

I actually gave an instant's thought to calling this issue *Spock-ta-cus* – but luckily, what passes for sanity and good taste in my silly self took over. I mourn the loss of Leonard Nimoy too sincerely to be so flippant. Is true: we in science fiction fandom owe him and his great character an awful lot.

2001 was a liberating moment in the history of science fiction: it brought SF into the realm of art. The paperback release of *Lord of the Rings* cemented SF/fantasy's hold on the boomer generation. *Star Wars* took science fiction more deeply into mainstream pop culture than it had ever gone – a perch from which SF still seems inextricable. *Star Trek* – and Spock, particularly – did something more basic. They brought *girls* into science fiction.

Of course the ladies were here before – but not in such quantity, and not with the same enthusiasm, a zest bordering on delirium. Many of the women brought here by their attraction to *Trek* and Spock's tortured reserve found a home in our weird community, and indeed, have lived long here, and prospered. I need mention only Lois McMaster Bujold.

But we all benefited from Spock, and Nimoy's increasingly nuanced and sensitive evocation. The character of an elf-eared science fiction sidekick is an old one, dare I say a cliché. Even I put a pointy-eared second banana named Ral Carthall into a tweener space opera I penned on a summer vacation to California in 1961. (I'll bet Gene Roddenberry never came up with a group of heroes like The Knights of the Universe, nor dared a title like *The Hole in Space*.) What was unique about Spock – at least until Roddenberry packed it into half the characters he subsequently created – was his dimorphism – half-human, half-Vulcan. It brought depth to Spock and a lot of social and dramatic potential to the show.

Star Trek itself had some very fine episodes – “City”, “Mirror, Mirror”, “Amok Time”, you know the list – and some beasts; had I children I'd threaten them with “The Way to Eden” if they committed murder or treason. But I think it was in the animated series and especially the middle movies that it hit its height. Of course this was mostly due to the performers, secure in their characterizations, in their acting



SPARTACUS

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family, and in their wonderful universe. Nimoy's Spock especially – a talented director and acting coach, Nimoy knew the value of humor and the iridescence it could bring to a performance. And in the films, from *The Wrath of Khan* on through *The Voyage Home*, humor and – here it comes – humanity were at his core. He started out good. He got better, and better.

I won't mention Nimoy's poetry, since I found it slightly sophomoric, and his other roles were competent and professional but nothing to write a fanzine about. No, he'll always be Spock to us, the man who would not be human, but became more so with every passing moment. Vulcan salute. In the books they call it the *ta'al*.



Perhaps not all of Leonard Nimoy's *other* roles are as undeserving of fanzine commentary as I say. Gaze upon the 1953 Republic serial *Zombies of the Stratosphere*, in which the 21-year-old Nimoy plays Narab, one of the invaders. At the end he turns on his Martian superiors and warns the Rocketman about the orbit-altering H-Bomb in the cave, enabling him to save the planet, and the day. Essays on the universality of moral heroism have been based on this scene, and bogus comparisons to the revelations of Edward Snowden voiced. That's Nimoy for you, a conflicted hero from the start!



Recently, as part of my duties as editor of the Sasquan program/souvenir book, I updated Dave Langford's listing of winners of fandom's two preeminent Fan Funds – TAFF and DUFF. Dave's list includes not only delegates' names, but the conventions they attended, the reports they published (if any), and the opponents they bested to achieve their wins. I looked forward to publishing, in the pages immediately preceding this encyclopedic list, personality squibs about the TAFF- and DUFFsters elected to attend the Spokane Worldcon. But there were worries.

There *is* a TAFF race – Nina Horvath vs. Wolf van Witting. The able administrators, old friend Curt Phillips and new friend Jim Mowatt, were boggled at first by a seeming lack of interest – very few votes – and the FanFund list was a broil with small recriminations. No one had access to the ballot. No one could read the ballot (font's too small). Most importantly, no one knew the candidates or their nominators, because neither of the candidates was *campaigning*.

I couldn't help but remember when Rosy and I stood for DUFF in the distant Dark Ages – 2002. E-mail, Twitter and Facebook weren't yet mankind's (or at least fankind's) preeminent methods of communication. Back then the *fanzine* ruled in fandom, and after our friendly opponents, the McInerneys, had published a zine promoting their candidacy, I tested the limits of fannish acceptability (it being declassé, apparently, to plug oneself) and published *Guy & Rosy for DUFF!*, a one-sheet wonder with which I flooded the 'dom, ballot attached. As I recall, neither team did much of anything on the net. Together, the McIs and we garnered 150 votes and change, an undeniably successful race. So even though paper fanzines are now as antique a method of communication as smoke signals or cuneiform on clay, *campaigning* is still the way to go. Candidates going out for the vote, instead of being damned as uncouth, should be encouraged. Is for the good of the funds.

But how? Many of the commentators on the listserv and elsewhere are operating on the assumption, not unreasonable, that younger active fans of today have no interest in fanzines, either paper or electronic. Are not blogs and lists, though more self-contained and self-referential than zines, likewise suited for vote-cadging campaigns? Apparently not – or else, no one is using them with any effectiveness. Things have apparently improved vis-à-vis the TAFF competition – check out the statements by the reigning administrators below – but *campaigning*, either first- or second-hand, remains near nil.

There's also a problem with this year's DUFF. Although Australian delegate Bill Wright is "chuffed" with enthusiasm, rumors roll that Juanita Coulson, the reigning NA delegate, is unable to perform the duties of the job – raise funds, find candidates, conduct an election. Admiring Juanita as I do, I pray this is not so, but there are no candidates and there is no news. Said Bill in reply to my inquiries about DUFF, "I have not instigated a 2015 DUFF race, and it is most unlikely there will be one."

I can think of worse catastrophes than skipping a year in the DUFF race. Right now, every other North American Worldcon can boast both a TAFF and a DUFF delegate. That means that every *other* year, the

Worldcon has no one to honor. Staggering the delegacies would give every Worldcon on these shores a chance to salute foreign fandom, TAFF one year, DUFF the next. So if DUFF sits fallow for a year, we can live with that. But to have the fund completely fade from fandom would be disastrous for international fandom.

Bill is determinedly silent about DUFF developments. I have much confidence in him, but as a onetime DUFFer I'd still advise that someone from North America with resources and stability – preferably a former member – needs to step forward and join Bill in administering the next DUFF race. Australian candidates need to be found who are willing to travel to Kansas City in 2016 and to collect funds and run an election in the following year. I cannot understand why such souls haven't already surfaced. DUFF and TAFF are great fannish institutions. As we can testify, they change the winners' lives for the better.

Just do as I did, and ask the two TAFF administrators,

Curt Phillips: “TAFF is actually doing okay at the moment. The 2015 race is still underway with almost a month to go and although the votes were a little slow in getting started I'm seeing an uptick in the number of votes in the past few days. This year is first in which we've had a West-to-East race with all the candidates from Continental Europe, a trend that I find fascinating. Both our candidates are accomplished fans in their home areas and are largely unknown in America (though they both *have* shown that they do command some support from over here ...) and I think this is exactly the sort of thing that TAFF can do better than any other mechanism in Fandom that I know of. TAFF exists to stir the pot of fandom and get fans moving around whom most of us would otherwise never have a chance to meet, and whoever wins the 2015 race the fans who attend Sasquan are guaranteed to meet a fascinating active fan from a far part of the world who'll have unique viewpoints and unusual things to share with us. I think this race has the potential to be one of the most rewarding TAFF races in history - but potential goes for nothing if we don't make the most of it by *voting* in the TAFF election! (And thank you, Guy, for sending in your vote early. You were one of the first to do so.)

“I firmly believe that whether you are a candidate in the race or a voter, participating in TAFF is an investment in the future of Fandom itself. Sending in your vote is a generous and selfless act that says to everyone in our fannish world that you believe that Fandom is not just a personal hobby, but that it is important in a greater scheme of things. A vote in TAFF – or in any of the fan funds – is very much a way of saying that we feel a kinship and a solidarity with fans in lands far from our shores. That those fans are connected to us and us to them through our mutual love of Fandom and what it represents in our lives. Voting in the fan funds is an act of faith by which we declare that this institution *matters*. From the first fan fund that brought Walt Willis to America over 60 years ago, right down to each of the several fan funds that have sent fans traveling all across the planet to visit fans in other lands, fans have stood up each year to support the fan funds and to keep the tradition alive. It was the proudest moment of my life in Fandom when I became the TAFF delegate in 2014, and I am even prouder now to know that there'll be another to come after me, who – in their time – will pass the torch of TAFF along to another. It is one of the grandest things that the people of our wonderful fandom have ever done, and I hope that when my days are finally done that TAFF will still be going strong.”

Jim Mowatt: “My view of the current TAFF race is slightly less rosy than Curt's. I've been a little disappointed with the lack of enthusiasm from people who are usually very excited about TAFF. The main problem is that many people know nothing about either candidate. I think this sort of thing can be fixed by campaigning.

“Now I've seen many different views about campaigning and I've come to a conclusion about which side of the fence I stand on that one. There is a view that the honour of TAFF should go to someone who is well known on both sides of the Atlantic. This has merit in that the beginnings of TAFF are rooted in this

concept. However, one of the other things that TAFF has done over recent years is to encourage people in fandom to dive in that little bit more. John Coxon wasn't very well known but became much more so after he won his TAFF race and has added significantly to fandom since that victory. I always considered myself very much a fringe fan as I guess did Randy Byers who even uses that as his livejournal name. TAFF has drawn us further into the fandom family and we've all been able to give back into that family as a result of our getting involved and campaigning for victory. Not every TAFF race should be a foregone conclusion and campaigning helps you to meet new people and helps TAFF to branch out in new directions.

“This year we have a delightful opportunity to reach further into Europe and let them know about this fan fund that includes Europe in theory but in practise has focused upon the UK and Ireland. Ask the candidates questions. Read the TAFF newszine that will be coming out for Corflu. Read the ballot forms. Make your decision and let's make TAFF a real Europe/North America race rather than just a UK and Ireland/North America race. Wolf von Witting and Nina Horvath are both strong candidates for very different reasons. Decide which candidate is the one for you and place for vote.”

You heard them.



 (Huh?!? Good grief. Excuse me,)

I also voted (there!) in this year's FAAn Awards, and will discuss them further in my next issue of *The Zine Dump*, coming forth in April. For all the faults I've found with this extremely insular poll, I still enjoy thinking out and writing down my favorite fanzine work over the past year. I've somehow managed to name a winner or two over the years.

La belle and I both filled out Hugo nomination ballots, as well – on line. There were no physical nominating ballots available for this year's Science Fiction Achievement Awards, and that's the fault of my department in the Sasquan power structure. I am fond of the editor for Progress Report 3, think the book looks good, and understand the medical and editorial issues that made it so late getting to the printer. Nevertheless, that tardiness was a horrible problem for which I feel responsible. I grovel to all inconvenienced.

There should be no such problems with PR#4, where the final Hugo ballot will run. Expect it in mid-June. Nor should we have such hassles with the convention's restaurant guide or the souvenir book – the latter is just about 2/3 done, with 5 months to go until the convention. (A joyous duty looms – writing the bio for Sasquan's "mystery guest," ISS astronaut Kjill Lindgren.) Sometime between now and the con, the pocket program, in conjunction with the programming DH. Should be loads of work, loads of fun. We hope we can be at Sasquan to see how it all comes out.



It's happy news that Neill Blomkamp, director of the brilliant *District 9* and the iffy *Chappie* (currently in release), will helm *Alien 5*. Blomkamp has the opportunity to reverse the worst mistake in the history of science fiction movie-making.

Rumor has it that the new movie will ignore *Alien 3* and the fourth film in the franchise, *Alien Resurrection*. Good. While I didn't mind *Resurrection*, I found 3 to be little short of reprehensible. Blomkamp should not only ignore *Alien 3*, he should outright repudiate it.

The story behind the film is well-known, how its story and tone were worked and reworked, how the film had no sustained vision, and indeed started shooting without a finished script. It showed. I found the effects repetitious, the suspense tepid and the nihilism offensive. For heaven's sakes, they only not murdered the character that brought life to *Aliens*, they devote a good slug of the movie to her autopsy – a *child's* autopsy. Killing off Newt was not brave or a daring move. It was a lazy and disgusting one. A fellow panelist on a Worldcon program described the death of a child as being equivalent to the death of hope, not to be risked unless – like *The Sweet Hereafter* or the “Pretty Much Dead Already” and “The Grove” episodes of *The Walking Dead* – that death, and the reaction to it, is at the heart of the story. If not, then its only purpose and its only effect is simple ugliness: to bum out the people. There was no redeeming artistry in 3. There was nothing at all to 3.

What's the last word in *Aliens*? “Ah-firmative!” What's the last spoken dialog in *Alien3*? “Fuck you!” Same to you, movie.

I can't understand why Sigourney Weaver, who owed her career to *Alien* and *Aliens*, could show such arrogant disregard for her audience. The only explanation I can think of is that she had come to believe that, after scoring an Oscar nod for *Aliens* and two in one year for *Gorillas in the Mist* and *Working Girl*, she was now such a great big movie star that she could discard the role that got her recognition and brush away the ticket-buyers who cheered her on. You can see how well that's worked out for her: a good supporting role in *GalaxyQuest* and a few other cameos, but nothing on a star level. So now she's back where she started.

Not that it'll do any good, but I understand you can send messages about *Alien 5* to the producers at foxmovies@fox.com. I know the message I'm sending: “Reboot Newt!”



A second look at two of the four films which actually had a chance at the recently-presented Oscars shows that the Academy made a very solid choice. *Birdman* was a uniquely wrought and uniquely thought out motion picture, with a genuine theme of self-acceptance, brilliantly performed by all concerned. A mind-blower and a thought-provoker. Had I a ballot, I'd've voted for the supremely quirky and delightful *Grand Budapest Hotel*, but I huzzah the Academy for choosing the only movie of 2014 which could equal its originality and verve.

Professional critics have preferred *Boyhood* over *Birdman*, and John Q. Public has made its favorite movie of 2014 obvious: *American Sniper*. I had no problems with Clint Eastwood's paean to Chris Kyle even though, as has been said many times, we've seen the story before. The G.I. who falls in love with war is an old standard. But I've never seen the plot handled more personally or more humanely than here – Eastwood and his star, Bradley Cooper, obviously admired Kyle with sincerity, and, almost wholly without politics, let that admiration spread throughout the entirety of the film. Kyle fought for the next soldier in line. No cynicism, no self-pity, no hidden motivations, no posture. Excellent film.

Boyhood, on the other hand, bored me. Though I found the idea of following a human story year to year, human era to human era, using the same actors to be a novel technique, little grabbed me about the film. I applauded the decency of his father, the patient exhaustion of his mother – Patricia Arquette was the film's soul, and deserved her Oscar – but the movie himself meandered on and on until I grew tired of it. Besides which, it said nothing about the boy's sexual awakening, and if we're being honest, that moment is central to any life. Anyway, the artifice of *Birdman* was much more compelling.

Arquette's award was well-deserved, as was Julianne Moore's for *Still Alice*, a commentary on Alzheimer's that made a strong humane point – that the only antidote to hideous fate is love. The pitiability of Moore's character's situation was front and center, of course, but the triumph of her family's reaction was astonishing to see. Breakout performance by Kristen Stewart; she keeps up that quality of acting and people may manage to forget *Twilight*. Best supporting actor J.K. Simmons was phenomenal in *Whiplash*, playing against type as an obsessive and abusive music teacher – the burden and the blessings of genius on such a man and his students has never been better portrayed, not even by John Houseman in *The Paper Chase*, the mere thought of whom is enough to send this onetime law student into a state of nervous distraction. Great music, too.

I only wish Michael Keaton – heart, soul and subject of *Birdman* – had won the Oscar. His performance was every bit as strong and far more complex than Eddie Redmayne's in *The Theory of Everything*, a film I enjoyed but found shallow. Safe Oscar. I fear that, as with Mickey Rourke and Bill Murray, Keaton has now made his masterpiece, had his best shot at recognition, and none will come again.



I'd hoped to give politics a rest in this *Spartacus*, but that's clearly impossible. As I compose this issue, the televised media is going ape over an unbelievably trivial issue – Hillary Clinton's e-mail server – and ignoring, as best it can, a truly catastrophic scandal – the Republican attempt to embarrass the President of the United States by undercutting his foreign policy.

What gets me about the letter – signed by 47 Republican Senators and sent to the Iranian foreign minister – was how thoughtless it was. I get the strong feeling that the letter was written, signed and sent without regard for decorum or consequences. Such clumsiness and recklessness I could expect of a newcomer to the body like this fool Cotton and hyper young punks like Rand Paul and Marco Rubio, but coming from pros like Orrin Hatch and John McCain – unspeakably foolish.

The United States Senate has been the greatest deliberative body in the world. Now, it's demeaned. The 47 Senators have disgraced themselves and the institution they inhabit. Hundreds of newspapers – even rock-ribbed conservative journals – have denounced their stunt as harmful to the government and to hopes for peace. We hear little of that on the air, so the great majority of our citizenry that doesn't read won't know how universally the Republicans have been condemned. Cue disgust with the broadcast media, who live in the corporate pocket. Fox News is only the most obvious and unapologetic. I feel angrier at NBC. Their news division is entertaining and its staff attractive, but has suffered a severe dearth of integrity for years – one needs only remember their blatant support of O.J. Simpson to be assured of that. The network is not honest.

But honesty is not a respected commodity in the enemies of this administration. This debacle makes it clearer than clear that today's Republicans care nothing for facts, truth, law, precedent, humanity. Their only concern is to cause harm to those they have chosen to hate. It's the strategy that crawled like a serpent from the tumor in Lee Atwater's brain, and it's absorbed the right wing in America to a cellular level. One has only to regard the manic spewings recently voiced by Rudy Giuliani to see that.

By contrast – and what a contrast – consider Barack Obama's comments at the Edmund Pettus Bridge, Selma, Alabama, on the 50th anniversary of the police attack on a civil rights march there. That is what a compassionate patriot sounds like. That is what a President of the United States sounds like.



SIGNED, SEALED, DELIVERED – reader reactions to previous issues

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I enjoyed reading *Spartacus 2*. It is a rare fanzine that I read from cover to cover, a testament to your skills as an editor as well as a writer. On *Twelve Years a Slave*: There were criticisms of the movie when it came out, detailing ways in which it was not true to the book. In particular, the movie seemed to downplay Solomon Northup's Christianity, and to generally be more anti-Christian than the book. Also some incidents in the movie ignore the large cash value of a healthy slave, which would mitigate brutal treatment and especially murder. When the book came out, it also attracted criticism, as too similar to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which came out just a year earlier. While nobody seems to have disputed the basic facts, there was a feeling that the person Solomon Northup dictated the book to, David Wilson, may have spiced it up a bit to aid the cause of abolition. However, Edwin Epps was a real person, and he seems to have been just as cruel to his slaves as the movie depicts. His neighbors evidently despised him for his cruelty, but nobody did anything about it. A slave owner's property rights were inviolable.

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Greg Benford's political writing gives me so many options as to how and when I will be inserting foot into mouth if I reply. That's a compliment for him and for *Spartacus*. I will only say that I likewise find it hard to not giggle about the furry gas attack, and I also see the need to recognize the humans inside those godawful costumes. I guess I have reconciled myself to things that initially seemed only a bit less strange than these folks.

I've heard no updates about the investigation into the Chicago gas attack. Anyone?

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Many thanks for the current zines available from you, and I have got *Spartacus 6* in front of me. As always, lots to talk about. Then the Charlie Hebdo massacre happened, I said on Facebook "Nous sommes Charlie, tout le monde." As a journalist in my training, I saw real danger for free speech here. Now that I have the time to look back... Years ago, I wondered about the motivations of the 9/11 terrorists, and was called a sympathizer. I think the best way to conquer your enemies is to understand them, and try to figure out why they committed these horrific deeds.

With the Charlie Hebdo event, I see why these deadly invasions took place. The cartoons in Charlie Hebdo offended some local extremists Muslims, and probably most if not all of the Muslim community in France, and the rest of the world. The cartoons in Charlie Hebdo take a shot at everyone, and while nearly all groups shrug it off, Muslim groups obviously have not. I guess the worst thing here is that if the magazine didn't explicitly tell its readers that the big-nosed gent in the turban is supposed to be Mohammed, there might not have been any offence taken. I think we should choose to temper our free speech to a degree. Perhaps we need something like the Hippocratic Oath imposed on journalists... report the facts, but Do No Harm. If a substantial part of the readership will be offended by what is printed, perhaps we need to consider their easily-offended nature. (And I am sure that expressing this opinion will appear to be kissing Muslim butts, but I stopped caring about that a long time ago.)

I am not sure I can comment on the widespread police abuse being suffered by far too many people, especially blacks. I recently saw a video about a black man minding his business when he was harassed by a female police officer who claimed the golf club he was using as a cane was swung at

her...her car's tapes show she was lying. Another instance of arrest because of walking while black. We do need police, but we don't need their abuse. Whatever happened to "serve and protect"?

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Guy, I've been trying to write a few more LOCs lately but I'm hesitant to LOC a zine most of whose comment hooks are political. Usually I avoid writing about politics. I have very strong views, but they aren't original, and political "discussions" have a way of turning into arguments and setting people who have much in common at odds with each other for no good reason.

Having given my disclaimer, as for the Je Suis Charlie controversy, I reflexively agree with the Greg Benford quote at the start of the zine but I suspect that's being unfair to the majority of Muslims. I need to remind myself repeatedly that the ignorant, bigoted Bible-thumpers (and right to life terrorists) who get the most press do not represent a majority of Christians.

Similarly I believe in freedom of speech and my first reaction to those who taunt Islamists trying to enforce their views on people outside their faith is to cheer them on. However, it might be better, if less viscerally satisfying, to take a more Pauline approach and not offend the religious beliefs of others just because we have the right to do so.

As for this country's long history of atrocities, I think there is a streak of adolescent immaturity in the American character. We do things out of sheer willfulness and self-centeredness, things we ought to know are wrong, and in many cases are going to end up harming us all. Then, to make it worse, we refuse to own up to our mistakes let alone learn from them.

People still insist the Vietnam War was worth fighting despite the fact we were ignominiously defeated, without the world suffering any the predicted dire consequences, although it did delay our regularizing relations with Vietnam for a few decades.

Whenever I see a photo of the Confederate flag being displayed I think of Germany, whose people had the good sense, decency and maturity to ban Nazi displays. They felt a proper shame over Hitler's crimes. Much of the American South still feels pride over its fight to preserve slavery.

The pride is certainly not in slavery but in the sense of honor intelligent Confederates felt towards their homelands. "Honor" was the word Lee himself invoked for taking on grey instead of federal blue. He saw disunion as a terrible mistake, but he could not take arms against the people and government of Virginia. Men and women of that time did not travel as casually as we do, could not hit a switch and see sites from far away. Their loyalties lay with the homelands they knew. "America" was for most a distant idea; even a well-traveled, well-educated soldier like Lee held to that loyalty. But he understood what the war decided. After Appomattox he said, "Let us teach our children to be Americans," and knelt beside a black man at his church in Richmond to take communion. Lee got it. Before, people said "The United States are." Afterwards, and forever, "the United States is." Through Civil War, we all created our country. I'm proud of men like that.

I don't necessarily believe that a majority of the American people support these sorts of follies. It is more that the majority is too easily persuaded or misled or frightened into going along with the powers that be.

Now I shall go away, hoping we remain on speaking terms!

If you buy me a Snickers.

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I didn't see more than a few minutes of the TV *Peter Pan* that ran recently, but from the photo, Tiger Lily was pretty evidently not a Native American.

I disagree that the discussion over changing the Redskins name is “silliness.” “Redskins” is traditionally a racist name for Indians and a large number of them find it offensive. Granted, the Native American population faces a lot of problems, but eliminating racist language is one step toward treating them better.

As to Wisconsin’s action against Jim Frenkel, I’m not an expert on it, but I understand its behavior at Wisconsin was part of a continuing pattern.

“Feminism laced with fury.” Well, feminists have a lot to be angry about. And I don’t think feminists want to “conquer,” but “love” hasn’t helped them get very far.

*What’s brought feminists as far as they have – and they might well see a woman elevated to the highest office in the world next year – is demonstrated competence and relentless work. This might not betoken love, but another quality, **patience**. Alas, that’s an even more detested sentiment.*

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To me the odd thing about the midterm elections is that the public polls give Congress a very low approval rating – and yet over 90% of the incumbents were returned to office! I didn’t vote for any of them ...

Much of the seeming invincibility of incumbents is due to flagrant gerrymandering, contorting a Congressman’s district to include only areas controlled by his party. It’s illegal and immoral and done all the damn time.

Milt Stevens seems to admit that the brutally aggressive police have in fact conspired to terrorize the citizenry. But is this the cause or the result of the ever more frequent killings of unarmed and in fact totally non-aggressive black men (and boys)? Neither Eric Garner, nor the man in the Walmart with the BB gun picked up as a purchase, nor the child with the AirSoft pistol in the Cleveland park had any malicious intent at all. If the police are really intent on [fighting] terrorism, why kill only blacks?

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Speaking of communicable diseases, did you hear the joke about Ebola? You probably won’t get it. (Pause for gales of riotous laughter.)

On the Brittany Maynard case: I think too many Americans were raised on *Marcus Welby and Emergency!* and have come to the conclusion that nobody dies. The truth is that no doctor has ever had anything but a terminal patient. I think constantly these days about my father. I realize that sometime soon he is going to die. Right now, though, he is able to live at home under careful care, is not in much pain, and lives in an uncomplicated world of petting the cat and dog with Fox News in the background. His quality of life is not what it was, but it’s not bad either. If his life ends tomorrow, nobody can say he hadn’t lived a fruitful life right to the end. On the other hand, his condition isn’t so dire that assisted suicide isn’t something to consider.

In Ms. Maynard’s case, the choices were starker. She knew her death was inevitable and the getting there was going to be excruciating. I’ve been very close to three people in the last ten years who faced similar outlooks. None lived more than six months past the point where they could at least leave their homes. One died of brain cancer that took him so quickly there was only three weeks between his retirement party and death. The other two lingered on in such horrible pain that it utterly destroyed who they were and their relationships with family.

I really don’t know where the point comes between living as long possible and suffering too much to bear. I do know this. Those who choose to hang on and fight to the end do not change the outcome of their disease. What they do change is the lives of their survivors. The ethical question is

which is better: dying before your disease kills you but without the suffering, or living as long as life allows but leaving your survivors' final memories of you in agony? It's not an easy choice, but I do support the places where the state at least allows the patient to make the choice.

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You come down firmly on [the side of Kaci Hickox in regards to her Ebola quarantine], but I am a bit more ambivalent. New Jersey's decision to put her into quarantine is a good one from risk management principles. It didn't really cost anything, except creating some cabin fever for a single person, and it took completely out of play the admittedly very small chance that she could be a carrier of the virus and could cause a contagion. Proper risk management dictates that the greater the degree of a worst-case calamity, the closer to zero the risk of that outcome should be. Isolating someone for less than a single month to reduce the risk of an Ebola pandemic to exactly zero doesn't seem to be an egregious requirement. She must have known when she went over there that she might be quarantined on her return, and if I were her I'd have accepted it and binge-watched *Breaking Bad* for three weeks.

The missing component in that ridiculous scenario is the Constitution. The government cannot deprive anyone of liberty without due process of law – a factor New Jersey didn't bother with in their irrational panic. The same logic would justify immolating someone possibly exposed to a scary disease. Not a chance. If the gummint wants to quarantine someone for any reason they better pass a proper law allowing it.

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Brittany Maynard used her bravery where it would do good: to stand up for the right to end purposeless suffering. Just as Terry Pratchett is now challenging the prohibition on assisted suicide in the U.K. with the mental capacity he has left. That said, I've friends and family – one within the last year – who were willing to let fate take its course. Comforted by palliative drugs, they enjoyed their last few days surrounded by loved ones. But that is an entirely different end than being unconscious, insensate, and in pain from brain cancer. I honor both those paths, both those choices. Which one I will make depends on the end fate chooses for me.

*From the announcement of Terry Pratchett's passing: **Death said: "AT LAST, SIR TERRY, WE MUST WALK TOGETHER.***

"Terry took Death's arm and followed him through the doors and on to the black desert under the endless night."

Thanks for attempting to give Tim Bolgeo to tell his side of being disinited from being the guest of honor at Archon. However, two pages of all caps is impossible to read. *[Impossible to translate, too.]* Given your précis in introduction, Tim's being disinited for unpopular political opinions is beyond the pale. If the committee didn't understand his opinions when they invited him, they weren't doing their job. If they buckled under to criticism after the fact, they weren't doing their job. That said, what we've got abroad is too much extreme sensitivity to anything *anyone* might find objectionable. Don't dare criticize Christians because Fox News will be all over your ass. Don't dare criticize Muslims because al Qaeda will send folks with AK-47s to shoot up your office. Don't point out that the third ranking Republican in the House speaks at Klan rallies or have your internet connection physically destroyed. My sense from the parts of Tim's article I was able to read are that he – like those Parisian gendarmes attacked this month – is politically incorrect for sport.

And that caps that for *Spartacus*' 7th. A happy spring to you all.