' updates, honours,

Professor of Philosophy at the University of California, Irvine, has been elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, which recognizes leaders from the academic, business and government sectors who are responding to challenges facing the nation and the world. With three other UCI colleagues, Gilbert will be inducted at a ceremony on 8 October 2016, in Cambridge, Mass.

Gilbert is recognized for her distinguished contributions to the field of philosophy, particularly her founding contributions to the philosophy of social phenomena. She is the author of six books, including *Joint Commitment: How We Make the Social World* (OUP, 2013 and 2015) and *A Theory of Political Obligation: Membership, Commitment, and the Bonds of Society* (OUP, 2006 and 2008).

Ann Spokes Symonds (*Spokes* 1944). Last year (December 2014) saw the publication of her latest book *Also Rans: The Injustice of History* (see 2015, *The Ship*). She hopes to see the publication of a local church guide and the re-publication of the story of the Oxford children who were evacuated to Canada and the USA in 1940. In November 2015, she celebrated her ninetieth birthday, and is still playing golf and gentle tennis to keep fit.

Positive hell

JOAN SHENTON

A saga of controversy, threats and the growth of student censorship

I was very excited when I heard that our half hour documentary *Positive Hell* had been selected for screening on 17 April at the London Independent Film Festival (LIFF).

We prepared a press release and were looking forward to a lively debate after the screening.

Our film tells the story of five individuals in the north of Spain who had been either intravenous drug users or alcoholics in their teens. They were treated in rehab units and overcame their addictions but they had tested 'HIV' antibody positive. Twenty-eight years on, when we filmed them they are fit and well having refused to take antiviral medication.

Positive Hell has already been nominated for best documentary at the Marbella International Film Festival, and selected for LACinefest, Digital Griffix online festival, and the Indie Festival 01.

To our dismay, on the day our press release was sent out, the festival director, Erich Schultz, wrote to tell us that he had 'pulled' our film. He said he had received warnings from four HIV/AIDS charities urging him not to screen our film. They threatened protests at the screening venue and at the festival sponsors premises 'if we [LIFF] don't comply'. Schultz said he had received 20 protest letters including one from the LGBT society at the University of London where he teaches and where all of his selection committee comes from. He wrote, 'And now, my selection committee is unanimous in wanting to step away from screening *Positive Hell.*' We were given no reason for this blatant censorship.

It seems odd that the committee that selected our film was suddenly unanimous in wanting the film withdrawn. However, it is not unusual for HIV/AIDS charities to receive funds from the pharmaceutical industry, always on the lookout for any challenges to their medical policies and their profits.

It is not the first time such interference has taken place. Only last January (2015) before the screening of *Positive Hell* at the Frontline Club in Paddington, the club received complaints from several groups objecting to the screening. Happily, the club ignored the complaints and we went ahead with a peaceful screening to a full house with a lively debate afterwards.

In an article following our press release publicising the ban, the online magazine *spiked* said the following:

> *spiked* certainly doesn't share Shenton's views on HIV/AIDS. But we are still worried about this act of silencing brought about by campaign groups and censorious students ... At the heart of the decision to pull *Positive Hell* from the festival is the idea that words, or films, are dangerous, and that challenging the medical consensus would lead millions unthinkingly to change their course of treatment and suffer as a result. But Shenton and her colleagues are only airing an opinion ... We must give people the right to make up their own minds, and we should trust them to do so, even about the most difficult of subjects. Shame on LIFF for refusing its audience that right.

Joan Shenton (1961) has produced and presented radio and television programmes for 50 years. Her independent production company Meditel Productions has won seven television awards and was the first independent company to win a Royal Television Society Award for an episode of Channel 4's *Dispatches*. Her book *Positively False: Exposing the Myths around HIV and AIDS* (1998) was updated and republished in 2015.