

Women at Warp 95: Book Club - Articles of the Federation

SUE:

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 is Sue and thanks for tuning in. With me today are Jarrah.

JARRAH:

Greetings from the City of Lights: Ottawa, Ontario. *laughs*

SUE:

And Andi.

ANDI:

Hello.

SUE:

All right. So before we get into our main topic today we have a tiny bit of housekeeping to do first. As you know 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 1 dollar per month and get some awesome rewards from thanks on social media to silly watch-along commentaries. And just recently we sent out some stickers that were featured at Star Trek Las Vegas. So you can visit us at WWW.patreon.com/womenatwarp. You can also support us by leaving a rating or review on Apple podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts. Also we want to send out a congratulations to Caitlyn who was our giveaway winner for the Eagle Moss VoyagerXL edition. So Caitlyn by the time you hear this you should have already received an email and we hope to get that out to you as soon as possible.

JARRAH:

Yaaay! Now you can be like "There's coffee in that nebula!" as you're flying your mini Voyager.

SUE:

No but the best thing about this giveaway, that of course was our question "What was Janeway looking for in that nebula?", a lot of people wrote back "coffee" which was obviously the answer we were looking for. But several people also wrote back "But really omicron particles" because thats what powers the replicator. It just made me so happy.

JARRAH:

Yeah there were some pretty awesome creative answers so thanks everyone for entering.

SUE:

All right, so our main topic today is the book *Articles of the Federation* by Keith R.A. DeCanidio. And a lot of people talk about this Star Trek novel as if it's the West Wing in space.

ANDI:

It's accurate.

JARRAH:

Pretty much.

SUE:

Yeah. And in the acknowledgements he even says it was kind of pitched to *him* that way.

JARRAH:

Well that's cool. I think Sue, you suggested this be one of our choices for book club, and yeah it was a neat choice because it tells the story of the Federation President Nanietto Bacco. It's post-Nemesis and stuff is going down. And she has to weather sort of her first few months in office under a lot of really trying circumstances. And it's very different than a lot of other Star Trek novels, even though it's taking place in the established universe, because it's almost totally set in the Palais De Concorde and it has a massive cast of original characters. Most of them you don't need to know that well, they just kind of come in and have opinions and then leave. Kind of like *The West Wing*. Like "Oh there's a federation councilor who has opinions" and then "There's a journalist" but I think it mirrors that dynamic really well, of just like how busy things are and how many different massive issues you have to juggle at one time.

SUE:

Yeah, and this is as you said right after *Nemesis*. It's set in 23 A.D. which, I mean, the events of *Nemesis* seem to take place around 2378 2379? For Trek historians. So like basically, me and two other people. *laughs* And it covers the first-ish to first and a half-ish term of Baccos presidency. So we see her after the previous president had resigned after the end of the Reman issue. And the Dominion War.

JARRAH:

Yeah and I hadn't read there is the series of novels you know, *A Time To Stand*, *A Time To Heal*, *A Time To Be...*uh..StarTrek-y. I had not read that series *Sue laughs* but I had read the Titan series, and it does connect to-like a lot of it is about the politics on Romulus after *Nemesis* and after this deal that's brokered by Riker as captain of the Titan that the Klingons will be the protectorate of the Remans to sort of ensure the Romulans aren't further oppressing the Remans? And the sort of innate tensions of that situation.

SUE:

Yeah but I would say that that's all fairly well explained in this book. So and it's also placed fairly early in that shared continuity series that we've talked a little bit about before. So you can jump

into Articles of the Federation, I feel, without really missing much. Without having to read everything that came before.

JARRAH:

Yeah, I mean Andi did that. How do you feel it went?

ANDI:

For the first two chapters I was like "I don't know what's going on, like at all." It's just a lot of people talking about things that I don't really understand. Part of this is just *me* though because I very rarely remember people's names. So like when it comes to me and Star Trek I am the opposite of most Star Trek people in that most Trekkies are like, they know everything. They know all the details, they know all the names of the ships, they know all the episode names, they know all the even smallest characters, which by the way I think is amazing. I'm not throwing any shade at that. I think that's amazing. But for me it's very much like "That dude who did that thing." And so when it comes to something like this which has a lot of background to it and a lot of names I don't really remember the things that I'm like "Oh yeah that Shinzon guy. I think that was Tom Hardy." *Jarrah laughs* You know, stuff like that. So that was a little tough sometimes, especially in the beginning, but also I did like how often stuff that he was talking about, kind of connected to the rest of Star Trek, I thought it was cool. Like there was a lot of follow up on things that just kind of ended. Like B4 comes back.

JARRAH:

Maddix. Maddix's like totally switched sides.

ANDI:

That, I thought, was awesome. I love the idea of-because you know Measure Of A Man is my favorite episode that I have seen thus far of Star Trek. So like seeing Maddix come back and-the events of that episode had such an impact on him that it totally changed his world view. I think that's *amazing*. And stuff like that in books like this, I think it's really cool and what is basically the joy of Star Trek novels. In that, it's the continuation of stories that maybe you were not ready to let go of yet. And in that way, I mean, there's a reason why I read a lot of Fanfic. *Sue laughs* I love them. So that was really cool. And a lot of the stuff, like if you don't know who that person is or you missed that or whatever, it's okay. You just have to like kind of let it float by you. Like "Okay cool. I didn't quite get that, but yeah."

JARRAH:

Because the book starts with like a mom, and making her homeschooled daughter watch this Federation News Service show called Illuminating the City of Lights, and in between the scenes with the characters, the main characters, we see like various different groups of people across the various quadrants watching this show that's basically like a commentary show about the presidency and the government of the Palais De Concord. And the people watching it, you only need to know for that one scene, and the people in this show like usually about half of them like they just kind of drop in and out like Admiral Janeway was there at one point. That doesn't really

mean, like it's just kind of a nice little note. But it was interesting, because it was kind of more realistic that like, yeah these like people *do* change up on these shows. And you aren't going to have the same commentators, and you don't necessarily need to know like the background of the aide to former Ambassador what's-his-face. But, because it explains like their *opinions* and why they have those opinions you can understand what you need to know.

SUE:

Yeah, I thought that that was a interesting way to sort of ground this book in that all of our intermediary scenes were around the show. And it was *one* of the interesting ways to allude back to characters that we know already. We saw Spock very briefly and a few others. You mentioned Janeway and there are some admirals that we've seen very briefly on the show but there were also a ton of *new* characters which kind of, for me anyway, made it difficult to keep track of until I realized I didn't necessarily need to.

ANDI:

I think part of the reason why I'm good at that's because, by the way, my background is in government and politics and I have been working for politicians since I was a teenager. Like I started my first campaign when I was like 14. So I should tell you now that this is how politicians talk. 110 percent. This is how they talk.

SUE:

So, nailed it! *laughs*

ANDI:

They just move from person-like talking about person, to person, to opinion. And it's just-it's exactly like that. Like, when I hear politics nerds talk *now* this is what. Like half the time I don't know what they're talking about and I'm like "Whatever. That's fine. Yeah I don't remember that guy that worked for that campaign that one time ten years ago." Like but that's how it is. That's exactly what it's like. And that show they have is like Diane Rehm show, 100 percent.

JARRAH:

Yeah. I thought that the show was interesting. The one thing I wasn't 100 percent sure about is whether it was like, I thought it was a little bit odd in some of them that he had like not just admirals but like Starfleet commanders and stuff? Who were out serving on ships being on this show that's like a very political show? And I guess maybe in the future everone has like the right to their political opinions and to say that freely in the media and that's great. But it seemed like odd to me, as like, that something that wouldn't-that we'd have people that are out there serving and like active diplomatic missions that are throwing shade on the sitting president on TV.

SUE:

Fair point.

JARRAH:

But overall I most enjoyed the way that they showed the different audience members reacting to it in their different planets. And I liked the one with like, the college roommates who like one of them really wants to watch the show but otherwise they hate each other. Yeah It was very cute and like, kind of reminds you that, you know I mean, I also work in political realms and we talk about the bubble, the Ottawa bubble. And it can be really easy to get stuck in the bubble. But reminding you like, how things are actually landing or not, when no one is even appreciating where the people actually are, is important.

ANDI:

Part of the problem though, is that if you're looking at it from a plot perspective there really isn't much of one. It's like the day to day stuff but there is like-if you had to like, if somebody asked me what happens in this book I'd be like "Um. Stuff? I dunno." Like there's not really big plot points. There's a handful of like pieces that come back? So like you kind of get invested in these storylines but they're not-

SUE:

There's not *one* through line.

ANDI:

It's not very structured. It's very much like, these are *these* people and these are their lives.

JARRAH:

Like I was almost expecting there to be more of a climax on one of those pieces. Like particularly on the piece around the President who resigned and the uncovering of this like really pretty bad scandal in Starfleet where Starfleet forced a President's resignation. Which is horribly undemocratic and illegal because the President had done some really awful genocidal type stuff.

SUE:

Well Starfleet didn't. One particular person In Starfleet did.

JARRAH:

And then it's like, heavily implied that it was Section 31 and maybe if I had read those books I would know that all. *Sue laughs* Anyway I did really enjoy that plotline. It was like, that was one that had a lot of gravity to it and a lot of like really high stakes. But it felt like it- I was expecting it to be more of a big deal than it was. Or like there to be more of a climax around it. But it kind of resolved in similar ways to the other ones.

SUE:

I kept waiting for one of them to become the big central issue. Whether it was the First Contact storyline, or the Remans, or the scandal, or something else but none of them really did.

However we did see how they sort of built on each other and the reactions that the President and then the chief of staff had to them and what was going on.

JARRAH:

That one situation means like, because the Klingons are already mad about this one thing you *really* can't afford to make them mad over this other thing. Like, the interactions with issues.

ANDI:

Yeah I think that that was on purpose. It was meant to show the nuances of how certain issues and certain decisions can impact others. And you know how complicated it can get. So yeah I think that that was probably extremely deliberate.

SUE:

Yeah well, and the idea that one thing at a time isn't always an option.

ANDI:

It's never an option.

SUE:

But it also is one of the things that I saw paralleling for the West Wing. I mean those episodes of that TV show do generally have one central storyline. But if you binge watch it like I have been *Jarrah laughs* then it feels very much like you're watching a whole season.

JARRAH:

Well and some-I mean a lot of the pieces that I felt like directly related to West Wing for me were ones that were like side plots in West Wing. Like the guy who's trying really hard to write the birthday greeting for the boring agricultural secretary? Like, reminded me of the one where Leo gives Sam the task of writing a birthday greeting to prevent him from going on a date with Mallory. And the part where Nan Bacco has to- where she goes in and basically yells at the Deltans and the Carreans for not making their treaty. Reminded me of the one where like Bartlet needs to go in and yell at both sides in the truckers strike because he can't fix anything that day and that's one thing he can fix. There were definitely like, parts like that where those were not necessarily the main point of West Wing episodes. But it was effective and they're all like obviously things that would happen in a presidency in the future too.

SUE:

Yeah and there were some character traits Bacco had. And I-Keith has said in the past, I've heard him say, that he had based his character on his grandmother but there are also some characteristics in here that ring very clearly to me of President Bartlet on The West Wing. So I'm wondering if those were just shared or where certain things came from? Like the baseball obsession, the trivia. You know?

JARRAH:

One area that was distinctly different though is-that I liked, was that she doesn't like fancy language. Like the part where she's like "I usually change things. My speechwriter writes these like, things and I change things to sound like more because it's useless if the people can't understand what you're saying" and I'm like *hallelujah levels of enthusiastic* "Yes!" *Sue laughs* As a communications person, thank you! Yeah, but I mean I liked her. I thought she was a cool character to follow. She definitely-like the part where she lectures Spock. I almost like, my jaw dropped. I was like *fearful whisper* "You can't lecture Spock." *laughs*

ANDI:

I liked too that that's basically how she reacted too. She got out of there and she's like "I can't believe I just had to lecture Spock." *crew laughs* "Nobody told me that would be part of this job and that sucks." *laughs*

JARRAH:

Totally. Yeah I mean I thought that it was a neat depiction of like an older woman in leadership that I didn't fall into gender traps but you know wasn't just like a-she wasn't like a cookie cutter of a previous character.

SUE:

Yeah I also really liked Piñero.

JARRAH:

Yeah. The chief of staff, Esperanza. I mean God, in some ways it kind of stresses me out a little bit when I read about it like Esperanza and some of the other characters and like their burnout and their feeling of having no time for themselves and I'm like "Oh gosh I remember that."

SUE:

Yeah.

JARRAH:

That like, feeling like you could just-you're going to be hauled-on like 24/7 cause a crisis is always going to be unfolding. And I liked her conflict with-is it Shiv? Vulcan who's like the personal-the executive assistant for the president?

ANDI:

Sivak?

JARRAH:

Yeah. Sivak!

SUE:

Yes! There you go!

JARRAH:

So there were some funny interactions there.

ANDI:

Now see *that* character is way more like Sue on Veep than anyone on West Wing.

JARRAH:

Wasn't exactly Mrs. Landingham.

ANDI:

Yeah which-I'm pretty sure this book was written way before Veep. Sooo..

JARRAH:

Also so Jorel the press secretary is like nothing like C.J. Like there's obviously like-I mean there's *inspiration* but a lot of creativity and melding of traits to fit the context of the novel.

ANDI:

No, Jorel is Toby that disastrous time when he takes over *Jarrah laughs* doing the briefing.

SUE:

Yeah for sure.

JARRAH:

Yeah he's like totally cranky all the time.

ANDI:

I like too that they're like he had an assistant and he's like "Why won't he quit?" *crew laughs*

JARRAH:

Yeah that was funny.

SUE:

I did appreciate though, that they had the-who wasn't the deputy chief of staff? Say "You know what? this isn't working for me. I can't do it."

JARRAH:

"My husband is not happy. We had to move from a different planet."

SUE:

Yeah it was like 500 hours a week, she said. I mean I get it. I appreciate it. It felt very real in that way.

JARRAH:

Yeah totally. I really liked the Vulcan and the Klingon ambassadors. I thought that they both had like interesting background and the Vulcan ambassador was awesome and sassy and just like a good Vulcan should be. And I liked how Bacco like sort of checked herself and remembered that like sometimes it's easier to catch flies with honey rather than vinegar. And then the Klingon Ambassador is like sort of like, opposed to the chancellor. So he's not necessarily like working in the best interest but Bacco really wins him over through just basically being awesome and understanding how Klingons work.

SUE:

So I thought it was interesting reading through this how so many of the little, I guess we'll call them subplots side stories, had I guess where it gets very prescient. I'm thinking we're maybe going to be maybe a little bit political here, when I'm thinking specifically about the Remans approaching outpost 22 and the idea that they're going to seek asylum and the question in the government of "What are we going to do about it?" It felt incredibly timely to me.

JARRAH:

Yes so this is a situation where these like Remans are fleeing, they're under Klingon protection so they're worried about making the Klingons mad if they give them asylum. They're also worried about the Romulans being mad and they aren't really sure whether to trust the Remans because they used to work for that Tom Hardy dude.

ANDI:

Exactly! *Jarrah laughs* that Tom Hardy dude with the purple cape. Yeah I remember that! I understood that reference!

JARRAH:

With like.. shoulder ...weird balloon-y things.

ANDI:

To be honest that's the best thing about Nemesis.*Jarrah laughs* Soooo yeah.

JARRAH:

Yes and I kind of almost wanted it to be like, not end the way it did. Which is that the-so basically *laughs* I don't know if someone else can give this summary a better stab than me. But the Remans are heading towards the outpost. They're saying basically "We're going to take them in on the outpost and not *guarantee* them asylum but will like process their claims." And meanwhile the Klingons just found all these other worlds that are like kind of shitty, but not as shitty as Remus, so we all move them *there* and they can have their own planet and Spock thinks this is a good idea. Everyone kind of thinks this is a good idea. But then it looks like there's going to be some bigger problems and *Jarrah pauses. Sue laughs*I forget is it the Klingons are going to come and stop this? Or the Romulans are going to come?

SUE:

Well the Klingons view them as Nationals. Right? So the Khitommer accords would say that the federation has to turn them over if they seek asylum to the Klingon empire. And Baccos argument is "Well they're not nationals, they're under your protection. They're not citizens." So that's the fight with the Klingons. But then before an answer can be given the Remans broadcast Shinzon's warcry and kill themselves.

JARRAH:

Yeah. They do a suicide run into the outpost but they only kill like 31 Starfleet people and they kill all of themselves.

SUE:

I think it's 3 Starfleet people.

JARRAH:

Did I say 31? Section 31-

SUE:

Yeah.

JARRAH:

In my brain. *Sue laughs* But what I think is important is that even though in some ways like, it kind of gave a bit of an out to the conversation because everyone's like "Well I guess they were criminals and I guess we should just be glad more people didn't die." I think it's important that the bigger discussion was "Well should we have given them asylum sooner?"

SUE:

Yeah they spent a lot of time talking about what the right course of action was there, but not really giving any reasons other than fighting about the language in the Khitommer accord. Which I kind of.. maybe it is what is happening in our current political climate. *uncomfortable laugh* But I kind of wish there was a little bit more-

JARRAH:

Reminder? Like it felt like it could've been which should be for Starfleet at this point that like the right thing to do is to assume good faith and like investigate, but like make sure that people are safe first and foremost.

SUE:

Well, and have empathy.

JARRAH:

And like don't assume just because like, cause they're saying like "Well these people are also outcasts on their own world. So maybe they are desperate that they could be integrated." So that was interesting. I think that it also would have been good if they had been less faceless? But I mean that the whole thing about this book is like all the things that are happening are happening a little bit removed and it was almost like fascinating that you could have so many things occurring in like everywhere in the galaxy and they're constantly just like pinging back and forth to Paris. I did also really like that subplot at the end with the doctor who doesn't want to treat the Tzenkethi kid. That was super powerful. There's like a woman Starfleet doctor who is abducted by the Tzenkethi and basically like forced to treat only their wealthy patients, and treated really horribly, and then after the war was done instead of giving her back to the federation, she was a prisoner of war, they lied and said she was dead and her whole family went on without her. So like she's very angry and traumatized by this whole experience and then they've, the Tzenkethi, like sent a 2 year old boy to her and she's the only one who can save him by operating. And I thought it was really neat how like they all have this conversation with her and like "Look we understand. We don't want to force you to do this but we want you to make the right choice here." And yeah. I don't know, I just thought like all the nuance in *that* which even was like still a relatively small part of the book was really well done.

ANDI:

Although it had a really sad ending.

JARRAH:

It was really sad because she wasn't fast enough to decide and they weren't fast enough to push her or whatever and in the end the kid died anyway. And then she resigned her commission.

SUE:

They said it would take a whole-it would have been a whole month earlier. So I mean they didn't even send the kid with enough time. But there was so much emotion. And I don't know different threads happening and just that one story. I mean she said they kept her for four years for an additional two after they told the federation that she was dead and her whole family mourned her. Her husband remarried and then like her coming back ended that marriage because of the disruption. Her children, I think she said "hadn't spoken to her in 15 years." And then she makes this very difficult decision to perform this surgery and it failed anyway. And then she gets a commendation and resigns at the same time. And it's just, I want a whole book about *that*.

ANDI:

The thing that I like most about that storyline is that it has an unhappy ending. Because sometimes you can do everything right and still lose. But like sometimes you do make the right choices and you do the moral thing and you do everything that you're supposed to do and it's still a tragedy. And I thought that that was really cool. And important.

JARRAH:

I mean, there were some other moments like that too where they were kind of doing stuff they don't *love* to be doing. Like persuading people who have legitimate points to give up on their points. Like the, well I mean actually this wasn't so much a legitimate thing, with the whole Cardassian aide storyline and like comparing it to the Marshall Plan and how there's like people who are just like still holding really big grudges against Cardassians and Cardassia like the Betazoid guy. I thought that part was another really well done section.

SUE:

I also thought it was interesting the fight over the Committee placements and appointments and especially with the counselor from Bajor about-they've only been in the Federation for a few years but it's such a strategic part of the Federation territory being so close to Cardassia, being the entryway to the Gamma Quadrant. And just the debates that came from that in this book even though it was one of the *even* smaller sections.

ANDI:

And I'm-talking about the council I think one of the best moments that the president has is apologising. So there is a pretty minor storyline in that she finds out that the federation is still trading with a planet that has slavery and she's like "Why are we doing that? That's immoral, it's against everything the federation stands for." which is *all* true. And the problem wasn't that she was wrong. The problem is that she did not raise her concerns in a way that was respectful to the council. And they punished her for it. So that is a really common **laughs** problem that comes up. And the fact that she was like "You know what? I was wrong. This has damaged my relationship with the council. I'm going to apologize and try and fix it." was not something that happens in politics very often.

SUE:

And she won a lot of them back with that apology.

ANDI:

And just in general the idea of "You can be right but express it poorly" is-that's just true. I will say though that her apologizing and them accepting the apology kind of goes to-I don't know that-that would not happen. In modern day American democracy anyway and I don't know how everybody else's democracy is going but um **pauses** doesn't feel like it's going great and I don't think that that works in this society that we have right now. And wouldn't it be lovely if we got to a point where apparently the Federation is in this book?

SUE:

So that makes me wonder, because the federation has healthcare, the federation has food, nobody has to work if they don't want to. Yet there are still elected officials and representation. I mean *is it* a true democracy that the federation is in or has the system of government changed in some way?

JARRAH:

Well I mean, it seems like it's one representative per planet on the council and that there's-I may be wrong but there's only one governing house one, governing council.

SUE:

That's certainly what's implied for sure.

JARRAH:

Which is like, not the norm in really anywhere. Like even places like you know Canada and stuff where we have the unelected Senate. So like even disregarding *them* like it's odd to have just like straight representation regardless of population as your only form?

SUE:

It also is implied that the councillors are appointed actually, but the president is elected.

ANDI:

Except for at one point there is a councillor on that show who was like "It's stupid that the President is talking to constituents because the only real kind of feedback you need from constituents is if they don't want me back they can not re-elect me, and then that will tell me that my job is not-I was not doing a good job."

JARRAH:

Yeah and actually there's an election in the DS9 books that we read about the world of Andor, that follows an election on Federation Council. But it sort of implied that there's not usually a lot of turnover. Like the Vulcan's been there forever and stuff so it's maybe not usually super hotly contested from everywhere. And we also know there's planetary governors. Because that's where Nan Bacco came from.

ANDI:

That line he has actually reminds me of a saying that one of my old bosses used to have, which was because every once in a while in Illinois term limits will come up. And I've worked in Michigan too where there *is* term limits and pretty much everyone in government hated it because you would have an issue where all the institutional knowledge would turn over so you get people who didn't know what they were doing all at once. And so its this really rough turnover process. And then in Illinois we don't have term limits and the saying that my boss used to have was "We have term limits. They're called elections." So like they want people to leave office they have to un-elect them is kind of the argument there.

JARRAH:

In theory yes.

ANDI:

Yes it's definitely not a cut and dry issue. There are a lot of different, I guess, positions you could take that would be valid.

JARRAH:

I mean I don't know. I don't think we saw a lot of examples of like how well represented people are as individuals of the council, because we also don't have a clear understanding of what their jurisdiction is vs. planetary governors. But I mean it's certainly implied that there should be a democratic relationship with the people.

ANDI:

Yeah, I found that this book was very interesting in that I felt like it was simultaneously extremely cynical and extremely naive. Which was kind of funny to me because on the one hand it is extremely cynical in the sense that you have the Federation which is supposedly so progressive and then you have a president who arms a genocidal maniac, covers it up, allows I think it's like thousands of people to die, and then the military representative, because in this case Starfleet is military, effectively killing him. Like they literally kill him. Or at least it's extremely heavily implied that he is dead. And that is that's an issue. That's like *stuttering* that's like that's like-I mean here I am crying over the state of American democracy, at least as far as I know we've never taken a President out back and had him shot. *bitter laughter* So that is super cynical to me that even in a progressive utopia such as the Federation that we have this sort of thing happen is... wow that's.. that's heavy. And then also simultaneously I feel like it's extremely naive. Because throughout the book and the way that Keith DeCandido talks about it very much believes in public service. And he treats public service as like, a given. I guess that all politicians and people who seek power are doing so out of like an idea of public service which I just think is wrong in general. And then...I don't know. It's interesting. It's a weird mix. I find it very thought provoking.

JARRAH:

Yeah. I would say like, just given the ending, that like the overall tone is optimistic. And I mean there's a similar tension in the West Wing too and there is, I mean, I certainly remember watching it during the Bush two presidency. And you know having all the like, basically the people talking about like how much of an honor it is to serve at the pleasure of the president and being like "I don't understand that at all." *laughs* But I *do*. Like, I understand the myth I guess or the like..

SUE:

Idealism?

JARRAH:

Yeah. The symbolism and the power of what it should mean to be elected to the highest position. And having worked in politics I have seen a lot of people who *do* do it for the right reasons. And I do think like, I liked the part where she's giving the speech at the funeral when

she talks about how like this is the hardest job. Because, if you're in it for the right reasons especially, it's a really hard job. And there are always going to be people who are awful and not happy even if you're trying your best to do your job everyday.

SUE:

Well in that speech at the funeral, and it comes up again I think later in the book as well, she says something to the effect of if "If the Federation is still intact when you're done then you've done a good job" or maybe "you've done the job." I'm not sure if the good was there. How do you feel about that? Is that true?

ANDI:

I would say that that's pretty much that speech. I feel like it's coming straight from Keith DeCandido. I feel like that's very much his like thesis of this book essentially. And he actually posted on Twitter a thread that is extremely similar to that, and that there was a person who had read this book for Trek Book Club, if you're interested in joining the Trek Book Club you can catch them at @trekbookclub. And they actually read this book just before we did, and she brought up that at the very beginning he posts-he dedicates the book to all the former U.S. Presidents up until that point. I think it stops at Clinton.

SUE:

Uh. George two.

ANDI:

George W. Bush, okay. And there was a woman named Jen who kind of pushed back on that and was like "I don't believe in this idea of like the respect for the office" kind of thing. And if we're talking U.S. presidents she literally says like "There are men on this list who have literally committed genocide" you know? Yeah, the republic was still standing after that. But like, we still consider them to have done a good job you know? And he-props to him because you know sometimes people get hurt when it comes to criticism which I understand like you've worked really hard on this piece of art and you want people to love it. And also it feels like it's a direct criticism of you which sometimes it is and sometimes it's not. But like one of the things I really respect about how he handled this criticism, which is very valid, is that he was like "Your criticism is very valid. And here's my response." And he basically said this speech essentially, which was like "It's really hard. This job is really hard" and you know he goes through each of the Presidents and like his issues for it, but he says ultimately they still chose to serve their country in the most impressive manner possible. Even some of the really terrible ones did some good just as the good ones did bad. But more to the point they chose to do quite possibly the most difficult job in the world. And I don't know, I feel like that idea has a really obvious flaw at its foundation and that you're assuming that all of those presidents chose to serve in good faith. And I don't think that's true. Not even a little bit. So I don't know. I disagree with him on that.

JARRAH:

Yeah I mean, it's interesting. Like I want that to be the case. Like I want people-like kids who are interested in-like to be interested in politics and to see it as a vehicle for a way that you can make positive change in the world. But yeah, it is really hard to look at it that way and I mean and you don't want to be like overly rosy about the history. Especially because, like even though *pauses* yes absolutely a really hard job and all those leaders and like the leaders we're looking at in Canada, now examining their legacy. Like they did things that shaped the way our society lives today but also for the worse, and that it wasn't just because it was a hard job. Like they were picked because they, in some cases, were like totally willing to further the most common prejudices of the time. And they used their power to do that and in ways that have lasting impact on people still alive today.

ANDI:

And also he adds at the end that he would have added Barack Obama and Donald Trump to that list. And to me that's hilarious because, and I'll fully admit that I am probably farther to the left than most people and also more cynical than most when it comes to government, I don't think the U.S. has had a good president. I think we are on the list of "least terrible". *crew laughs* because a solid, what third of them were slave owners? Like Jenn pointed out that there are quite a few people with genocide in their resume there. So I guess I just find it disingenuous because if you're telling me that, even if you're a Trump supporter I don't know, like if you're telling me that you think Donald Trump ran for the presidency because he wanted to serve. *crew scoffs* No. No. No I'm sorry that's like-there are people who run for office specifically for power. And so that he can give power to certain friends, corporations, whatever you want to say and like they're not there for public service. They're there to steal essentially. And I have seen that at every level of government. There's a reason why there is so much corruption. People who award contracts, that will give government money to private corporations that gave them campaign contributions, or even worse like straight up bribes. And so, I don't know. I just find that kind of maybe not as nuanced as I would like. But I do really respect how he handled that and I do really respect that point of view because I feel like that point of view is how it should be. And that point of view is that ideal that we would-we need to get to. Like that is the goal right there. I just don't think we're there yet and I don't think even in his book they're there yet.

SUE:

Well it reminds me, I mean this is much lighter than the conversation we just had, but it reminds me again of the West Wing and the young blond Republican-

ANDI:

Ainsley!

SUE:

That they bring in. Yes, that's her name. I couldn't remember it. To the the law offices of the president and one of the things she says is "You know I've always wanted to serve the president- to serve at the pleasure of the president, but I never thought it would be *this*

president.” And I I think that we have these situations where we're at least in the US sort of like brought up to be in awe of the Office of the president. But as we learn more and more about the people who have held it, there's just this cognitive dissonance that comes along with it.

ANDI:

One of the things that's been most **pause** saddening about where I started, when I started my I guess you could call it political career because I will never run for office but public service, whatever you want to call it is. I genuinely believed this for the longest time. This is what I wanted it to be. This is why I wanted this. And the more that I learned about the people that inspired me and the more that I learned about the process and the more that I learned about what goes on behind the scenes, the more I realize that like there are bad people who are good politicians. So like, you have people that are voting the right way and for the right policies but they're horrible human beings, you have good people that are bad politicians you know, like bad at the game but like a genuinely good person. And then you put the number one thing that I've learned about politicians is you should never trust them. Even good ones. Like, there are political figures that I consider family, like I think they're good people and I love them. I would never like-to say that you should never trust politicians because the number one thing that they will always do, no matter who they are, is they will always look at decision and think “How is this good for me?” And the reason that is is because that is the nature of who you have to be to get into politics. It's like, if you want to succeed. That's what happens. So it's really frustrating because **pause** you should *a/ways* question them. It doesn't matter who it is and if they're on your side, “your side” I'm using air quotes here, or not. Like you *a/ways* have to question them and you always have to keep their feet to the fire and you always have to re-evaluate “Is this a person I can trust in my best interests?” over and over and over again and the moment you stop doing that is the moment that you've stopped being a good citizen because you gotta keep them in their place. They work for you. You know? And I feel like a part of the problem that we are in right now is that people just started voting for a party and then after that stopped questioning who was in office. I don't know. It's really tough. The whole thing is really tough.

JARRAH:

Yeah. I've certainly had some “Don't, you know, never meet your heroes” moments in politics where you just are really disappointed. I do know some politicians who have surprised me by their depth of their integrity. But I think a healthy degree of skepticism. And as long as it's not to the point that it disengages you from the process entirely. Like it should make people more active. I think, unfortunately sometimes when it does it just make people be like “Oh they're all the same. Why should I even vote? Why should he even turn up?”

ANDI:

And I should be clear that I have worked for good politicians. They do exist. We just always *a/ways* question them. That's all I'm saying like, at no point should you treat them as like all encompassing power that you must always respect. Because to me, the office of the president, I only respect it as far as I respect the person who is in that office at that moment. You know there's a line in Firefly where they said that “anybody who's ever had a statue made of them is

some sort of some sort of son of a bitch in some way.” This is true. Like the more you learn about people that are held up to be heroes when it comes to history not always the case. I mean look, if we're bringing it back to this book, look at how hard they're working to keep this guy who was completely corrupt as a part of this grand tradition of federation president. You know? They rehabilitate his image specifically because they don't want people to distrust presidents of the Federation and to hold them up as, you know, good people always. And I get that impulse but I don't know. I'm very much of the mind that you should be like “Yeah this dude sucked, here's why. Here's why we shouldn't elect someone like him later.”

JARRAH:

So we actually are going to be interviewing Keith DeCandido, and we're going to be sharing a little bit of that interview with you here on the show. But then the rest of it will be available for our patrons on Patreon. So now might be a good time to segue into the interview.

Comm sound

SUE:

So, hi Keith! Thanks for joining us.

KEITH:

My pleasure! Good to be here.

SUE:

We're super excited to talk to you about Articles of the Federation, and I know you've said in the past both to me and to others that Nan Bacco was inspired by your grandmother?

KEITH:

My great grandmother.

SUE:

Your great grandmother. Can you tell us a little bit more about that?

KEITH:

My great grandmother, her name was Gratzia Silverio. I called her Nana and her married last name was T'bacco which is where Nan Bacco comes from, Nana. And she came to this country from Italy in the early part of the 20th century along with large numbers of other Italians and she came into Philadelphia and moved out to rural western Pennsylvania. It was limestone country out there, so there was work in the limestone mines and she proceeded to have ten kids and the oldest of them was my grandmother. And as a result of this became the matriarch of this gigunda family. I could not possibly count all my cousins, let's put it that way. *crew laughs* And don't even get me started on the second cousins. It's pretty ridiculous. So-but the amazing thing to me in particular is that all 10 of her children grew up to be genuinely good nice people and and they all loved her very much. And she was just amazing. You know, taking care of all these

people living in this *itty bitty* house in which she raised 10 kids. And she always was, you know, in charge. Kind o. in charge of everything and always, you know, everybody deferred to her and pretty much everything. And I could totally see her running the Federation without any problem. *crew laughs* Having said that, while Nana was the primary inspiration there were others who kind of got mixed in the stew there to form President Bacco. Two women from Texas were very much an influence on her. One was a politician Ann Richards, who was governor of Texas for a while, the other was a political writer named Molly Ivans. They were-she was the one who first referred to George W. Bush as "Shrub" *Jarrah laughs* back when he was governor of Texas. And there is one other influence that's kind of obvious. Anybody who's read the book or any other books that she's in, one of the influences on the character President Bacco was in fact President Jed Bartlet from *The West Wing*.

JARRAH:
Yes!

KEITH:
There's a lot of ol' Jed in there. So yeah, that's that's pretty much.

SUE:
I was assuming that's where the love of trivia and the sports all came from.

KEITH:
Well that's-Bartlet was never much of a baseball fan. That was really Toby's thing.

SUE:
It was Notre Dame really. *Jarrah laughs*

KEITH:
But having said that, yeah. The love of obscure trivia and of being spectacularly snotty to the staff pretty much was Bartlet. Although there was a little of-that was my great grandmother too.

JARRAH:
Yeah we had several questions from listeners about the *West Wing* inspirations, including from Barnabus and from Jacob. And wondering also if there were other characters where you were drawing inspiration from *West Wing* or just you know, where else you were drawing inspiration from when you were creating this cast of many many original characters in addition to the ones we are familiar with.

KEITH:
Some of them-there was a little bit of inspir-there was certainly a certain amount of Toby in the character Fred McDougan and and the relationship between Bacco and Esperanza Pineira was very much like a relationship between Bartlett and Leo McGarry. Having said that, it's also very much the relationship that you see a lot in *Star Trek* between the captain character and the first

officer character. Because it's the same relationship. *laughs* You know? That was part of the appeal of doing this to me, was that that kind of leader and second in command relationship is something that's always been very integral to Star Trek. From you know from Kirk and Spock all the way forward. Even in a bizarre sort of way with Burnham and Tilly on Discovery, that sort of mentor-mentee or you know as Bartlet put it in one episode he's actually referring to Josh about this but it but it applies here too. One of them wants to be *the guy* and the other one is the guy *the guy* depends on. *Jarrah laughs* And you know Bacco is very much *the guy*, and the guy has always been a non gender specific term in my family, so yeah. But Bacco is the guy and Piñero is the guy she depends on. So yeah. The one who sort of makes things happen, you know, for her. Some of the subplots in Articles were definitely inspired by the West Wing, some more than others. The original impetus behind the book was to do a Star Trek version of The West Wing. That's how the whole thing started. Was John Ordovery came up to me one day and said "Hey I want you to do a Star Trek version of The West Wing." That was exactly how he said it. And then it sort of languished for a while, and actually the actual editor of the project, when it happened, was Marco Palmieri after John left Simon and Schuster. We'd still been talking about it and wanted to do it and Marco really helped focus the book a little better because John with John it never got really past the concept. And Marco when I sat down and really worked out what the story would be, or more accurately what the *stories* would be. Part of the point of it was to-there isn't one single overarching plot so much as it was a whole bunch of little plots. Which is the way politics works. There's a whole bunch of little problems to deal with, some bigger than others. One of the things Marco wanted which I was completely on board with was to show the second half of a first contact situation. We always see the first half of that on Star Trek. We see the part where the ship contacts the species and becomes friends with them and whatnot. Then what happens? You know, Enterprise makes the first contact and then they sail off to the next planet. What happens after that? How do they start the process of becoming possibly members of the federation or at least being integrated into it or becoming protectors of the federation or whatever?

SUE:

You also had to fit this into the, I guess, the early stages of the shared continuity timeline. The post-Nemesis books.

KEITH:

We were pretty late in at that point. *laughs* That already started a few years earlier. But yeah part of it was to be integrated with that, but that was that was always a feature of it. We always-at that point we have pretty much settled into all the 24th century stuff being connected to each other. Particularly once it was clear that Star Trek Nemesis was going to be the last NexGen movie. We weren't bound by anything at that point. The onscreen stuff was going to be focusing exclusively on the 22nd century with Enterprise at that point, and then later the movies on the twenty third century. So we pretty much were given carte blanche to do whatever the heck we wanted with the 24 century. So *laughs* we had pretty much decided at that point that everything was going to be interconnected. And part of what I was working with was what Andy Mangles and Mike Martin had done in the first two Titan Books. And that one in particular

because that affected the Romulans. Because I wanted to play with the Romulans. That was-I figured that would be one of the big lines throughout the whole thing because Nemesis, in Nemesis you have the entire Romulan Senate turned to pixie dust and then the guy who turned them into pixie dust got killed. So there was a serious power vacuum there and that's something that would have a major effect on everybody.

JARRAH:

Yeah absolutely.

KEITH:

And that would be something we have to be dealt with. So not to mention because of the crisis in *A Time To Kill* and *A Time To Heal*, which were two of the pre-Nemesis books that David Mack wrote, and that was something that was going to have some fallout too. And I wanted to deal with that.

Comm chirp

SUE:

So again, if you'd like to hear more of our interview with Keith DeCandido you can head over to patreon.com/womenatwarp. And that about wraps it up for us today. Jarrah, where can people find you on the interwebs?

JARRAH:

You can find me on Twitter @J-A-R-R-A-H-Penguin.

SUE:

And Andi?

ANDI:

The easiest place right now is on Twitter. @firsttimetrek.

SUE:

And I'm Sue, you can find me on Twitter @spaltor that's S-P-A-L-T-O-R. If you'd like to reach the show you can find us on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook @womenatwarp. Check out our blog and show notes at WomenatWarp.com or send us an e-mail to crew@WomenatWarp.com. And for more from the Roddenberry podcast network visit podcast.Roddenberry.com. Thanks so much for joining us.