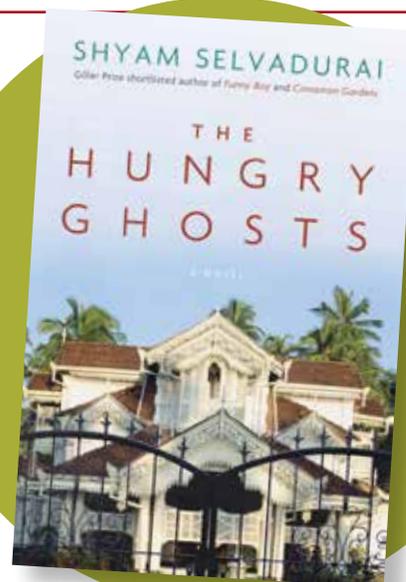
Shyam Selvadurai was born in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in 1965. He came to Canada with his family at the age of nineteen. He has studied creative writing and theatre and has a BFA from York University, as well as an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of British Columbia.

Funny Boy, his first novel, was published in 1994 and won the WH Smith/Books in Canada First Novel Award and the US Lambda Literary Award. It was also named a Notable Book by the American Library Association, and was translated into eight languages.

His second novel, *Cinnamon Gardens*, was published in Canada, the UK, the US and translated into nine languages. It was shortlisted for Canada's Trillium Award, as well as the Aloa Literary Award in Denmark and the Premio Internazionale Riccardo Bacchelli in Italy.

Shyam is the editor of an anthology, *Story-Wallah: A Celebration of South Asian Fiction*, published in Canada and the US. His novel for young adults, *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea*, was shortlisted for the Governor General's Award and is the winner of the Lambda Literary Award in the US, the Canadian Library Association Book of the Year Award and Silver Winner in the Young Adult Category of ForeWord Magazine's Book of the Year Award.

His fourth novel, *The Hungry Ghosts*, was published April 2, 2013 in Canada, India and Sri Lanka. It was shortlisted for the Governor General's Award for Fiction and longlisted for the DSC South Asia Literature Prize. His latest work is a comprehensive anthology of Sri Lankan literature, *Many Roads Through Paradise*.



Shyam Selvadurai on *China Dog and Other Stories*

"Judy Fong Bates, in all her works, is able to take the racism that is a daily reality for her Chinese characters and interweave it with complexly built characters who live vivid lives and like all other human beings, fall in love, experience grief, etc. The result is that the racism they experience seems more unfair and is felt more deeply by the reader for being slightly off to the sides of the characters' lives."

Discussion questions from Shyam Selvadurai

1. One reviewer states that *China Dog and Other Stories* “breaks through a barrier of cultural silence.” Given that this collection was published eighteen years ago in 1997, did Fong Bates succeed? How? Why? What barriers (if any) are there for minority voices today?
2. Loneliness is a recurring theme in immigrant stories. The stories in *China Dog* are no different as they explore the effects of isolation: cultural, physical and psychological. How are the characters in *My Sister’s Love*, *Eat Bitter*, *The Gold Mountain Coat* and *The Good Luck Cafe* shaped and changed by isolation? What about the people in their lives?
3. The conflict between generations is explored in *The Lucky Wedding*, *The Ghost Wife* and *Cold Food*. Are these conflicts specific to the Chinese community? To other immigrant communities? How are the family dynamics different in each story, in the mother-daughter relationships? What is the role of humour?
4. Racism is very much a part of these stories. How are the characters in these stories shaped by racist legislation and attitudes? How do these stories reflect the changing face of racism for the Chinese in Canada? What about racism in Canada today? Does it still exist? In what ways are minority members marginalized /dehumanized today?
5. Superstition plays a strong role in several of these stories. Does it represent the difference between the old and new world? Or something else? Why is it so powerful?
6. Detail is very much a part of these stories. How does the use of detail advance the reader’s understanding of the characters and their lives?
7. Fong Bates has been told that the stories from *China Dog* could be about the Greek, Italian or any immigrant community. Why might that be? Do you agree? Why or why not?
8. The act of immigration is often a traumatic one with effects rippling into successive generations. How is this revealed in the stories from *China Dog*, especially in *My Sister’s Love*, *The Gold Mountain Coat*, *The Ghost Wife* and *China Dog*? Is there a role for government / institutions to play in mitigating these effects?

BACKGROUND

China Dog provides a series of compelling stories which reveal the tenacity, spirit and drive of hardworking Chinese migrants who have come to Canada in search of economic prosperity while facing racism and cultural alienation. The stories speak of the complex world of the new immigrant who has travelled far, and longs for home, family, acceptance, safety and security.

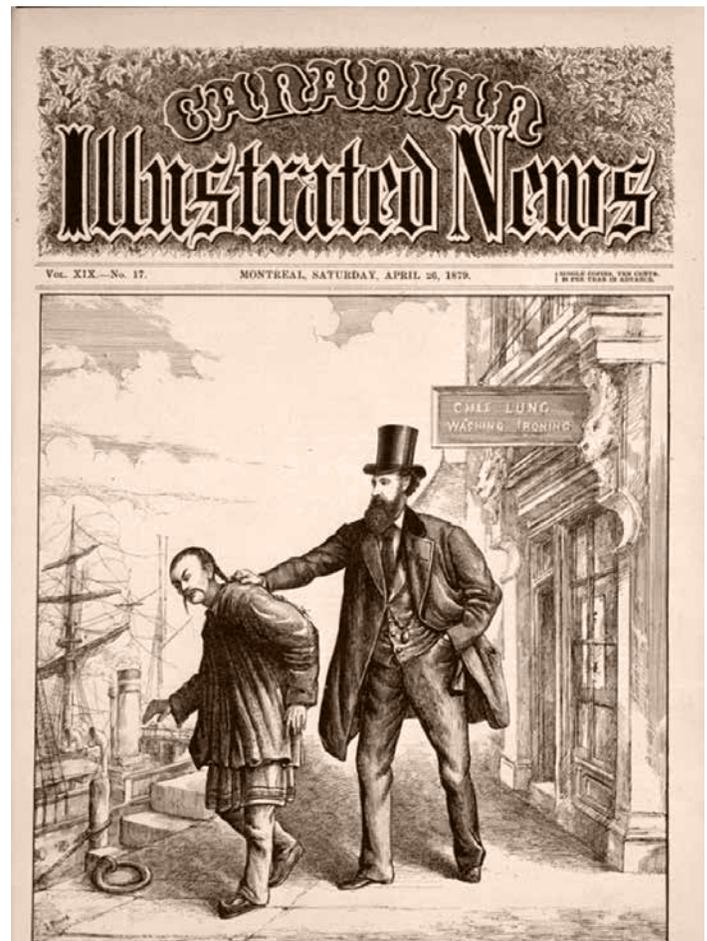
History of Chinese Canadians

The discovery of gold in western United States and Canada in the mid 1800's, fuelled by political instability and poverty in China, set in motion the migration of predominately single men from the southern regions of China to North America, searching for a better life.

In 1871, British Columbia was persuaded to become Canada's sixth province with the promise that a railway would be built to connect the Pacific coast to the rest of the country. One of the hardest parts of building the Canadian Pacific Railway was cutting through the Rocky Mountains.

Chinese workers proved to be an indispensable source of labour in the building of the railroad. It may never have been built were it not for the 'cheap' and seriously exploited labour of the Chinese workers, who were paid lower wages than 'white' workers. Many died from dynamite accidents, landslides, rockslides, cave-ins, scurvy, fatigue, drowning and a lack of medical help. The death count of Chinese workers over the entire construction period has been estimated to be from 600 to 2,200 workers. No definite count exists because no one accepted responsibility for the Chinese workers beyond the work they did in laying the track.

Upon completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1885, Canada took steps to stop Chinese immigration in favour of immigration from the British Isles and Europe. Under the Chinese Immigration Act, the Canadian government forced every Chinese worker, and family member wanting to enter Canada to pay a \$50 head tax. It was assumed that Chinese people were too poor to pay and therefore would not be able to come to Canada.



THE HEATHEN CHINEE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.
A. D. C. — "Beware you ain't no wick' meddles" with us — "Heathen Chinee" — "What is datee?" — A. D. C. — "You won't drink whiskey, and talk politics and vote like us."

"Heathen Chinee: Why you send me offee?"
Amor De Cosmos: "Because you can't or won't 'assimilate' [become absorbed into the larger society] with us."
Heathen Chinee: "What is datee?"
Amor De Cosmos: "You won't drink whiskey, and talk politics and vote like us."

Charles Hou and Cynthia Hou, Great Canadian political cartoons, 1820 to 1914 (Toronto, ON: Moody's Lookout Press, 1997), p. 35.

Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration: Report and Evidence, 1885

“The Chinamen is in every respect the reverse of an European His religion, his notions of honor and rank, his mode of thought, his dress, his amusements, his sense of beauty, his vices [bad or immoral practices] are not to our taste at all, or such as we can take to or even understand, and his language ... appears to us at once incomprehensible [unable to understand] and ridiculous what is most annoying, they come here and beat us on our own ground in supplying our wants. They are inferior, too, in weight and size of muscle, and yet they work more steadily and with better success on the average than the white men.”

-Sir Matthew Begbie
Chief of Justice of the Supreme Court of BC

Joseph A. Chapleau and John H. Gray, Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration—Report and Evidence (Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada, 1885), p. 72, produced by Canadiana.org CIHM _14563 <http://www.canadiana.org/ECO/ItemRecord/14563?id=0fbb131cfc5cc80>

(Accessed October 15, 2011) © Public Domain

After the 1885 legislation failed to deter Chinese immigration, the government of Canada increased the tax to \$100 in 1900 and to \$500 in 1903. *The Chinese Immigration Act, 1923*, better known as the Chinese Exclusion Act, replaced the prohibitive fees with an outright ban on Chinese immigration to Canada with the exception of merchants, diplomats, students and “special circumstances” cases. No immigrants from any other country ever had to pay such a tax to enter Canada.

Attitudes towards Chinese immigration

Racism toward Chinese people was a powerful force in British Columbia politics and elsewhere in Canada. Chinese immigrants were easy to scapegoat when the economy turned bad. In 1910, Calgary property owners living near the city’s Chinatown wanted to block its growth because of fears of falling real estate prices.

In the 1910s, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario prohibited Chinese employers from hiring white females, out of fear that they would take sexual advantage of the women. In 1915, white laundry owners in Montréal called for citizens to boycott Chinese laundries.

The Exclusion Act was repealed in 1947 largely due to the Chinese support of the Canadian war effort and the fact that China had been Canada’s ally in the war. It was only in 1967 that Canada finally removed immigration restrictions on the basis of race, ethnicity and national origin.

As a result of racist policies and practices across Canada, many Chinese immigrants started businesses in laundries and cafes as they were forced out of many other professions by the increasing number of migrants who came from eastern Canada and Europe. Anti-Chinese organizers in British Columbia and California argued that jobs in mining, logging, manufacturing and other industries should be reserved for white workers. Laundries were a good way for a Chinese labourer to go into business for himself once he had paid off the debts he owed for getting to Canada. It did not cost much to start a laundry and it was not a popular job. Laundrymen worked long hours for little money. As a result of their work on the railway, Chinese workers were dispersed across Canada, often setting up small businesses in the towns and villages along the railway line.

Today Chinese Canadians are one of the largest ethnic groups in the country and continue to make significant contributions to Canada’s economy and culture.

HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS IN CHINA



Two ethnic Uighur women pass Chinese paramilitary policemen standing guard outside the Grand Bazaar in the Uighur district of the city of Urumqi in China's Xinjiang region on July 14, 2009. A mosque was closed and many businesses were shuttered a day after police shot dead two Muslim Uighurs, as ethnic tensions simmered in restive Urumqi.

Political instability and economic hardship have contributed to the exodus of Chinese migrants since at least the mid 1800s. The Peoples' Republic of China was formed in 1949 under the leadership of Mao Zedong. Amnesty International's early reports about human rights abuses in China in the mid 1970s drew attention to political imprisonment and labour camps, noting that "over the past ten years procedures for arrest and trial have increasingly been applied without any clear reference to statutory law."

Amnesty reports that human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrest, long term detention of political dissidents without trial and use of the death penalty steadily increased, particularly after the death of Mao in September 1976.

Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR)

Xinjiang is one of the five autonomous regions of the People's Republic of China (PRC), where the officially recognized national minorities maintain a degree of formal self-government. The Turkic peoples, including Uighur, Uzbek, Khalkhas and Kazakh, are the main officially recognized "national minorities" and together

comprise about 56 percent of the population. The Turkic peoples of Xinjiang are predominantly Muslim.

Since the 1980s, the Uighurs have been the target of systematic and extensive human rights violations. These include:

- arbitrary detention and imprisonment
- incommunicado detention
- serious restriction of religious freedom
- restriction of cultural and social rights.

Local authorities maintain tight control over religious practice, including prohibiting all government employees and children under the age of 18, from worshipping at mosques. Chinese government policies that limit the use of the Uighur language, severe restrictions on freedom of religion and a sustained influx of Han migrants into the region are destroying Uighur customs. Along with employment discrimination, these policies are fuelling discontent and ethnic tensions. The situation has worsened following the attacks in the USA on September 11, 2001, as the Chinese authorities have used alleged counter-terrorism efforts to justify further repression of the human rights of Uighurs.

In the past year, the Chinese authorities have tightened already onerous restrictions on Islam in XUAR, with the stated aim of fighting “violent terrorism and religious extremism”. The authorities have ratcheted up restrictions on public displays of Islam. Long beards have been banned, as have veils, hijabs, and T-shirts with the Islamic crescent moon and star. During the month of Ramadan, authorities banned fasting for some groups.

In May 2014, a “strike hard” campaign was launched in the XUAR, and officials prioritized speedy arrests, quick trials and mass sentencing. The government called for greater “co-operation” between prosecuting authorities and courts, raising additional concerns that accused individuals would not receive fair trials.

State media reported that after six months of the “strike hard” campaign, by autumn 2014 at least 238 alleged “illegal religious preachers” and people who had provided religious venues had been detained and 171 venues for “illegal religious activities” had been “eliminated”. A total of 23,000 “illegal religious items” were confiscated, including more than 18,000 books and 2,600 CDs and DVDs.

Chinese authorities also made use of the death penalty as a punitive tool in the “Strike Hard” campaign in XUAR. At least 21 people were executed in 2014, three of whom were condemned to death in a mass sentencing rally conducted in a stadium in front of thousands of spectators.



Chinese policemen push Uighur women who are protesting on July 7, 2009 in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, China. Hundreds of Uighur people took to the streets after their relatives were detained by authorities. Ethnic riots in the capital of the Muslim Xinjiang region the previous Sunday saw 156 people killed. Police officers, soldiers and firefighters were dispatched to contain the rioting with hundreds of people being detained.

TAKE ACTION

Help free Huseyin Celil



Huseyin Celil is a Canadian citizen originally from the autonomous Xinjiang region of China. He is a member of the minority Uighur ethnic group and a Muslim. He came to Canada in search of a better life.

In the 1990s, he suffered persecution and detention in China for his work advocating for the religious and political rights of the Uighur people. He fled China and eventually made his way to Turkey, where he was recognized as a refugee by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Huseyin was resettled to Canada with his wife Kamila and child in 2001. Like many new immigrants, they began to build a new life in Canada. Two more boys were born and Huseyin became a Canadian citizen. In March 2006, when Kamila was pregnant with their fourth child, the family travelled to Uzbekistan to visit her family. That's when things started going wrong. The police in China found out that Huseyin was in Uzbekistan, and asked the police there to arrest him. They did and then sent him to China.

The Chinese authorities accused Huseyin of offences related to his activities in support of Uighur rights. They held him in a secret place. They did not give him access to a lawyer, his family, or Canadian officials. They threatened him and forced him to sign a confession. They refused to recognize Huseyin's status as a Canadian citizen and they did not allow Canadian officials to attend his trial. The trial was not conducted fairly and he was sentenced to life in prison in China, where he remains today.

Huseyin has spent much of his time in solitary confinement. He lacks healthy food and is in poor health. His mother and sister, who live in China, are occasionally allowed to visit him.

Huseyin's wife and four children live in Burlington Ontario, where they hope that one day they will be reunited with their husband and father.

Act now!

In your own words, or using the text below, please write to President Xi Jinping.

Dear President Xi Jinping

Huseyin Celil is a Canadian citizen and ethnic Uighur originally from Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) of the People's Republic of China.

He was arrested in 2006, then held in secrecy without access to a lawyer, his family, or Canadian officials. He did not have a fair trial.

He is now serving a life sentence in China for his activities in support of the rights of the Uighur people. He is in poor health and only allowed occasional visits from his family.

I urge you to immediately:

- provide Huseyin Celil with a new trial in full compliance with international standards
- ensure he receives regular visits from his family and Canadian consular officials
- see that he receives adequate exercise and prompt attention to all of his medical needs.

If he is not provided with a retrial in full compliance with international standards, then Huseyin Celil must be released without delay or conditions on his freedom.

Write to:

President Xi Jinping
The State Council General Office
2 Fuyoujie, Xichengqu
Beijingshi 100017, People's Republic of China

Email: gov@govonline.cn

Salutation: Your Excellency

ONLINE: <http://bit.1y/1vU23sp>

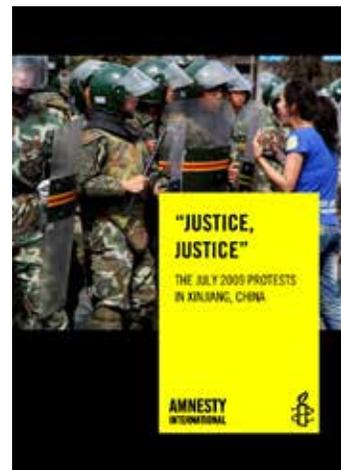
RESOURCES

Libraries and Archives Canada – The Early Chinese Canadians 1858-1947 <https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/chinese-canadians/index-e.html>

Amnesty International, People's Republic of China: Secret violence: human rights violations in Xinjiang, November 1992
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa17/050/1992/en/>

China: Draconian anti-terror law an assault on human rights. March 2015
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/articles/news/2015/03/china-draconian-anti-terror-law/>

China: "Justice, justice": The July 2009 protests in Xinjiang, China. July 2010
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa17/027/2010/en/>



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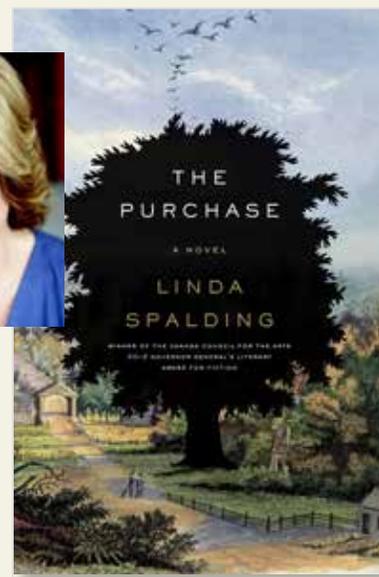
COMING UP JULY/AUGUST

Recommended by guest reader **Esi Edugyan**

The Purchase by Linda Spalding

In 1798, Daniel Dickinson, a young Quaker father and widower, leaves his home in Pennsylvania to establish a new life. He sets out with two horses, a wagonful of belongings, his five children, a 15-year-old orphan wife, and a few land warrants for his future homestead. When Daniel suddenly trades a horse for a young slave, Onesimus, it sets in motion a struggle in his conscience that will haunt his life forever. This act also sets in motion a chain of events that lead to two murders and the family's strange relationship with a runaway slave named Bett.

Spalding's writing is as rugged and hard-edged as the pioneer life it describes. Winner of the Governor General's Award for Fiction, the novel vividly describes the time and place of the novel, and follows the lives of unforgettable characters.



The discussion guide will be sent out in early July.

In the meantime, if you have any questions or comments, please contact us at bookclub@amnesty.ca.