

SPARTACUS 31

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In our time, Donald Trump, President of the United States, autographs Bibles, ignores the ongoing suffering in Puerto Rico, insults the memory of a dead hero, the universally admired John McCain, and continues sucking up to Russia after he flops like a fish trying to negotiate with North Korea. He demoralizes and mocks our allies, reduces America's influence on the world with every move, and a maniac in Christchurch singles out Trump as an influence before slaughtering 50 guiltless men, women and children, disgracing our country further than I ever thought possible. The Christchurch massacre simply beggars words.



Trump pays the slimmest of lip service to the atrocity. In response to progressives' outrage, we stand warned. Says the President of the United States,

"I can tell you I have the support of the police, the support of the military, the support of the Bikers for Trump – I have the tough people, but they don't play it tough — until they go to a certain point, and then it would be very bad, very bad." And on another occasion, "Law enforcement, military, construction workers, Bikers for Trump ... They've been great. But these are tough people ... But they're peaceful people, and antifa and all — they'd better hope they stay that way."

Donald Trump is a thoughtless, sloppy talker. He and/or his stooges deny that he meant to threaten his opposition and recoil at the thought that he encouraged the Christchurch maniac. But I don't think it matters or will matter. I truly, truly hate to say this, but I think Donald Trump is going to be re-elected in 2020.

This horror will likely come about despite the wrongness of the right and the rightness of the progressive cause. Let me quote myself from Facebook, in reply to a meme saying that we progressives are “after” the people who support Trump, not Trump himself:

“The only people we progressives are “after” are the swine who gas and imprison children and separate them from their parents to make racists feel powerful.

“We’re after incompetents who humiliate our country before the world, alienate our allies and cozy up to our enemies who are actively interfering in our home-country business.

“We’re after brutes who openly promote racism, sickening misogyny and illegal, corrupt personal profit over the public good.

“We’re after a fraud who took office thanks to an antiquated and worthless technicality after losing the popular vote by 3 million votes, making mock of the principle of one man’s vote having the same value as another’s.

“We’re after a mountebank who made hate popular, corruption acceptable, and divided people like me from wonderful people ... [the] legitimate conservatives out there who are genuine statesmen and patriots. We are after the criminal liars who do them and all of us dishonor.”

And what are we for? Let’s take a look at the Green New Deal proposed by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a ten-year plan to – I’ll say it! – *make America great again*:

"Guaranteeing a job with a family-sustaining wage, adequate family and medical leave, paid vacations, and retirement security to all people of the United States."

"Providing all people of the United States with — (i) high-quality health care; (ii) affordable, safe, and adequate housing; (iii) economic security; and (iv) access to clean water, clean air, healthy and affordable food, and nature."

"Providing resources, training, and high-quality education, including higher education, to all people of the United States."

"Meeting 100 percent of the power demand in the United States through clean, renewable, and zero-emission energy sources."

"Repairing and upgrading the infrastructure in the United States, including . . . by eliminating pollution and greenhouse gas emissions as much as technologically feasible."

"Building or upgrading to energy-efficient, distributed, and ‘smart’ power grids, and working to ensure affordable access to electricity."

"Upgrading all existing buildings in the United States and building new buildings to achieve maximal energy efficiency, water efficiency, safety, affordability, comfort, and durability, including through electrification."

"Overhauling transportation systems in the United States to eliminate pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector as much as is technologically feasible, including through investment in — (i) zero-emission vehicle infrastructure and manufacturing; (ii) clean, affordable, and accessible public transportation; and (iii) high-speed rail."

"Spurring massive growth in clean manufacturing in the United States and removing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from manufacturing and industry as much as is technologically feasible."

"Working collaboratively with farmers and ranchers in the United States to eliminate pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from the agricultural sector as much as is technologically feasible."

I’d add restoring America’s ambitious scientific undertakings, our status in the world and our relationships with our allies as worthy goals, too.

The 2020 election shouldn’t even be a contest, so vividly superior is the progressive cause. But here’s what I see: a country in a state of confusion; a population asked to yank itself, all but violently, from a moral and practical morass; a people asked to admit that they made

tremendous mistakes; a Democratic Party in the throes of reforming itself with an upsurge in youth that offers much but demands too much, forcing us to put aside prejudices now, accept bitter truths *now*, to trade chaos we know for instability we fear.

Absent a figure who can advance, with charm and persuasion, the dizzying challenges we're presenting to our people, a person of charisma gifted with bell-like clarity of vision and infectious, righteous outrage, I don't see how we can surmount the raw fear the party of greed and corruption represent and utilize. I don't think we have such a hero. Elizabeth Warren is terrific, but she's not the Huey Long giant to bestride the election as our candidate must do. Joe Biden, to my despair, seems cautious, squeaky-voiced, *old*, without the needed fire. Beto O'Rourke *could* do it, capture the American imagination and change us all – or is that my wishful thinking struggling to find hope?

So I think that, taking advantage of the pun suggested by the year, our 2020 vision will fail. Trump will continue to fill the courts with winger vampires out to destroy the liberal legacy of the progressives who have gone before. But 2024 will come, and in 2028 Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez will come of age. Give her four years to gain greater gravamen. **AOOC in 2032!**

I'll be 83. If I'm anything.

Is there hope *before* then? Maybe. We're unpredictable as a populace. But my hope, alas, doesn't rest with the people. I fear we must rely on the American strength *behind* us as a people: the law. Mueller has finished his work, but there are other lawmen out there. They are not asleep.

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Recent reads ...

The New Iberia Blues / James Lee Burke is the best writer about violence I have ever read. This novel is a distinct improvement over the past several Burkes, though I hesitate to say why: it's because he soft-pedals the insistent feminism with which he's all but browbeat us in recent Robicheaux, a feminism that jarred and didn't really fit.

Rewrite / Greg Benford Greg Benford's latest book is outstanding, a thought-jabbing, exciting novel on a familiar subject -- repeating times and lives -- but for the first time in my experience, backed up with strict science. It's a shame that the publisher held it up until after the beginning of the year, making it ineligible for the 2019 Hugo.

The Kind Folk / Ramsey Campbell is short for Campbell of late, and has a similar theme to many of his later works (I won't state it here, since it's such a spoiler), but the comparative brevity of the book works to its advantage; it's the tightest, briskest and best Campbell I've read since rediscovering him at the start of the year.

Delving into the *Cartel* trilogy on Greg Benford's advice. The first book is *The Power of the Dog*, the second *The Cartel*, the latest – in hardback – *The Border*. Spare, strong writing, an exciting, involving story – and a deeply depressing one, as America's death-deep drug problem is shown to be as hopeless as addiction itself. Drugs squandered whatever quality my generation had to offer; the foolishness and the corruption they haul seem everlasting.

Recent movies ...

I can't imagine that anyone is much interested in my opinion of *Cold Pursuit* (hilarious, bloody, parodic, a sheer guilty joy) when *Captain Marvel* is out there; Rosy asked to see it as her birthday movie, and we both enjoyed it. True, I thought it overly reliant on FX in the last half hour, a storm of blinding lights and pointless racket that served no point except to show that the

movie was determined at every moment to top itself. It didn't; Brie Larson was more fun to look at from the first scene than any of the flashy stuff. (Did you notice how they always framed her from her bottom ribs up? I wonder why.) Anyway, the brouhaha over having a female superhero in a Marvel movie ended up meaningless and the show ended up enjoyable.

Us is the new horror film from Jordan Peele, and like *Get Out* before it, is a film bursting with dread and a truly fearsome intelligence. It requires two contradictory responses: thought (to decipher – and understand -- the complex reveals) and respect (for the sharp direction and *wondrous* acting, especially by the incandescent Lupita N'yongo). The movie has its share of shocks but like *Get Out*, relies on wit for most of its effect – which will linger. Very strong film, better in the details than overall, I'd say, but powerful and scary and very strong.

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LEAD ON, COMRADES ... or, LOCs

Lloyd Penney
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Commiserations on the passing of Gary Tesser. I didn't know Gary, but we are all losing friends and big names from our happy hobby. I am told that when we lose interest in our hobbies, it is a sign of depression. I may plead guilty to that; I am not sure what else to say.

Greg Benford's ejection from Loscon...I would not blame Loscon for what happened. We are asked for a level of decorum wherever we might go, but different people demand different levels, and as disclaimers on some comedies say, different people have different senses of humour. I won't say more, other than if different people had been in the audience, none of this may ever have happened. All I can do is shake my head. I blame today's politics for all of this hypersensitivity.

Well, the Orange Fool has declared his so-called emergency, and wants \$5 billion...NOW. Do you get the feeling the whole country was held hostage? This money will probably come from cuts to programmes that will affect the most sensitive of all your fellow citizens. He's truly dug through the bottom of the barrel, and is pulling up the dirt underneath.

So many movies not seen, so I can't get excited by the Oscars, with a parade of sensitive egos strutting in front of a world-wise audience. We were a part of some recent awards, though... Yvonne is a member of CAFTCAD, The Canadian Alliance of Film & Television Costume Arts & Design, and their own CAFTCAD Awards were staged last weekend. We helped with some set up, and stuffed swag bags. More strutting egos, but we were busy with getting things done, which is where we are getting a good rep. Fandom trained us for this, and we are putting all of this experience to good use.

Rich Lynch
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Sad news on the passing of Gary Tesser, and thanks for making part of this issue a remembrance of him. I'm somewhat embarrassed to say that I never met him in person, but I got to know him pretty well in print. Back when Nicki and I were publishing *Mimosa* we tried several times to get him and the BAPster to write an article about "The True History of Chain Up!" Never happened, though, and the world is worse off for it as a result. Death sucks. We're all gonna miss him.

John Purcell
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Dang, Guy! You have passed my little perzine *Askew* in productivity: its 27th issue should be completed in the next week. Happy 29th issue to *Spartacus*! And what an issue it is.

Starting with that editorial cartoon representing the suppression of the voice of justice, As you noted, this is probably the main take-away the world had from the Kavanaugh hearings. Even worse, those hearings clearly revealed just how belligerent and indifferent to due cause and the proper process of judicial appointments the Republican Party is. They really don't care, and now with the results of the mid-term election rearing the spectre of what the Democratically controlled House of Representatives might do starting in January 2019, the GOP will kick into full-tilt, jam through whatever we can mode before their lengthy end of the year break while they still control both chambers of congress. I fully expect to see more gridlock over the next two years as the Democrat controlled House and the Republican controlled Senate clash over policy, subpoenas, economic and climate-related bills, etc., ad infinitum. I am afraid there will be more of the same, especially as the Toddler-in-Chief wails about the "witch hunt" and spews even more ludicrous nonsense as a constant smoke screen to hide what his GOP toadies are doing to our American political system and way of life. That toad in the White House has done more damage to this nation in less than two years than the combined 140 years' worth of efforts by the Soviet Union and mainland China.

There is no doubt in my mind that Drumpf is hiding all sorts of shit in his financial and "political" background, and he's very, very scared. He should be. Just on what we already know by watching him and reviewing what he has done in the last 21 months, he definitely must be removed from office. Sadly, that won't happen by an act of Congress or an act of God - I am a studied agnostic, so I discount any chance of the latter act actually happening - so the voting public needs to keep the pressure on him and congress - *both parties!* - to work together and then vote as many of these Trump-enablers out of office in 2020 along with the dirty water coming out of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NE, Washington, DC 20500.

End of my rant.

I am very glad that Hurricane Michael missed your part of Florida and that you, Rosie, and the rest of your family are all fine. Scary stuff. Our part of Texas usually gets swiped by outside arms of hurricanes that hit the gulf coast, so we receive lots of rain, which tends to pool in the lower parts of our yard. Fortunately our house is on a raised bit of land, so we have never <knock on wood> had to deal with severe water damage inside the house. Still, it is all "not good" and indicative of rapidly changing meteorological patterns thanks to... Oh, you know what I mean. We already know "who" doesn't know squat nor cares about scientific research or fact.

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A note from **Nic Farey**:

An earlier post [on Facebook] by [Roy Hessinger](#), a share of some dreadfully pretentious tosh by that awful old pouf Stephen Fry made me consider:

Fry is, in my opinion, a pretentious dreadful old pouf. That doesn't make me homophobic. Also, in my opinion, Jerry Seinfeld is a totally up himself smug and unfunny prat. That doesn't make me anti-Semitic.

As has been wisely pointed out (in the case of racism in particular), any form of prejudice is ridiculous, since there are more than enough reasons to dislike people on an individual basis.

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Something different for this issue ... fiction. My old friend and fannish mentor **Rick Norwood** offered me the following for the *Challenger* I'm working on, but seeing its powerful political and social message, I felt it would be more at home here. Thanks to Rick, latest winner of Southern fandom's Rebel Award and editor of the great monthly anthology, *Comics Revue*.

America 2020

By Rick Norwood

Walking to class on this warm fall morning, I could see the relief on the faces of the people I passed. The election had been cancelled. Waste of the taxpayer's money, the president had said. Foregone conclusion. The 2016 election four years ago had been so ugly everyone was glad not to have to live through that ever again. I kept my head down, tried not to let my feelings show, kicked my way through the fallen leaves.

Today I was presenting the fundamental theorem of calculus, a presentation I love. I could feel my inner tension drain away as my entire focus turned to mathematics. I forgot the world around me, and lived for the moment in the parallel universe of pure abstraction.

I was just about to use the mean value theorem to bring the proof to its magnificent conclusion, when a policeman entered my classroom, weapon drawn. My hand instinctively went to my own gun, but I jerked my hand away. This was not the place to start a firefight. We had seen too many of those on campus in the past year. No matter what, I would not put my students at risk of collateral damage. In situations like this, it seems the innocent bystander is always the victim.

"What can I do for you, officer?" I asked.

"We had a report of a terrorist in your class. I'm here to take him in."

"I'm sure not, sir. I know my students."

The policeman paid no attention. His eyes scanned the rows of students and he pointed his gun at my best student, Bishan Singh.

"You, raghead! Put your hands over your head and come with me."

Bishan obediently raised his hands and stood up, but he looked to me. I could not stand by and see one of my students taken.

"Sir, this student is Bishan Singh. He is a Sikh and an American citizen."

"That beard says he a raghead, and he sure looks like a terrorist to me. Thank goodness at least one of your students cares enough about freedom to report him."

My heart turned cold. I drew my Springfield Armory XD and pointed it at the officer's head.

"Unless you have a warrant for this citizen's arrest, I cannot let you take him, sir. Stand down."

Instantly, half of my students were on their feet, guns in hand. One of the guns was pointed at me. All the others were aimed at the policeman. He was a young man, and you could see the arrogance on his face fade, replaced by fear. He shot me a look of pure loathing, and backed out of the classroom. I followed him into the corridor and watched him get into the elevator.

Back in the classroom, I put my hand on Bishan's shoulder. "Shave off the beard. I ask this not as an insult, but because it is your only chance to survive. You are a fine student, a good mathematician. You have a promising career ahead of you."

Bishan looked up with me with his large, liquid brown eyes. *Like a puppy. Like a foolish, trusting puppy, unable to believe there is evil in the world.* But then he spoke, and there was nothing childish in his words. He spoke as a man speaks. "No, professor. With respect, a Sikh does not shave his beard. I appreciate your willingness to risk yourself on my behalf, but I will not compromise my religion. Please continue your lecture."

My eyes filled with tears. I felt as if I could not go on. But I steeled myself and walked to the board. If Bishan could face this bravely, so could I. There was a lump in my throat, and I could not speak, so in the neat cursive I had learned as a child, which I refused to give up,

despite all the pressure to use the Powerpoint slides that came with the textbook, like most of the other professors did, I wrote out the final sentences of the beautiful proof of Barrow's great theorem. Then I choked out a few words. "The first proof of this theorem was due to Isaac Barrow. Isaac Newton was a student of Barrow, and he used the groundwork laid by Barrow to develop the calculus, as it was then called. Then he used calculus to invent physics. He was one of the greatest minds of all time."

The student who had pointed his gun at me jumped to his feet and shouted, "He was not as great as the President of the United States, traitor!"

My weakness vanished. This was a confrontation I was accustomed to, and I had no doubt about my ability to handle. I walked over until my face was just a few inches from the student's face. In a level voice, I said "Mister Gold, sit down. This is my classroom, and you are here to learn mathematics and for no other reason. If you start paying more attention to the subject matter, and less to being a tattle tale, you might still pass the course." Mr. Gold sat down.

I talked for a few minutes about the homework assignment and reviewed a few of the calculus tricks they would need to take simple antiderivatives. When the period was over, and only then, I dismissed the class.

Bishan Singh was on his way out the door called to him. "Mr. Singh, I understand your devotion to your religion, and I respect your refusal to give in, but your life is at risk. That policeman will not forget the way I humiliated him, and he will come after you the minute you leave the campus. I can't protect you. Do you have a car?"

"No, professor."

I reached into my pocket and brought out my car keys. "Take my car. It's the blue Tesla parked in the faculty parking lot. If you drive non-stop, you can reach the Canadian border before nightfall. Don't go back to your room. Nothing there is worth losing your life."

He pushed my hand away. "No, professor. I will not run away. A Sikh does not act the part of a coward."

He turned and left me standing there, my hand outstretched. I knew I would never see him again.

