

Women at Warp Episode 97: Citizenship and Immigration in Star Trek

[WAW intro plays]

Jarrah: Hi, and welcome to Women at Warp, a Roddenberry Star Trek podcast. Join us as our crew of four women Star Trek fans boldly go on our biweekly mission to explore our favorite franchise. My name's Jarrah, and thanks for tuning in. Today with us we have crew member Grace...

Grace: Hey, everybody!

Jarrah: And we also have two very special guests, who I will introduce and get them to tell you a bit about themselves, starting with Shashank Avvaru.

Shashank: Hi! I'm not a woman but my mom is, so that's about the qualification I have to be on Women at Warp. This is very exciting!

[laughter]

Jarrah: Awesome! Well, we'll get you to tell us more about yourself a bit later, because there's more to you than that. But for now, our other guest is Michelle Zamanian.

Michelle: Hi! Thank you for having me.

Jarrah: You are very welcome. And so, I'll start with you, Michelle, can you tell us maybe a bit about yourself and how you got interested in Star Trek?

Michelle: I just graduated with my MFA and I got into Star Trek when I was about 7 years old. I want to say that was around 90, 91. It was the first time I saw Star Trek and I fell instantly in love. It was like... exactly what I needed to see at that age, it was like a family coming together on the ship. I don't know, it was just really, really nice. And I've been a fan ever since.

Jarrah: Awesome. And you wrote a really cool piece for our blog on the TNG episode *The Drumhead* which we'll be discussing a little bit later. And how about you, Shashank?

Shashank: I am a data analyst, that's my day job and a fancy way of saying that I computer code. My night job is I write comic books and hopefully that's something I want to do at some point when I have grown up and when things have gotten to a point where I can do that full time. But I also do a couple of podcasts. I do PoliTreks and Weekly Trek both for the Tricorder Transmissions, both Star Trek podcasts. And how I got into Star Trek: Star Trek started as a mystery for me. When I was 10 or 11 my mom and dad were talking about how they got married. Again. And they shared something that they hadn't shared before. I'm from India and when my mom and dad were growing up, arranged marriages were the norm. So, they were set

up as a date to go out and talk to each other, see if they got along in the early... I want to say in the mid-80s and the first thing that they talked about, or one of the first things that they talked about, is how both of them as kids saw Star Trek growing up, because it was one of the three things that was on TV back home in India in the 60s, and just the way their conversations started and... the fact that they had that common among themselves was one of the reasons why they got together. So, I am, in a very literal way, a Star Trek baby.

[laughter]

Grace: Star Trek brought you into this world! That's incredible!

Shashank: [laughs] It did! And I really didn't get into it a whole lot because I was like, "That was something mom and dad watch. Why would I watch that?" But when I watched the 2009 Star Trek, I just fell in love with the franchise all over again and I had to go back and watch it. So, that's the really long short story about how I got into Star Trek.

Jarrah: Awesome!

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Well, our main topic that we're going to be discussing today is citizenship and immigration or migration in Star Trek. And before we get into that, just a brief piece of housekeeping as we always do, our show is entirely supported by our patrons on Patreon. If you'd like to become a patron you can do so for as little as a dollar a month and get awesome rewards from thanks on social media up to silly watch-along commentaries. Just visit patreon.com/womenatwarp. You can also support us by leaving a rating or review on Apple podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts. So, back to our main topic and just before we get into--.

Grace: Would you say we're migrating back to the main topic?

[laughter]

Jarrah: Exactly. It's been a short road getting from there to here. But we're going to start with just some sort of really basic concepts before we get into the Star Trek examples. First of all, what is citizenship? I think it's a concept that a lot of us take for granted and kind of assume it's kind of a universal given but it's not, actually. It's a concept with a long and complex history in Western philosophy. But basically, when we talk about citizenship today, we're talking about a legal status that is defined by civil, social, and political rights and responsibilities in the domain of a sovereign state. So, the right to vote, the right to, you know, who gets to identify as American or Canadian or British, to work, to the right to greater privacy than some other people. There's a bunch of rights and there's also responsibilities that come along with being a citizen. Some that are sort of more just assumed that like, "A good citizen would do this," and some that

are explicit. But it's important to note that, historically, groups of people have been excluded from full citizenship based on gender, race, etc. So, it's not something that I think we're talking about as like... to be a citizen is necessarily the goal. But it's a thing that structures our world a lot today and we're interested in exploring how it works in the Federation. We're also going to be talking about immigration, including voluntary and involuntary migration, refugees, as well as, you know, the aliens that just really want to move to a different planet for some reason. So, we're going to discuss those things and we have a list of episodes, but does anyone have a particular one you'd like to start with?

Shashank: No, I think as long as we get to *A Measure of a Man*, because that's the one I really felt connected me the most and spoke to me the most about things like migration and citizenship, I'll be happy.

Grace: All right!

Jarrah: Well, I might propose then that we start with the Deep Space Nine episode, *Sanctuary*, if people are cool with that, because I think that it is one of the ones that is most directly connected to this topic. A lot of the other ones have, sort of, oblique references. But this is an episode that is basically all about refugees. Of course, one of the reasons we wanted to do an episode is because refugee issues, in particular, are top of mind for a lot of people in North America right now. And, of course, you know people trying to come to North America. So, I wanted to take a look at how this works in Star Trek. So, Grace do you want to take a stab at summarizing this episode briefly?

Grace: Sure. Basically, the gist of the episode is we have a bunch of aliens come through the wormhole who've been displaced by this mysterious Dominion thing that [sarcastically] I'm pretty sure we don't hear about again, right? We don't hear about this Dominion thing again, do we?

Jarrah: [playing along] No...

Grace: Doesn't come up. One off thing, I don't know why they even mention it.

[Shashank laughs]

Grace: So, basically, they have been displaced by this thing called the Dominion. They are all homeless now and then they are given some time and space on Deep Space Nine to figure out what they need to do while they try and track down a planet. And they decide, "Bajor! Bajor is an awesome planet, we should live on Bajor!" And basically, the people of Bajor have to be like, "...N-nooo? We kind of need that planet. I mean we're not doing so great right now. We can find you in another planet." And they're like, "No. Why do you want us to stay with you? Do you not want us as guests anymore? What's your problem?" And it becomes a tense political situation.

Jarrah: Do you have something against farmer matriarchs with terrible hair?

Grace: I have something against dandruff jokes, thank you very much.

Jarrah: [laughing] All right.

Grace: We've got a pretty good listener comment from Oren that summarizes kind of what are the primary problems of the episode, if you don't mind if I share that?

Jarrah: No, go for it!

Grace: The quote we've got from Oren is, "*Sanctuary* always really bothered me because it seems to be casting refugees as greedy and ungrateful. "Sup, pals? How about this cool new planet The Federation has?" "Nah we want this planet, the one suffering from resource shortage and only freshly liberated from a brutal occupation. If you don't settle us on this specific planet, we will hate you forever." Which is pretty much how the aliens are being painted. They're being painted as literally very choosy beggars.

Jarrah: Interesting. That is a really interesting comment.

Grace: [laughing] I added the last part about the choosy beggars.

Shashank: That was not Oren, that was Grace.

Grace: Yes, that was me. All me, baby!

Jarrah: Did either of our guest have thoughts on this episode?

Michelle: Oh, yeah. Well, I guess the way that the episode was originally written, it was supposed to have kind of an uplifting ending where these people actually do end up on Bajor. And then it was rewritten by, I believe Michael Piller, to have a downbeat ending. So, it ends on a kind of sour note, which I think is really interesting, because it casts Kira, ultimately, with kind of a sense of bigotry and an inability to see the benefit of their emigration for their planet and I think it's really heartbreaking. And I almost feel it's like she couldn't accept that they would be beneficial for Bajor or, she thought Bajorans wouldn't accept them.

Jarrah: Yeah, I mean it starts out with... she's having a really rough time dealing with Bajoran politics and resource shortages and all this kind of stuff. So, it makes it hard for her to separate out the situation and even though she forms this really close friendship with the leader, she has to kind of admit that her government might have a point when they're like, "No, we don't really have the capacity to take on these three million people." But it's after this whole thing about how she's already really stressed out and then some of the refugees are being in scuffles with Jake and Nog.

Grace: [sarcastically] Jake and Nog, those two major aspects of Bajoran life.

Jarrah: Xenophobia personified.

Michelle: Yeah well, and on that note, I think that it's interesting to note that at beginning of the episode they talk about how there's this part in this area in Bajor where there's total famine, they can't farm the land, and it just so happens that these people come along and they're expert farmers. But Bajor doesn't want them.

Jarrah: It also kind of implies that... I don't know it strikes me as odd too, that you know even if you have this logistic concern because they're saying, "Well, you know the land isn't good anymore and, of course, if you started starving, we would feel like we had to feed you." Okay, but so, you're going to send them to a planet that no one else is on? And then what happens if they start starving there?

Grace: [sarcastically] Well, then it's not their problem, you see.

Jarrah: And then if the Federation is going to step in, in that case, why won't the Federation provide some assistance if a bunch of people are starving on Bajor, too?

Grace: It raises a lot of questions.

Shashank: Well, one really cool thing that I found about this episode, and I promise it has nothing to do with the actual topic, but I wanted to bring it up anyway--

Grace: Okay.

Shashank: --is the quote, "Men are far too emotional to be leaders. They're constantly fighting amongst themselves. It's their favorite thing to do." [laughter] I know the topic is very poignant, but it somehow feels like even that quote is poignant for a very different reason. Very, very much relevant. I've always thought that if the Federation shown in TNG and TOS represented the ideal America, the Federation and most governments shown in DS9 represent real governments; they're much closer. They're a lot more similar than what you'd find in an episode from TNG. So, in that reference, what Bajor did to the refugees, was, while not very surprising, it did seem in line with what would happen or, what actually is happening to the refugees, today. But the world can see and tell that there are places with all these resources. But instead of actually accepting them and rejecting decades of data—there is data from across the world, over time, that shows that when economies accept refugees, they accept migrants, their economies get better. More businesses open up, because people come from other cultures and they want to grow the horizon for the population available. But in rejecting such kinds of really strong economic data, governments today would rather not accept refugees. Because they want to cite incidents like the scuffles with Jake and Nog to close themselves away from legitimately helping these people.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Shashank: And much like the Skreeans, the refugees today really have nowhere to go in the situation that they're in. So, it's just a very—that's the first thing that struck me in this episode.

Jarrah: Yeah that's a really good point. And yeah, re-watching it, it did strike me that there were things here that were, I think, unfortunately realistic instead of the idealistic that we even, I think, expected at this early stage of Deep Space Nine. And yeah, it's definitely the stuff where Quark's xenophobia is particularly pronounced. But they're still—it's validated in some ways, by showing these scuffles, and then the son stealing the ship, and getting in a firefight and everything so, it's almost—it does kind of reinforce this idea that refugees are dangerous. And probably are going to be a drag on the economy or the system, instead of the actual facts of refugee situations.

Grace: Also, interesting because we're getting all of these opinions made on them based on one space station worth of these migrant population members of an entire species. That's the polling data that you get right there, is from a very small group.

Jarrah: Mm hm.

Shashank: It also makes—in a weird way, it makes sense to me, too. I can understand the perspective, to a point. I can get behind it because just not too long ago they were under the Cardassians, the Bajorans. And the suffering that they had to go through, which I'm sure started out, if not exactly like this, similar to where people started coming in and they started making deals and arrangements and before they knew it, their planet was taken over. So, I can see, to a certain extent, why something like this might have happened. But I'll say more about how the Federation suspiciously decided to... you know, allegedly, play it a little safe in there and that disappointed me, but that should have been the exact reason why I think the Bajoran government should have jumped at this and said, "You know what? We are stronger than this. We know that even though that happened before, that should not stop us from really helping people." Because if you look at it, Bajor is held by the Federation. The entire reason why they're in that situation is because somebody took a chance on them. So, I would have imagined that the right thing to have done there would be to accept them, but because this is real... DS9 is more real, more similar to a real world, that made sense to me too, the plot line.

Jarrah: All right well, let's flip over. We're going to go backwards through the canon today. We're going to go to TNG. We definitely have a few episodes we want to touch on here. One that I want to start with, which is the episode with the indigenous settlement of people who are of American Indian descent who live on the planet that is being traded to the Cardassians. And the one where, turns out that Wesley is on a vision quest with The Traveler, but that's not [laughs] the main purpose of the episode, but it is an interesting episode.

Grace: Albeit that B plot raises a lot of questions, also.

[laughter]

Jarrah: [laughing] Yeah it does and you should really take a listen to our episode *Indigenous Representation in Star Trek* where we talked about it in depth with some really cool guests. But it's an interesting episode because it talks a bit more directly about Federation citizenship and the ability to renounce Federation citizenship and the types of rights and protections that maybe citizenship does or doesn't afford to groups of people. Does anyone have any thoughts on *Journeys End*?

Shashank: The first thing that I realized when I saw this episode was that it seems like even that far ahead in the future, minorities will still have problems having or getting the land that they have found and having what they have. Just holding on to it. It seems like this episode is a really good metaphor to say, "Hey, no matter how far we go into the future you people will still be suffering." It seems funny, tragic, heartbreaking, and terrifying all at once and it was just a lot to take in when I saw the episode. But the fact that Starfleet went to the ends of the universe but indigenous peoples were still suffering, that kind of broke my heart.

Jarrah: Yeah, I mean they said they had taken like 200 years to find that planet.

Grace: You got to admit, you can't help but wonder if that is a byproduct of the thinking of the people writing the show though, who are just used to seeing these minorities put into these situations. The first thing they think of, if you're going to have a story with Native American characters, is they are displaced, they are impoverished. That is just the go-to for these groups of people for them, story wise.

Michelle: Yeah, that's tragic on its own, too. And it's like exactly what everyone's been saying. It's the toxicness of colonization never really ends.

Jarrah: I mean I think there, you know, not including the Wesley/Traveler subplot, there are some really, really nice moments in this episode and I think the dialogue between Picard and Ned Romero, who plays Anthwara, there's some really powerful moments there. I appreciate that they're probably more powerful for a white viewer thinking of this for the first time, than for an indigenous viewer. But still some nice lines. But what I thought was interesting is so, first of all basically they give away their planet to the Cardassians. And they say, "Okay, well, we just have to move these people and they should just be happy because we're going to find them a new planet." So, first of all, why didn't they find them a planet earlier than this? The people have been looking for 200 years.

Grace: Also, if they've got another planet readily available why not give that to the Cardassians?

Michelle: Yeah.

Shashank: Well, because the Cardassians are more, they are powerful, they have the—to put it bluntly, to me at least it seems, clearly, they are more important to them than these indigenous peoples.

Jarrah: 100 percent.

Grace: Yeesh, that's familiar.

Shashank: It's not unlike the Dakota Access Pipeline situation.

[Grace and Michelle audibly agree]

Shashank: Everybody in the world came out in support of them, but it went through anyway. And now the Dakota Access Pipeline is going through that land.

Michelle: Yeah, there almost seems like... that cliché of “the greater good” constantly going on in this episode with the higher-ups, the admiral being like, “Oh, this is for the greater good.” And it ends up basically coming down to: the citizenship of these people in the Federation, on this planet, is completely conditional.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Michelle: And it's also heartbreaking. And I know that it's supposed to be and so it comes off a little bit heavy handed, but the reliving of history.

Jarrah: Yeah, I mean it's kind of getting—I think this is a good example of how citizenship is not like a universal, neutral system, that this was a system that was imposed on indigenous North Americans, and then basically it's like, “Well, but you only get some of the benefits to start and only if you play ball. And then even in the 24th century you still only get the benefits if you play ball and that means being willing to be relocated, again.” And you know basically, at the end Picard tells Anthwara that by renouncing their status as Federation citizens, “Any future request you or your people make to Starfleet will go unanswered because you'll be in Cardassian jurisdiction.” So, basically, they're cool with things going totally sideways, after the fact. And that seems odd to me because certainly, they intervene on behalf of non-Federation citizens in other situations.

Grace: Yeah, this is definitely a case of, “Don't let the door hit your ass on the way out of our utopian society.”

Jarrah: Yeah, “Better not get sick, guys!”

Shashank: [sarcastically] I'm sure things will be peachy for the people who are going to be overtaken by a species who is well known for having their trials after the punishment has been executed. [chuckles]

Grace: "We'll just leave 'em there! It's gonna be fine!"

Jarrah: I do like the scenes with Picard and Gul Evek that are supposed to make you feel a bit better about the deal at the end, but it's difficult.

Grace: Yeah, but then all of Deep Space Nine happens and you're like, "Aw, jeez you just left them there?!"

[laughter]

Jarrah: Well, and you're also just like, "I really, really get the Maquis. If I didn't before, I get them now."

Shashank: Well, I have a theory about why the Federation does not involve themselves as much in wanting to help these people out. I think it's because, unlike Bajor, which is a strategic opening pointing into a wormhole that gives them a lot of economic and military benefits, this is just a land that is going to be a pawn in a bigger game for the Federation.

Jarrah: Mm hm.

Shashank: So, it shows a little bit the hypocrisy of the Federation that aligns itself and then shouts to the universe that, "We want peace and we want everyone to be accepted!" And yet, in this situation they're, like you said, okay with everything going sideways for these people because well, they don't get the bigger benefits like they do with something like Bajor.

Michelle: Yeah, that's such a good point and that kind of speaks to what you were saying earlier about Deep Space Nine being more realistic and I would say this episode of TNG is definitely more realistic on that, too.

Jarrah: Mm hm.

Shashank: Absolutely.

Jarrah: Okay, next one that I think we should probably talk a bit about is *The Drumhead* and Grace did you want to read our listener comment from Lori?

Grace: Absolutely. We've got a listener comment from Lori again here that says, "I think about *The Drumhead* a lot lately, given politics in the U.S. right now and the us versus them-ness of it all. While the Federation is supposed to be almost like utopia, it's a case of believing their own

propaganda. It's a galactic sort of nationalism that doesn't and can't serve all its citizens." Very accurate.

Jarrah: In case people don't remember *The Drumhead* episode, it's the one with Admiral Satie where there's basically a sort of McCarthy-esque court that is tracking down supposed Romulan conspirators on board the Enterprise, that ends up drawing in everyone who isn't okay with trampling on people's rights and liberties. And while not directly connected to immigration, it does sort of touch on the idea of citizenship, second class citizenship, and xenophobia which, unfortunately, is kind of inseparable from the discussion of immigration today and apparently in the future, in the Star Trek future.

Grace: Sadly.

Jarrah: So, Michelle did you want to talk a bit about this episode?

Michelle: Yeah. You know, it's really interesting how relevant this episode has stayed consistently throughout the years.

Grace: Yeah.

Michelle: It's really depressing. And then even more so, lately. I mentioned earlier, I was kind of digging through immigration policies in the United States over time, because I knew that certain nationalities and ethnicities were not allowed to emigrate until the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 that wasn't passed until 1968. And I think that's particularly relevant, specifically to me, because Iranians were not allowed to emigrate really until that time. There were some conditional aspects. But as I was looking back further into different immigration acts and how they've been passed, whenever I got to the 1920s it almost resembled verbatim what's happening right now in the U.S. with immigration. So, it's just this vicious cycle about every 100 years people here get really xenophobic. More so than usual.

Grace: Yeah.

Michelle. Yeah. So, yeah, I guess that's how want to open with that.

Jarrah: And I mean that same history basically in Canada. We have a reform of the immigration system around the same time of the 60s and 70s to what we have now which is called the Point System, where you get points for things like, you know whether you speak English or French, whether... what sort of profession you're in, the things that are supposedly objective criteria. It's still a problem.

Grace: Oh my god, there's citizenship brownie points?

Jarrah: [laughs] Well, immigration. Not even citizenship. You still have to immigrate and go through the process.

Grace: Holy crap. Geez.

Jarrah: And there's still problems. Just offhandedly I'll mention the fact that there's the number of embassies that process immigration applications in the UK is really, really high. And in India there's three. So, you have countries with way more population, way more demand for immigration, that they're basically cutting off the flow of immigrants from those countries that are not white, Western, colonial countries, that basically just are not providing enough services. So, we still have problems today. But before that we had the same systems as the U.S. where there were, if not deliberate bans on immigrants, then—there was a thing that the government apologized for that was a head tax on Chinese immigrants that they just kept raising and raising to try and make it less affordable for Chinese immigrants. There were restrictions on numbers of immigrants from India and other countries. And really ridiculous laws to try to make it harder for people to get to Canada. So, same deal. Not just the states.

Grace: Oh, boy! Everywhere's terrible!

Shashank: It's not difficult to connect more recent events like the U.S. government's Muslim ban. And this other administration rule that is going to go through which is if immigrants ever get on something like Social Security, or if they use food stamps, their citizenship or their green card privileges should be limited. It's a new rule that's going to be passed soon by the Trump administration. But it's difficult not to connect them to something like the plotlines in this episode where Satie brings out incidents in the past and says, "Oh because this happened all of these people are bad." Which is the logic that was used for the Muslim ban is, "Oh, because these attacks happen every Muslim person is a bad person." And even though that's half true, because not all Muslim nations are banned, particularly the ones that Trump has business relationships, are completely open and free for people to travel, which is a side point and I'm sorry for going on a tangent, but this episode has—

Grace: Tangents welcome here!

[laughter]

Shashank: This episode highlights how you can use, and governments do that today and it looks they'll be doing it in the future, they use incidents in the past, isolated incidents, to specify targeted individuals and say how you know, "Because this happened in this one place." Like when Satie brings up star date... I forget the actual star date, but she brings up the T'Pol incident and she says, "Hey, because that happened, all Romulans are banned because you're fighting for them, Picard. You're a traitor." And there is that pointing of fingers because of isolated incidents to basically reject an entire species, which is not unlike the things that are happening today with the U.S. government in particular.

Michelle: Yeah, and I would like to point out that a lot of the countries in the “Muslim ban” are countries that do not have economic relations with the United States and also most of them don't buy weapons from the United States. So, I just want to throw that out there.

Grace: Fair point to bring up!

Shashank: Also, none of the—I believe none of the terrorists that were involved in 9/11 were from those countries.

Grace: No.

Michelle: No, they were not from those countries.

Jarrah: Yeah, but the facts don't matter because they're stoking fear and you get the same thing in *The Drumhead* where it starts out like, “Oh, okay. Well, we suspect Simon Tarses because he lied about being part Romulan.” And that's already a little scary and I think Picard's advocating is really powerful. But then because Picard advocates for him, Picard comes under suspicion. And then I think the more egregious example is then when she basically turns on Worf, who she's been complimenting this entire time and is like, “Oh, because your father was an alleged Romulan conspirator,” even though they never had reason to believe that and just like, “Well, you're obviously suspect too.” So, it's like this whole—

Grace: [loud and dramatically] Everyone is suspect!

Jarrah: Yeah! And that's how you get Sikhs being attacked for wearing turbans because people are afraid of Muslims because of xenophobia after 9/11. You get this whole thing that the facts get totally lost, and it's all just how you look, and influences your right to safety and security and justice in even the country you might be a citizen of.

Michelle: Yeah and I even kind of touch that a little bit in the end of my essay, where I kind of talk about being misidentified and how that's also a different kind of danger. I think that a lot of minorities have that issue as well you know, just like with the Sikhs, for example... or I'm thinking of a pretty terrible example of where two Indian men were misidentified as Iranian in Kansas City and they were shot. So, that's just a whole other level of misidentification. And I think that it's terrifying in the episode, especially that... you know, Simon Tarses grew up as a human, basically. He just had this small part of his genetic code was Romulan and that alone made him suspicious. And I relate to that a lot, unfortunately, because I am half Iranian so, you know I have to kind of play that game with people and go, “Are they cool? Can I talk to them about this?” It's always on my mind.

Shashank: One thing of note also in this episode is the very impressive tactic that seems to have outlasted centuries which is that when somebody says something false and you point

them out and you say, "Hey, what you're saying is false." They accuse you of being a traitor or say, "You're not one of us." By making you fear that what you're pointing out is wrong they instill that insecurity. And that's how for generations people who were really willing to stand up for someone, are so scared of the consequences because they don't know what would be called out for them. That even knowing that something's wrong they're too afraid to come out and say it.

And that's what Satie does when she accuses the guard of treason and it made... it felt really right when at the end of the episode Picard said, "Vigilance, Mr. Worf. This is the price we have to continually pay." That people have to continue to be vigilant and no matter how many people yell out, "Fake news!" and "What you're saying is wrong!" and "You don't know how it's like!" and "Men's rights are being abused." That is the one that's utter danger. Now, when people say things like that, it's very important to be vigilant and point that out even if people accuse you of things.

Grace: Well said.

Jarrah: So, if there's nothing else on *The Drumhead* we can move on to another TNG courtroom episode which is *A Measure of a Man* and I think you wanted to talk about this episode, Shashank.

Shashank: Oh, yeah, *A Measure of a Man* is that episode that was the "A-ha!" moment for me when I was watching *The Next Generation*. I'll confess, I prefer *Deep Space Nine* to *The Next Generation* just because there is, A: a brown guy who has a lead on the shows that seemed really good to me and, B: because, like I said, the plotline seemed more real and they connected more with me. But when I saw *A Measure of a Man*, which is in season two, which doesn't have a whole lot of good episodes, I became so... obsessed is the wrong word. I became so fascinated with that episode. I actually sat down and wrote fanfiction for myself. In the episode in which—

Grace: Aww!

Shashank: I was in the chair that Data was in.

Grace: Oh wow!

Shashank: And there was an American on Picard's side and an American on Riker's side and they were both arguing about how if there is a kid in India who grew up and all he wanted to do with his life was live in America, and all that he thought was, "The greatest thing I'll ever do with my life is move to America and more than anything, more than breathing, I want to be American." If I have that kind of love for a country, for a culture, and something... an ideal that I want to be a part of, will I get to be that? Will a paper decide that? Will a scientific process decide that? Or does my word count for anything?

So, *A Measure of a Man* worked on so many levels, for me. It seemed like the really, really underrated metaphor for immigration. A lot of people talk about it as a metaphor for humanity and what it means to be human. On another level, it connected to me about what it means to love a country in which you'll always only be a guest or a visitor. And even if you love it so much that you embodied it in every way you will never be able to be born with it. Would you like me to summarize it? I'm sorry. [laughing]

[Grace laughs]

Jarrah: I think most people will be familiar, but it's the episode where it—is Data human or not?

Grace: [laughing] We bring this episode up a lot.

Shashank: Nice. I'm impressed. Count me on that [inaudible].

Jarrah: Yeah, that's really interesting. I don't think that's something that we thought about before. And just a random sort of related note on this episode: Melinda Snodgrass, the writer, was asked about how Data might become a citizen of the Federation and what her thoughts were around this episode and Data's citizenship rights as an android. And she said that it's possible that he could have become, or he could become, a citizen once his humanity is established based on Dr. Soong's citizenship, as that he would be seen as equivalent to an offspring of Dr. Soong. Or possibly that there could be a system where in someone like Data, or perhaps like Jaylah in *Star Trek Beyond*, could be able to apply for citizenship after a certain number of years of service in Starfleet. It's not something that *Star Trek* really deals with in terms of like, how does this whole thing actually work? How do you become a Federation citizen? What rights does that bestow on you? There's very, very, few actual details in the show.

Shashank: For an organization with crews brave enough to go down and stop a volcano from bursting open so these people who survive on a planet that they have no connection to, they really seem to like their paperwork about people who want to belong to the organization.

Grace: [laughing] It is funny how they choose which things to get super pedantic over.

[Shashank laughs]

Jarrah: Well, I mean sometimes it seems like captains can just hand out citizenship like, "Oh, hey, we rescued you off this planet and you seem to want to hang out with us. You seem cool. You're a citizen now."

Grace: They have five "You are a citizen now" cards that they're given at the start of every year.

[Shashank laughs]

Jarrah: Yeah, or maybe not. Maybe it just means you can hang out on Earth but you can't vote in our elections. Or maybe there are some restrictions. It's sort of implied that the Federation may work sort of like a European Union type situation, at least in terms of travel rights, that people can travel freely between Federation worlds, that you get to vote for the Federation government. We know that there is a Federation constitutional guarantee against self-incrimination. We know there's a guarantee protecting the rights of artists from the *Voyager* episode *Author, Author*. And there's a guarantee guaranteeing the right to counsel. So, we know that there is a framework of rights and responsibilities for citizens of the Federation.

And then in order to join the Federation it's sort of reinforced that members must—well, we know they have to have an advanced level of technology, political unity, and in the *Deep Space Nine* episode *Accession*, Sisko notes that Bajor would be rejected or would risk rejection if it took up caste-based discrimination in contravention of the Federation charter. And this comes up also in episodes like *Attached* and stuff about like why you weren't good enough to be members of the Federation. Are there any thoughts on that about what it means to be a Federation planet member and some of the sort of system around that?

Shashank: Okay, well, it is so... it's not just hypocritical, it's so confusing that if you are going to search out into the universe and say, "I'm going to accept everyone and anyone," wouldn't your Prime Directive really be, "We should be accepting of everyone. Because if we can't accept people, how can we expect them to accept us and make do with us and have a relationship with us when we are so selective?" One of my most confusing emotions with *Star Trek* is the way Federation are dealing... a lot of people in the show deal with the Maquis. The Maquis, what they want and the way they try to achieve it, that's quite, really questionable, but ultimately they want what the Federation want. They want this place that they think they have a right to and they're trying—they're doing their best to get there but in a very revolutionary, very yes radical way, a violent way, but still shouldn't the Federation at least hear them out? Shouldn't the Federation be on their side? Because in a weird way they're also trying to do what the Federation does in a lot of ways.

So, it's just there are so many hypocritical things in the show or the Federation that I actually credit the writers for because I think in a way, they want us to know these things. Maybe they're telling us, "Hey, this is the cost of running a bureaucracy if you want to go out in the universe. It's that we will pick and choose things. Yes, that's how it will work. We give you ideals of Picard, but really what we are doing is Garek-style diplomacy and you have to live with it."

Jarrah: Yeah, there's some interesting writing on... around sort of these issues and the Prime Directive and the way that our heroes explore the galaxy and approach possible first contacts, possible new Federation members. Daniel Leonard Bernardi has a book called *Star Trek and History: Race-ing Towards a White Future* and it sort of accuses *Star Trek*—and to be clear this is up to very early *Deep Space Nine*. But he's mostly talking about *Next Generation* saying that it ignores the white racist past through episodes like *Time's Arrow* and by forgetting about that

past it continues with the model of colonialism that has been the way that things are set up. And basically, they kind of go around lecturing to people about why you can't be members of the Federation or gracing people with the decision to let them be members of the Federation. And that isn't—there's not really like an objective set of criteria there. It's a value laden sort of system and it's often quite subjective.

Shashank: Good point.

Michelle: Yeah, I think that's the perfect example, with the colonization and the Federation. I think about that a lot when I'm watching and I've actually seen that be a common concern about Discovery, which I don't really agree with, but I kind of see where people are coming from and I think that's definitely true about older Star Trek. And I think that it was more... everything was well intentioned, for the most part. But I think that that was a consistent problem particularly in The Original Series and less intentionally in Next Generation.

Jarrah: I think the intention of the Prime Directive as non-interference: yeah, I agree that it was well intended, but I think it also is problematic when it's like, "Yeah, well, we're just not interfering with people who are less advanced." Instead of, "These people are different and have value that we can learn from." Not just like from an anthropological study.

Grace: Such a loaded concept.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Shashank: I really think the Prime Directive in the future should come with an asterisk so everybody's aware that there is a "conditions apply" clause. [laughter] And those conditions will be decided at the discretion of Starfleet.

Jarrah: [laughs] Yep.

Grace: They are due to change based on what needs to happen that week.

[laughter]

Jarrah: Yeah, absolutely. So, we have a couple more examples to throw in here. Did anyone want to hit on any of the other TNG episodes on the list?

Michelle: One that I looked at pretty closely was *Attached* and then the villainization of the Kes versus the Prytt and what a huge role propaganda played in propagating their poor relations. I don't know if anyone else has anything to add to that.

Jarrah: So, this is the episode where Picard and Crusher are kidnapped and psychically joined together and meanwhile Riker is trying to negotiate some diplomacy between these two factions

on a planet. One of them wants to join the Federation and the other one doesn't. But I can't actually remember how propaganda factors in so, could you refresh my memory a little?

Michelle: Yeah, so, I believe it—actually I can't remember which one of them came onto the Enterprise, but they had all these gadgets in a room and they were kind of driving Starfleet crazy with all their demands. And they had extreme paranoia towards the other—I don't know if we call them country or species. I think they look the same. Yeah, I don't know. It just, it seemed kind of perfect. Whenever you look at any culture that villainizes the other like it's extra paranoid and extra--.

Jarrah: Like hyper vigilant. They have very extreme surveillance techniques and they're constantly looking for proof that the other side is devious.

Michelle: Yeah. And then labeling everyone as a spy.

Jarrah: Yeah, that's really interesting because, yeah. I mean I picked this episode out because it shows an example of where they end up saying, "Basically, neither of you is good enough to be a member of the Federation. One of you is really isolationist and the other one is really paranoid and neither of you can join us." So. But that's another good point too about how internally to this planet they're deeply fearful and distrustful of one another and have this—you're right the one that's more techno—I can't recall which one it is either, the Kes or the Prytt, the technological ones, they're using all of these strategies of monitoring and surveillance to basically try and build a case against the ones that they just don't trust.

Michelle: Yeah, I can think of so many real-life examples. It's kind of bananas.

Shashank: I promise I'm not trying to knock on the Federation [Grace laughs] I still think it's the best organization in Star Trek, but you could actually accuse—in DS9's *Sanctuary*, the first episode we talked about—you could accuse the Bajoran government of both a little bit of isolationism and paranoia and yet the Federation, as such a western interest, they can't help but change their tunes to make sure they match it with the people they would least want to offend. There is a little bit of hypocrisy there for you between the franchises.

Michelle: Oh, yeah!

Jarrah: Plus, they're eager to get Bajor in the Federation as soon as possible because—especially once they figure out they're near the wormhole—and because strategic interests involving the Maquis. [Shashank laughing]

Grace: Suddenly there's just so many less loopholes to jump through on joining the Federation at that point.

[Jarrah laughs]

Shashank: Suddenly that asterisk just disappears. [laughing]

Grace: They get the simplified terms and services.

Jarrah: Yeah, but that's really interesting. So, I mean, while not an episode I did also put *Star Trek Insurrection* on this list because this deals with an attempted forced migration of a group of people that they think are pre-warp basically because Federation corruption.

Grace: That movie is so freaking weird.

Jarrah: Any thoughts on *Star Trek Insurrection*?

Grace: Why are they withholding all that "fountain of youth" planet from everyone else?

Jarrah: Everyone wants to stop time and see the flowers. Whatever that flower did.

Grace: There's like less than 200 people in that town! Why did they get an entire planet?
[laughing]

[Michelle laughs]

Shashank: And maybe if we all get some of that fountain of youth, we could get rid of our dandruff problem.

[laughter]

Grace: [sarcastic enthusiasm] Aw, you think so? Do you really think so?

Jarrah: Well... and then once they figure out that the people are actually highly advanced, theoretically, couldn't they open negotiations with them to share land on the planet? But I mean, I guess they do sort of talk about other options, but by this point skin stretchy man and that bad—

Grace: The guy who killed Mozart, don't you know?

Jarrah: Yeah, exactly. F. Murray Abraham as Ru'afo and the mean admiral. They're like, "We need to get this stuff, this planet stuff, faster. So, that's why we're going to build this collector that kills the whole planet." I mean, I think it's—this is one of the most clear examples of Federation corruption leading to direct violation of the Federation stated principles.

Grace: And one of the most convoluted plots of any of the movies.

Michelle: Yeah.

Jarrah: Also, includes surveillance. In this case, anthropological surveillance at the beginning like, "Let's see how advanced they really are." And yeah, it's weird.

Michelle: Yeah, the thing that kind of stood out to me about *Insurrection*, when I was reading about it and kind of like refreshing my memory about it, was basically the taking resources from another people and then claiming it for your own and then all the corruption that goes into doing that. Kind of like how someone already brought up Standing Rock. I was thinking of that.

Jarrah: I mean it again goes to this idea of, sort of, the ends justify the means, or for the greater good. I think it goes to that utilitarian concept where they're like, "Well, we can share this fountain of youth across the Federation and what's this 200 people care about it?" And it also connects back to *Journey's End* because I think Picard makes a little speech about how forced relocations are really awful in human history. So, yeah, it's kind of interesting.

The other concept it kind of brought to mind for me is—I don't know if you guys learned these concepts in your high school, but in Canadian social studies we learn about how the American approach to immigration has been The Melting Pot. There was literally a thing that the Ford company would do where they would have immigrant employees in the early days of the automobile, they would wear traditional—they would have these big party demonstrations and they would make a giant cardboard pot that said "Melting Pot" and they would have immigrants wear traditional clothing and walk into the melting pot and then come out wearing all the same Ford uniform or traditional, or not traditional "American" clothing. [Grace scoffs and groans in disgust] Like, this symbolic idea that, "You come here, you better learn our language and our way of doing things. There is one American way of doing things," and that's part of the contract.

And then we learn that, by contrast, this is not 100% true, that Canada's approach is a Mosaic, which is like putting all the different pieces together to make a pretty picture. And that we're supposedly more tolerant or accepting or celebrating of differences, which, theoretically, sounds a lot to me like what "Infinite Diversity in Infinite Combinations" would be. It just—in practice, we work a lot like America. So, in practice, not so much, but that was just a concept that occurred to me when I was watching some of these episodes, too, was that sort of link between the idea of a Mosaic form of immigration and IDIC.

Shashank: That brings to mind a question. I'd really like to hear all three of your opinions on it. If there was a government that operated like the Federation, do you think it would have existed and been successful in our world today, in both practice and in policy? If they really meant everything they said about IDIC and—.

Grace: I want to believe it could happen, if I can quote another sci-fi franchise.

Michelle: Yeah, I want to believe that it's true, but I don't know. The events of the past few years/week has gotten, not really as idealistic as I'd like to be, but. But the 7-year-old me that was watching Star Trek, for sure believes that, you know?

Shashank: I know not everybody believes it, but I still think the closest thing to Starfleet in the best and worst way possible is America. The way the constitution is written and the way the government functions. More broadly—its' the West and the NATO countries, the countries that belong to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization that practice a certain form of democracy and freedom of speech. So, I've always been curious and to answer that question, Jarrah, from earlier, our immigration system in India is "Run Away as Far as You Can from Cholera."

[collective laughter]

Jarrah: So, the United Federation of Planets Charter is supposed to be based on the UN Charter and we hear—there's one Voyager episode, I think you see part of it on a screen. It's basically just like an edited version of the UN charter. So, I think if we're considering the United Federation of Planets and the UN to be similar, I would hope it would go better. But I mean, I still think the UN is a valuable thing, its just got its issues, for sure. I mean, I also was trying to think about this in terms of like a federal system, like we have in Canada with the Federal Government of Provinces, or like you have in with states and the Federal Government. And I mean, I think the structure is possible. I just don't know. It's hard. I the way that our government systems work and our voting systems, especially when there's built-in voter suppression and then that always seems to be increasing. I think it would be very difficult to get to a government, from where we're at now, that would be able to manifest those ideals.

Shashank: You've definitely answered my question. Thank you.

Jarrah: All right. So, before we wrap up, I also had a couple Enterprise episodes I wanted to throw in there which also touched on xenophobia and actually go back to this idea of, "What does it mean to be a Federation citizen?" This is, you know, we're talking about the birth of the Federation, near the end of season four of Enterprise. And in response—so, they're starting to have these discussions on treaties between the Humans, the Vulcans, the Andorians and the Tellarites and people on Earth go a little bit... "a little caca," as Scott Bakula would say in another series. [laughs] And we end up with a bizarre sort of group of "humans first" fascists who oppose all aliens on Earth and groups of people that follow them, even though that seems extreme. So, any thoughts on these episodes near the end of season four of Enterprise? I'm talking specifically about *Demons* and *Terra Prime*, but there's also *Home* near the beginning of season four where Phlox is attacked on Earth for being Denobulan.

Michelle: Well, I was specifically thinking about *Home* whenever Phlox has that encounter at the bar. While it felt dangerous, I think then it had kind of like a "Star Trek edge" where you know nothing too terrible is going to happen to Phlox. So, that was kind of in my mind. And, again, I was thinking of that incident in Kansas City and kind of juxtaposing that, whenever I was

re-watching it. But yeah, it's disturbing, especially for the way that Earth is at that time. Just this rise of fascism suddenly, obviously feels very timely, even though this episode aired and—actually, I'm not sure when, maybe around 2004. It feels more timely than ever.

Jarrah: Yeah, absolutely. I think the part that bothers me about *Home* is the scene where after Phlox is assaulted, he's talking with Hoshi and basically, tells Hoshi she doesn't have a responsibility to—like, “Oh, you know, I understand why Humans would be upset, because they've just been attacked and you know, we just have to give them some time.” And I didn't like—you know Hoshi is really upset on his behalf and I think when people who have more power and more rights, and more rights as a citizen in a country, see people being oppressed and assaulted and attacked, that they should feel a responsibility to do what they can to stand up, to be vigilant. And I feel like Phlox kind of like just lets the humans off the hook in that episode. And it's kind of—by extension, the writers kind of are. So, that I think it's unfortunate.

Michelle: Yeah, that's a little disturbing. And it also kind of makes me think of just after 9/11 how not vocal people were about protecting others, after that.

Jarrah: Yeah, but I mean, we talk down on Enterprise a lot on this podcast. I will say that I actually really appreciate the *Demons* and *Terra Prime* arc for the sort of reasons that you were saying, Michelle, in terms of like they're very terrifying. They are—especially in the light of how things are going in the rise of fascism and right-wing populist movements that we're seeing in North America and Europe. There are some parts of these episodes that are really uncanny.

And I think what is powerful about it is it has still some nice Trek-y moments. There's, you know, Archer gives a monologue that you can actually kind of buy about the importance of working together and the need for the different alien groups not to break up this alliance. It doesn't validate the sort of “Humans only” nationalism that these extremist groups are promoting and instead shows that would be the wrong way forward. So, I like that. I think there are actually some pretty solid episodes of Enterprise.

Michelle: Yeah, and that's not to say that I am letting the writers off the hook, you know on the flub with Hoshi and some of the other things that happened in Enterprise in general. But it is nice to have those moments in there that are especially relevant in that. And I think that's what made season four so good.

Jarrah: I would agree. If anyone has any other episodes you want to raise or other thoughts about Federation citizenship, migration, refugees, xenophobia, any of that?

Shashank: Well, the one DS9 episode that comes to mind often, when I think about citizenship or immigration or how it's really easy to turn people against each other is *Homefront*. In *Homefront* just the inserting that little worm of an idea into peoples' heads that anybody can be from the Dominion and everybody learning about it. Not only do we see how successfully, or almost successfully, to use to politically turn people against each other, but the fact that things

happen to a point where someone as, you know, valiant as ironclad Sisko starts to suspect his father for a second. You know, that kind of human level speaks a lot to what you were talking about earlier with the 9/11 metaphors and how anything can be turned into using an incident, or using a certain emotion, as fuel to turn against each other. It's surprising how easy it is to do that and it's shameful how easy it is to do that too, but it just baffles me. And *Homefront* always seemed like a—like when I see that episode, I can't help but look at the way brown people are treated after 9/11 because everybody started suspecting everybody. It was just chaotic.

Michelle: Yeah, that's the perfect episode to illustrate that.

Jarrah: There's a lot of episodes. [laughs]

Grace: Yeah, and you always remember the best ones at the very end of recording.

Jarrah: Yeah, I mean, we didn't talk at all about *Up the Long Ladder*, guys.

Michelle: I actually have notes on that.

[laughter]

Jarrah: Okay! Awesome! I mean, I feel like that's maybe a good one to end on because we've covered a lot of really heavy topics and there are some thoughtful things to say about *Up the Long Ladder*, but it is not a heavy episode. This the one with the boat load of Irish stereotypes. [laughs]

Grace: Good lord. [laughs]

Michelle: Yeah, this was the first one I watched while re-watching these episodes. Yeah, the Irish stereotypes are really thick. [laughs] And a little hard to watch around the episode for that. And also, it's hard to get around Riker kind of being a creep in that episode.

Jarrah: Yeah. "Let's sleep with some refugees, now. That sounds good."

Grace: Aw, Riker! We want to like you, damn it.

Michelle: Yeah. So, my notes are kind of like about socioeconomic class and technology privilege. And you know, one stray thought is that only one kind of type of living is unsustainable. So, just being all technology based or just being all agriculture based is not sustainable, I think. And purposefully closing yourself off to diversity and variety of people can be really harmful, in the long run, as we see with the technologically based colonists where they're—just to remind everybody, they have cloned themselves so many times that their DNA is degrading and they also just turn their noses up at the agricultural people, so.

Grace: You know, just fun bunches all around in this episode.

Jarrah: Yeah, lest we forget that many early immigration restrictions in North America were targeted at Irish immigrants, so. I mean, in that way that's kind of appropriate.

Grace: Yes, many of whom had to leave Ireland because of a very specific agricultural practice that screwed them over.

Jarrah: Yeah. So, this episode does not really do that history any justice.

Grace: It's *The Bachelor* for gene pools.

[all laughing]

Michelle: I mean, I think there's something else, too, about assimilation. So, you know, while doing that population matchmaking, if they can assimilate to each other's cultures or not. I think that's kind of in there, too.

Jarrah: Yep, for sure. Awesome. Well, we are getting to the end of our time. Does anyone have any final thoughts?

Shashank: When you told me about recording this episode, I was under the assumption that, "Hey, you know, this is going to be a discussion about what it means to be a citizen." But what turned out to be a great surprise is that it actually turned into a discussion about what the problem with the system is, and that's not unlike the world we live in today. What people usually assume is if somebody is rejected or somebody cannot belong to a society that they want to be, that there is something wrong with that person. I think what we did with this episode today is prove over and over that there are so many outward factors that affect someone and keep someone from being where they really want to be. And if anything, it should help everyone reconsider if they do have negative stances about any kind of people or cultures that—you know, if you were thinking that somebody might not be good enough to be at a place, or belong to a system that they want to be a part of. Maybe the problem is not with them.

The problem is with the system that is not accepting enough, or not freethinking enough, or not wide enough to bring everyone under its umbrella. If there is a system out there that wants to bring prosperity, it will not do that while being isolationist and being closeted within itself. It'll just choke on its own, you know, "integrity" in time. But what we have seen, especially with citizens in *Star Trek* and citizens in the real world, is that the only way to grow is by accepting people. The only way to grow is by accepting differences and celebrating who we are and not trying to fight each other for what your idea of that other person is.

Michelle: Yeah, I was just kind of thinking about general paranoia, propaganda, xenophobia and what roles that plays in immigration and citizenship, and how those things are not only toxic for the people who are trying to make a home in a new place, but also for the people who are

already there. You can't have a fulfilling nice society whenever those are the main things that are always on people's minds.

Jarrah: Yeah, it's certainly not fun or fulfilling to be living in a state of fear and suspicion all the time and probably prevents from moving forward and forming productive partnerships and relationships and appreciating infinite diversity in infinite combinations. Awesome. Well, it was so great having both of you here. We're going to do our outros and this is where we ask you where people can find you elsewhere on the Interwebs or if there's anything else you're working on that you would like to plug at this point. So, I will start with you, Michelle.

Michelle: Yeah. You can find me on Twitter @mezamarian. I'm mostly just ranting to the void about various political issues, so. And then I am working on some, what they call "fabulous fiction." I'll be reading at the Writing Conference in March. So, that's a little ways away, but that's all I have on my plate right now.

Jarrah: And how about you Shashank?

Shashank: People can find me on @gutter_hero on Twitter, which is about the only social media I use. It's a great place if you want to read about more political tweets and comic book related tweets because there aren't enough of those going around on Twitter. And if you're really, really interested, I would appreciate it if you reached out and found the Tricorder Transmissions on which I cohost, PoliTreks, which is a political Star Trek podcast. We try to find common ground between real world politics and Star Trek, and we try to make light of the seriousness of it. And then I cohost WeeklyTrek, on which we cover the news that came in over the week in Star Trek, so Those are the two podcasts I do and I would appreciate it if you go listen to it.

Jarrah: Fabulous. And, Grace?

Grace: Find me on Twitter @BonecrusherJenk, and in your dreams.

Jarrah: And I'm Jarrah and you can find me on Twitter @JarrahPenguin. And if you would like to get in touch with our show you can find us on Facebook, [Facebook.com/womenatwarp](https://www.facebook.com/womenatwarp). You can find us on Twitter @womenatwarp and on Instagram @womenatwarp. We have our own website, [WomenAtWarp.com](https://www.WomenAtWarp.com) where you can comment. And you can email us at crew@womenatwarp.com. And another way that you can help out our podcast is by leaving a rating or review on Apple Podcasts or wherever you listen to your podcasts, to help other people find us. And for more from the Roddenberry Podcast Network visit podcasts.rodnenberry.com. Thanks so much for listening!

[WAW outro plays]

Voiceover: The Roddenberry Podcast Network, podcasts.rodnenberry.com.