

Women at Warp Episode 119: Warrior Women of Star Trek (STLV 2019)

REKHA:

Hi this is Rekha Sharma and you're listening to Women At Warp.

Intro music

GRACE:

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 Grace and thanks for tuning in. With us this week we have Sue.

SUE:

Hey there.

GRACE:

and we've got Jarrah.

JARRAH:

battle cry

GRACE:

Jarrah's feeling a little aggro.

JARRAH:

That was my warrior voice, so yeah.

GRACE:

Maybe talking it out will help you calm it down a little. *Sue laughs*

JARRAH:

I just have so much need to punch bad guys.

GRACE:

Don't we all, right? I mean, that sounds like you're a real warrior you know?

JARRAH:

Yeah.

GRACE:

I'm pretty sure that won't come up in this episode but, you know, thank you for putting that out into the universe.

JARRAH:
OK.

SUE:
deadpan Wow. *all laugh*

GRACE:
So. Before we get to our main topic we have a little bit of housekeeping to do first. 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 free range gluten free commentaries lovingly crafted in the Swiss Alps by us. *Sue laughs* Visit www.patreon.com/womenatwarp. You can also support us by leaving a rating or review on Apple podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts from. Now do we have any additional housekeeping for this episode?

SUE:
Well Dragon Con is coming up in about a week and a half.

GRACE:
amazed Oh wow. That's convention for Dragons, right?

SUE:
Exactly. *laughs*

GRACE:
whispering Oh my gosh! How do they fit in a hotel?!

SUE:
Very carefully.

JARRAH:
Imagine the fire insurance for that event.

SUE:
Yeah. *laughs* But seriously, if you are headed to Atlanta for Dragon Con check out our blog where I have posted my schedule for the weekend. I'm breaking my record and doing 20 panels.

GRACE:
genuinely impressed Mother of corn! *laughs*

SUE:
I'm just not going to sleep. It'll be fine. *laughs* But yeah, my schedule on our blog will tell you where you can find me. And come say hi, I'd love to meet you.

JARRAH:

Whew I thought recovering from Vegas was hard. *Sue laughs*

GRACE:

Recovering from dragons, hoo boy.

SUE:

I took an extra day off work after Dragon con.

GRACE:

Probably a good call. Probably. anyway, moving on to our main topic for this week. I don't know if you could tell through our incredibly subtle allusion-alluding earlier, but we're going to talk about warrior women of Star Trek. Or we're gonna *have* talked about it *last week*. Exactly a week from- a week previously to the day we're recording this, there was a panel at Star Trek Las Vegas. The panel leader was Amy Imhoff, our panelists were Erin Macdonald, Michele Specht, Rekha Sharma, and then this incredible one that came out of nowhere and completely blew the house down. I mean, that last one that really got people up on their feet freaking out like **chanting** "USA! USA!"

JARRAH:

Yeah. Who was that Grace Moore character?

GRACE:

That was me.

JARRAH:

She looked so stylish.

GRACE:

mock smug I know, right?

SUE:

Always.

GRACE:

normal Yeah. This was my panel. I was stoked, and freaked out about it, and-

JARRAH:

On the freakin mainstage!

GRACE:

This was my first time on the main stage, so that alone was worth freaking out over for me. And to say nothing of the fact that I got to do this panel with these *awesome* awesome people. That

was just blowing my mind. The fact that I was even backstage with them before we started. And then Rekha Sharma came on! Oh my god! I'm like "Ahhh! Don't freak out! Don't freak out!" I think I maintained my cool pretty well though.

JARRAH:

You did, and it was a great panel. I really enjoyed the discussion. It ranged over a lot of different series and characters and, you know, different discussions on like "what does it mean to be a warrior?" does not always mean being violent. It does not always mean being like stereotypically masculine. And yeah, there was just some really interesting discussion. Also, it occurs to me that last week we aired our interview with Rekha Sharma and she references a bit of this panel. So if you were feeling like you wanted more background on that interview, then definitely take a listen to this.

GRACE:

That was your sneak peek that Rekha threw in there. Now anyway, before Jarrah starts getting really, you know, warrior enraged and goes into berserker mode- look at her go. Look at it.

JARRAH:

starts roaring

GRACE:

She's starting to go for it! Oh, we better head air the panel! We better air the panel!

Transition f/x

ANNOUNCER:

I am warrior woman, hear me roar! Right? There's nothing better than the badass warrior women of Star Trek. And hell hath no fury like a warrior woman scorned, I got to tell you. So we have a wonderful presentation put together. Here comes the moderator of this presentation, she's going to introduce you to the guests. Let's have a nice warm welcome for Amy Imhoff, everybody. Let's have a nice Hi for Amy!

applause/introductory music begins

AMY:

Hi everybody! It's awesome, we're back in Vegas and bringing some awesome content to you this weekend. My first panel up I'm doing the Warrior Women of Star Trek! Woo! Got some really great ladies that are coming out to talk to you. First up we have Dr. Erin Macdonald. Next up from Women At Warp we have Grace Moore. Following her, from Star Trek Continues Michele Specht. And we will have a late addition to the panel, Rekha Sharma will be joining us momentarily. She is on her way as we speak. We're going to do a little chat before she gets here. Thank you very much to the band. *band finishes* Ooh, you guys are hot! How is everyone doing at this early panel hour? *crowd cheers* We're good?

GRACE:

We awake yet?

AMY:

We've had our coffee? We've stood in the Starbucks line, right? How are you guys doing?

ERIN:

Doing great, yeah. Got in last night. So still getting oriented. But it's my second year back, so I'm thrilled to be here, and this is a blast. I love it. Happy *happy* place.

AMY:

Well, to kick ourselves off we're gonna talk just a little bit about who our personal favorite women warriors are before we get into the series, into our in-depth discussion. We have about 45 minutes today, so we're going to take some questions at the end. But we're gonna go through a pretty exhaustive list of these fabulous ladies that have been filling the Star Trek lore for so many years. So why don't we start with Michele, why don't you talk about-

MICHELE:

Oh! Hi!

AMY:

-talk about your favorite warrior woman? We can kind of get to know your vibe a little.

MICHELE:

OK, the obvious and immediate answer that we could do, growing up the way that I did on the shows that I did, I would say the Duras sisters. *But* I'm going to go with like, the kind of warrior woman I would want to be, which is Kira. Right? **cheers from audience** Come on! Yes! I'm even getting fit pumps! That's amazing! Yes, Kira. She's incredible. And you knew where her heart was. She was unabashedly passionate, unabashedly fierce. But you got to see her kind of personal process as well. Her development as a character as she evolved beyond that. When we're first introduced to her, that's what she is. Right? That's how she's defined. And through the course of those seven seasons, she becomes so much richer than that. So much richer. So yeah. Kira!

AMY:

And actually Kira, if you look at the women of all of Trek, especially the main series regulars, Kira is seen as having the most feminist agency alongside Captain Janeway. And Kira actually has a little bit more of a success, in that she's able to have successful healthy romantic relationships. You know, Janeway's were more limited obviously by her circumstances. But I think-

GRACE:

And by the holodeck.

AMY:

And by the holodeck, I know. But yeah.

ERIN:

She has excellent taste. *Michelle laughs*

AMY:

But having Kira's name come up first in this panel, it just feels very natural.

ERIN:

Yeah, I think one thing that's interesting is in the Deep Space Nine documentary Nana talked about how she really enjoyed playing Kira because she felt like a lot of the lines could have been written for a man or a woman. They were very sort of gender neutral, which gave her a lot of flexibility to play with the character as she sort of felt the instincts took over. That they weren't written for a woman or for an overly masculine character. So I always thought that was really interesting.

AMY:

So Grace, how about you? Who is your top lady warrior?

GRACE:

Well, I always think Kira first. But the one I want to talk about is Tasha Yar.

AMY:

Yay! I would just like to say Denise was hopefully going to be able to be on this panel, but she's filming, so we miss her.

GRACE:

Well the good thing is that now I can talk about her character without- *Michelle laughs*

AMY:

Without her-

GRACE:

Without matching these two here, and just being like *frightened noise*. Anyway Tasha didn't get a fair shake I don't think. I love the character. I love that when we first get to know her we know her as someone who has come out of some incredibly dark places, and who has worked her way out of it just by the skin of her teeth and by her own grit and determination. And I think there's a whole lot to be said about how- what am I trying to say here? I don't want to say more butch, but more sort of masculine traisted women really don't get a fair shake in terms of representation I don't feel like? *crowd member yells something* Yeah, yeah. Anyway I don't think she really got the fair shake she deserved in terms of, we know she went through some

stuff. Let's see her go through some more because she can handle it man. She can handle herself.

ERIN:

Well, and I think her character is kind of timeless because I gave *laughs* I had a friend who'd never seen Star Trek ever. *Any* Star Trek. And she was like "I feel like I need to get into it" like, "Yeah well, you're coming to the right person." And I had her start- she watched Voyager and then she started TNG, the first text she sends me she's like "OMG Tasha Yar is amazing! I love her!" and I'm like "Uh-oh" *Michele laughs*

GRACE:

I got bad news for you buddy. Bad news.

ERIN:

laughs "Not saying anything, but there's gonna be tears." *all laugh*

GRACE:

whispers always.

AMY:

And Erin, who is your top warrior?

ERIN:

I got to be as stereotypical as I can be, and just I- Janeway. Janeway is my-

MICHELE:

Yaaay!

ERIN:

- my one true love, lady, icon. Everything I do and be is shaped around trying to be more like Janeway. *laughs*

AMY:

I mean, that's the ultimate answer right there.

ERIN:

I just- the thing I really like is how much they played up- being a scientist myself, but the fact that she came from being a science officer, to being a captain, and how much of- some of the consternation and some possibly heated debates *laughs* I've had over the years with people is painful. But she's driven by-

GRACE:

There's no halfway with a debate about Janeway.

ERIN:

laughs No, there's not. But I think she's driven by curiosity. She's a scientist by nature, and she allows, you know- she takes control. I also have always really liked how she has had to play that line of being the leader, being the sort of more matronly character. Her crew is obviously freaked out and doesn't have a clear path forward. So she has *so many* roles she has to be. But then in that sense too she doesn't have anyone she can turn to. And they talk to that a lot, about when it comes to the relationships. When she's mortified that she like has a holodeck boyfriend *all laugh* and the doctors just like- I think it was a doctor just said "Who else would you date? Like, you can't, you know, you should allow yourself this. You can't be alone the whole time. So-"

GRACE:

"Just commit to your OC. He'll really bring you what you need personally." *all laugh*

ERIN:

Yeah exactly.

MICHELE:

I do think it's interesting as well, that the development of what a female captain is supposed to be. You really saw that on screen. You saw the show runners and writers kind of struggling with it. You saw Kate struggling with it. And you saw her kind of come out into what she wanted Janeway to be. I think it was like the second season pretty much? At first they were kind of playing with her, like how many hairstyles does one woman need?

AMY:

Oh, I think we have gotten the signal that there's somebody else about to join us.

GRACE:

excited Is it Mr. Rogers? *all laugh*

AMY:

No. I do believe that Rekah Sharma is here! *crowd cheers* Come on out!

REKHA:

Hi! So sorry I'm late.

AMY:

No, it's all right. *aws from panel* Welcome.

REKHA:

I have to hug you.

AMY:
You have to hug everybody.

MICHELE:
The tiniest warrior woman in the galaxy.

AMY:
Thank you so much-

REKHA:
strongman voice Small but mighty.

MICHELE:
Tiny but mighty!

AMY:
Well, we were just saying who our favorite warrior women of Trek are.

REKHA:
Oh my gosh.

GRACE:
Do you have a bias there?

REKHA:
Keep talking, keep talking. Let me- let me-

AMY:
We're gonna we're going to throw it to Discovery in just a minute. So you're right on time.

REKHA:
goofy voice Okay.

ERIN:
We have- so far we've had Kira, Tasha Yar, and Janeway. So that's where we're at. I don't know if you want to throw your hat in that ring. *Rekha laughs*

MICHELE:
Say yourself, come on!

REKHA:

singsong Landry! *crowd cheers*

MICHELE:

Yeah!

AMY:

I'll say mine. You know, obviously all of the ladies that we've mentioned so far are really up there for me, especially Janeway because she's my captain, but I really love Jadzia Dax. *crowd cheers* And her excellent Klingon tradition that she's been steeped in because of, you know, because of the symbiote. And I just- I love the way Terry approached playing her, and the way that they, you know, I was very sad that she didn't go out and have a warrior's death. So I really wanted her to have her, you know, for her to die in battle would have been really fantastic. But I love her, and I love that she has that rapport with so many people, and that, you know, she got married in a traditional Klingon way and she married a Klingon. And it was- you know she shouldn't be defined just by her relationship with Worf, because before that she said her own- she brought all of her own interests to that. That wasn't something that she just got into because her man happened to be into it.

ERIN:

I think one of the things that I always- where I really saw, I guess myself kind of, in Dax, in Jadzia Dax was when she's playing Dabo with all the Ferengi. And she's like owning them.

AMY:

She's the kind of person who's like *girly voice* "I guess I'll play a little pool, you know-

GRACE:

girly voice "Am I doing this right?"

AMY:

"I'll try it out." And she just smokes everybody. But we're going to throw it to Discovery.

REKHA:

Yay!

MICHELE:

Yay! Okay now go.

REKHA:

OK. OK. I'm going to choose somebody maybe a little bit unlikely. Because it's what came to my head: Tilly. *audience cheers/Michele freaks out with excitement*

MICHELE:

My God! Just any give me any subject and I'm going to want to talk about Tilly!

GRACE:

Dooo it.

REKHA:

I love that this woman is like, we get to see that it's not easy. Because as a bunch of warrior women we all know it ain't fuckin easy. Oop. I just swore.

MICHELE:

Yeah!

GRACE:

Well, you've broken that dam for the rest of us now.

REKHA:

Sorry. We can put the dam back up if you need be. Children. Sensitive ears.

GRACE:

Aw, damn.

AMY:

Aw dam!

REKHA:

Good one. It's not easy. We all have our baggage. We all have been told that we're not good enough. We've all not had our needs met by merit by our parents. And we get to watch that she struggles with that, and chooses to listen to her heart. Chooses to listen to her inner knowing, and do what feels right for her anyway. And put her mom in her place, respectfully. And even I mean, Captain Kill-y? Like a whole other side of her right? *panel makes excited noises*

AMY:

Kill-y is right here on my list. *laughs*

REKHA:

Yeah, but we all have- I really believe we all have a mirror universe inside of us. And you know, we need to just tap into that.

AMY:

Somebody tweet that. "We all have a mirror universe."

GRACE:

to audience Does anyone here have a phone and can tweet? *all laugh*

ERIN:

I think that's a great point though, because I think when she- when Tilly saw Captain Kill-y it awoke in something in her.

REKHA:

Exactly.

ERIN:

That she had her own potential, and she saw her own strength. And I just think that's- I think a lot of us relate to that. When we see fictional characters that we might see ourselves in. That it draws out something that we hadn't tapped into previously.

MICHELE:

And I love that she truly does make such a significant difference, and literally saves the day more than once using her amazing brain. I mean that's really her greatest- her greatest weapon.

REKHA:

Her brain, and her passion. She doesn't take "no" for an answer. She does what she needs to do, even *sneaky voice* quietly behind people's backs.

AMY:

She does do that.

GRACE:

Sometimes that's the strongest way to do it.

AMY:

And it's it's interesting because we often put these strong warrior women on a pedestal you know? And they're seen as being untouchable and Tillie is not like that. She's not untouchable. We can all relate to her. I deeply relate to her. I relate to her on a basis that it's nice to see a tall curvy woman in a Starfleet uniform.

REKHA:

Hell yes.

GRACE:

To say nothing of the fact that all of the examples we listed before, all women who've already kind of made their uphill climb, and are all bad ass when we see them for the first time. Tilly is someone who's having to make that climb.

MICHELE:

Yeah, we're witnessing it.

GRACE:

It's so powerful to *get to* witness it, and to see her get to sort of ascend to the person she wants to be. God willing.

REKHA:

Yeah. And I do believe that's a daily decision. That's a moment to moment decision. So that's why I love that part of the storytelling so much. Because I mean, you could be a bad ass out at work, and you come home and it's your significant other and all your triggers come up, and all of a sudden you're a mouse in the corner. And those are those moments where we need to go "Wait a second, wait a second. Be brave." Right?

AMY:

And Commander Landry was definitely not to be trifled with, in either universe. You know, not from the moment we saw her. You know, she had already had that sense that Tilly is after. You know, when she comes in she's very self-possessed. She knows what she's doing. She's in charge. And I really wish we'd gotten to see more of her. I mean, obviously we'll get to see a little more of her you know in the expanded universe of Star Trek with the game Star Trek Online. And all that.

REKHA:

Yeah. So you know, without giving too much away, because I know not everyone has played yet. There is more of her, you know, origin story of how she became a badass. And one thing I love about Landry is **pause** not all of her badassery is **pause** good. For lack of a better word.

AMY:

Exactly.

REKHA:

You know, she has her troubles. There are strengths that are wonderful, and there are strengths that well, they're not even strengths. They're just trauma and-

AMY:

Did you find it liberating to play somebody who is not necessarily likeable? But you find it liberating-

REKHA:

She clearly doesn't know my body of work. **all laugh**

AMY:

I do know, I am a very big Battlestar Galactica fan. *audience claps*

REKHA:

Are you saying that you thought you found Tori likeable?

AMY:

I'm saying- no, I'm saying did you find it liberating to play somebody who didn't *have to be* likeable.

REKHA:

Oh, just in general. Yeah yeah yeah yeah.

AMY:

Like you did with Tori, and then again with Landry.

REKHA:

You know, it's a good question.

AMY:

Because women are so often trained to please, and to be likeable. You want your character to be well-liked.

REKHA:

Yeah. *pause* Yeah. You know I just- you've given me pause *Michele laughs* in the best possible way. Because I- you know I have resented it in some ways. I've thought you know- and not initially, because I loved you know I mean Battlestar Galactica was an incredible story. I mean there's- *applause from audience* Yeah. It was an absolute honor to tell every word that was in those scripts. But you know, it became one of those things where everybody had seen me do that. And then you'll just get hired to keep playing those characters "Somebody you think is good, but they're *bad*." So I've done a fair amount of that. And it's, you know, being stereotyped in any way is sort of annoying to say the least. However, I like what you're saying now and so maybe I'll just reframe the way I think about that.

AMY:

I feel like it's liberating to see it as someone who's a fan.

REKHA:

Yeah. And like one of my favorite characters on television is actually Selina Meyer on Veep. And how like unlikable- and yet totally you cheer for her. You're rooting for her, but she's like the most ridiculous, despicable, idiotic woman.

GRACE:

And how big is the ratio that we have for male characters who get to do that vs. women characters who get to do that?

REKHA:

Absolutely.

AMY:

The male antihero is much more readily accepted. You know, if you look at the Walter White, and Don Draper, and you know all these- James Gandolfini on Sopranos you know.

GRACE:

But if a woman is unlikable-

AMY:

If a woman is unlikable then like- I don't know how many of you watch Breaking Bad but Skyler White, Walter White's wife, has been vilified repeatedly by fans, *repeatedly* for being such a horrible- like if my husband was making and selling meth I would be upset too. *Michelle laughs*

REKHA:

No, I never understood that. I never felt that way about her character at all. I thought she did a fantastic job of actually riding that line where she didn't like *murder him* you know? *Grace laughs*

AMY:

But yes, back to like the disco ladies. You know, we have a really large spectrum. You know, from Burnham to Georgiou to L'rell, who I adore, and Admiral Cornwell who you know-

MICHELE:

Amazing.

AMY:

Fantastic.

ERIN:

I looove her.

GRACE:

I love with those two characters alone, we have this thing about women characters not being able to raise their voice so much because that risks making them look angry, and then we get the two of them just straight up screaming in each other's faces. It's great!

REKHA:

That was the most amazing.

AMY:

It's about women in anger. I want to talk about that. Women and anger, and how as a society we're told that that is something you don't ever want to display. So maybe Erin you want to chat about that for a second? And we'll just go...

ERIN:

Well I was trying to think of how- I guess angry women in Star Trek, when I think about it first I think about the Klingons.

AMY:

And Seska.

ERIN:

They're good at channeling anger. Screaming in Klingon will get out a lot of stress. But I always found the Duras sisters really interesting. I think that they are complex. They are kind of that first introduction you get to how to operate in a more patriarchal society, and how they have found a place for themselves and they are a force to be reckoned with, and how they navigate it. And so I've always- I guess the instinct is when you don't have any other options you get angry, and you display that. And I think you can use the Klingons as a good conduit for that. But then they built out so many more characters I think. Yeah, as we talked about at the beginning Kira, you know, when people think of an angry woman in Star Trek she's angry. *laughs*

GRACE:

She deserves her anger, and she deserves to act on it.

ERIN:

But she does, as they start as they explore her background. You get it, and it's all part of who she is and there's nothing wrong with that.

AMY:

How about you Grace?

GRACE:

There's one thing that I always think back to when I'm talking about women and how their relationships with rage are depicted, and I'm taking it off track for a second but it just interests me so much. I remember reading about this interview that was during the making of one of the Avengers movies Joss Whedon talking about how they kept needing to reshoot the slow motion fight scenes because he's like "We don't want to see it in slow motion all these women going like *making angry noise* looking mad, and pulling angry faces, because that doesn't look

pretty.” It's like, they're mad. Pretty should not come before the character getting to be mad. That's ridiculous. And I think about that a lot in terms of again how women are allowed to be angry both in media and in real life.

ERIN:

Well- sorry about that, can I just interject?

GRACE:

Yeah totally.

ERIN:

Personally, so I work in a very heavily male dominated-

GRACE:

So you *know* it.

AMY:

I'm sorry, I said you said you were a *Dr.* Erin. Please tell our audience exactly the kind of awesome science you know.

ERIN:

laughs So I'm an astrophysicist. I like to say I'm a rocket scientist by day, and a warp drive expert by night. **all laugh/audience claps**

GRACE:

Hell yeah.

ERIN:

I do aerospace engineering and then I also advise writers on science fiction. And my background was in gravitational waves and general relativity. And so I work every day in a really heavily male dominated society. And **pause** it's interesting how much my male counterparts feel the need to point out when I look upset. And not even then like a “Smile sweetie” type way, cause they know what my face would be if they said that to me. **laughs** The guys I work with are good guys, you know? But I think they comment so much on like “Ooh yeah, you need to like- get like- we know you're stressed. We know you're stressed out, you need to get better at you know hiding that” because they don't like to see it when I'm angry.

GRACE:

There's an entitlement to women's emotions and how they're outwardly expressed.

ERIN:

Yeah. And you know, I work in meetings where you know guys are screaming at each other, you know? But I'm not allowed to do that. So anyway, that's just that reminded me of that. And

it's hard. It's something we have to navigate. And so it can be liberating in television to be able to see that.

GRACE:

Especially considering how sort of few role models of healthy anger we get for women on TV. *laughs* If I can say that. Yeah. And that's one of the things again that I liked about Kira a lot. Her anger was deserved and she had to learn how to deal with it.

MICHELE:

And she at that time was really- I mean what I had commented on previously, on her complexity, and we see her evolve into a fully fleshed out human being as she kind of proceeds and develops beyond that. What I love about Discovery is not just the amount of diversity, not just the amount of allowance there is for both male and female characters to kind of experience the spectrum of human experience and emotion and have the right to do so. And just sidenote: it's actually one of the reasons I *love* Discovery, because I feel like where it is within the timeline, by the time we have TOS the federation, its morals, its standards, its modicums haven't been completely established. They are set. They are out in the universe living it, supposedly. Discovery is set before that. So the federation hasn't really decided what that is. They haven't decided what their place is. They haven't kind of had that struggle as an organization, because the people themselves are having that struggle and we see it on screen. They are figuring out what it is to be Starfleet.

GRACE:

There's a lot of moral complexity going.

MICHELE:

Absolutely. So you're seeing that gamut of human experience in both male and female characters, and they're allowed to do so in quite a beautiful way. It adds so much depth and complexity to it. So I think that's one of the first things I really latched onto with Discovery, was we're seeing not just the development of these characters and these human beings we're seeing the development of what the federation is all about. Because they're figuring it out just as the characters involved are. I just love that.

AMY:

And seeing that, both of you Michelle and Rekha as actresses, and seeing- and Rekha has also been in Star Trek Continues, I don't know if everybody knows that. But you know, seeing Dr. McKenna and seeing your character in Star Trek Continues, and really being able to have those different kinds of strength you know? You're not just that outward warrior holding the bat'leth, or wielding the phaser, or punching someone you know? I wanted Michele to comment on that too, because, you know, we had talked about Dr. McKenna's strength. and then Rekha if you wanted to chime in and talk about that.

MICHELE:

Well I think quite frankly our most immediate and natural assumption is to kind of look at warrior women as basically embodying what we identify and define as masculine versions of strength. It's going to be extremely physical, it's going to be dominating, it's going to be the ability to harm, or dominate, inflict you know physical pain. Right? But what I love about what we're seeing, and what I'm really thoroughly loving in characters like Tilly and in characters like you, because we understand her more deeply than I think a normal say just a basic two dimensional anti-hero would be. What needs to happen to start recognizing and kind of expanding what strong woman are is we just need to start redefining what we mean by strength. What does strength exactly mean. I mean there are characters in and out of the Star Trek universe that aren't necessarily put in that category, but there are so many ways that strength can show itself. In that perseverance, and that absolute dedication, and that amazing ability to self-sacrifice in the sticking to your- I was about to cuss as well. *panel laughs/intense voice* A big one. It was going to be an f bomb. To stick to those principles and, you know, stand in who you are regardless of what's coming at you to- like Tilly does. To still choose to lead with that heart. To still choose to lead with love and passion regardless knowing you're probably going to get that smashed once or twice. But it doesn't matter, because that's who you are. So I think just kind of expanding what strength *is* in general will kind of open up the door to seeing a lot more of that. Or recognizing it because it's already there.

AMY:

Rekha, how about you? What are your thoughts?

REKHA:

Yeah, 100 percent agree. It's not Star Trek, but Wonder Woman the reason why I love that movie so much is it is about the strength of love and the heart. And I mean honestly there is no greater strength, there isn't, then love. Then our hearts. That is the substratum of the universe, in my opinion, is love.

MICHELE:

Oh my God, I love you. *Rekha laughs*

AMY:

No, and even looking you know through the tradition of other, you know, other women that you're- that Discovery is currently engaging with on television, you know, and within the tradition of television and literature and film, you know? Not only do we have the women of Battlestar Galactica, and Dana Scully, Wonder Woman, Captain Marvel, the women of Game of Thrones. You know these- Ripley, Buffy, it's like you're getting this- but everyone's basic journey really comes back to what you're saying about doing something out of love. You know if you're gonna harm this character you're gonna harm somebody they love.

REKHA:

Yeah, and this is why we love Star Trek. I mean that theme is in every single character's journey, as you say, every single one. Think about it for a minute. They all gotta do that.

AMY:

Even Seska. Even somebody like Seska that we don't really like. Yeah, you know like-

GRACE:

We like *not liking* her.

MICHELE:

Yeah, we *liked* not liking her.

AMY:

I mean like, someone that you're not supposed to- you're not *coded* to like. You know? But it's not necessarily just like, like it's not the Borg Queen. You know, she is pure ambition and pure domination.

REKHA:

Yeah. And I really love watching that aspect of Burnham's journey. You know? She's just- even trying to get in touch with her heart, like you know and the programming. I love what you were saying about, you know, this part of the journey being before, and what is Starfleet, and you know as the show goes on I mean it's interesting to do a prequel to a show that was made in the 60s where a lot of sexist stuff was really prevalent and was absolutely in the stories. As much as we'd like to think that they weren't.

AMY:

Turnabout Intruder. *group makes uncomfortable noises*

REKHA:

So to look at that now with Discovery and go "Wait a second, what are the roles that we are playing today?" You know I feel like there's a lot of that that we all struggle with. "OK. I'm Starfleet, I'm supposed to be this way" "I'm a scientist I'm supposed to be this way at work. Am I? No." No we're not. We're all supposed to be *human* and *flawed* and we all have soft feelings on the inside and have to use our armor on the outside and it all works in tandem right?

ERIN:

I think a great character we haven't mentioned yet is Seven of Nine for that. *panel makes noises of agreement/audience claps* Yes, she's coming from a point of like she is just- she's almost a blank slate. She's a warrior first and foremost, because she doesn't know who she is outside of the collective. And then the whole storyline with her, which we were also going to mention, it's amazing that they brought on someone to sort of be wearing a catsuit, *laughs* I'll say.

AMY:

They bought on because she had sex appeal.

ERIN:

Yes they brought her on for sex appeal, but there was so much behind the character as she started to discover herself, and discover her identity, and discover who the type of person she wanted to be and you could see her turning to Janeway for advice and mentorship because she was trying to figure out who she was underneath and start to make those connections because I think she began to understand that the foundation of everyone's personal one on one interactions is love. Like that's absolutely where she was coming from.

GRACE:

The entire arc that she gets is discovering that different type of strength we were talking about.

AMY:

And we're gonna get to see her again, and see where she is in her journey. Which I think that was- I didn't really, you know, we all watched the Picard trailer, and we were *so excited*. But it didn't strike me right away how genuinely good it was to see Seven. Like and the fact that she had like a very different intonation in her voice than we had come to know.

GRACE:

She's gotten to grow.

AMY:

Like "what'chu doing there Picard?" *laughs*

REKHA:

That for me was the clincher. That for me- I was like "OK this looks good, this looks good. This. *freaking out noise* I CAN'T WAIT!" My exact reaction. Like, I just watched her a little bit. I was like "Damn she's good."

GRACE:

I love that she's gotten-

AMY:

That she's not wearing a cat suit.

MICHELE:

cheers She gets to wear undies.

GRACE:

That's another side of herself she's gotten to discover.

AMY:

Yeah. And one person we didn't mention, who from a truly warrior point of view is Ro Laren. I love Ensign Ro. Yeah. You know- and then I think we definitely did not get enough of her as well, along with not getting enough of Yar. I mean the women of Next Gen were primarily caregivers. You know, and I love Troi and I love Crusher, and you know they have that ability within them of course to be badassess. But to be able to have these- and K'ehleyr you know, and yet there's with all the auxiliary ladies that we sort of only got to know briefly in Next Generation. Especially Ro. I love Ro, she's great.

MICHELE:

And again, that's why I'm so excited with Discovery. We have like just a full fully loaded cast all around.

AMY:

I think we have time where it- so we have about 15 minutes left, which is great. We're making great time. We're gonna take a couple questions so why don't we start over here and then we'll go over there. Is someone over there? Yeah. Perfect. Okay we'll start over here first.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1:

Hi. So you're already touched upon that a little bit, but like I'm in academia myself and humanities so it's a bit different than the hard sciences. But at the same time-

AMY:

I have my masters in English Lit.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1:

So I always feel like as a woman you're always policed, and the way that you're supposed to behave in terms of oh, if you swear you know that's looked at differently. So I love when Tilly got to say the F word rather than a guy.

GRACE:

I love that she got to drop the first F bomb in Star Trek!

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1:

Yes. And also the way you dress, everything is always being policed. So I was wondering if you want to elaborate a little how that played out for you in your careers. Like being actresses, being in the sciences. You already said a few things but I feel like we're always under much more scrutiny than men are.

ERIN:

I think what I found helped me was having idols. I've talked a lot about how my mentors are fictional characters. And I stand by that cause they're ones I relate to and I see myself in and that's what a mentor is supposed to be. But through them I discovered more of who I was and

became more confident in that. And so I think for me it's been constantly, especially in a new position, trying to find that line of how much I let my personality shine and slowly roll that out so as people get to know me better. You know, they'll maybe start seeing my tattoos more. I'll have like a Voyager mug on my desk. *laughs* As, you know, as they start to see me then I just try to let my true self shine and not always have that armor. Obviously you have it up first because you're still meeting people and I think we all do that naturally, but really not being afraid to let your true geek flag fly *laughs* and be your genuine self because that's when you're-

AMY:

Bring in all your nerd crap and put it on your desk on day one.

GRACE:

Yeah. Just get that out of the way.

AMY:

But in terms of, you know, I think maybe you know Rekha in terms of you know the Hollywood vibe that I'm sure that you struggle with as a woman you know-

REKHA:

Let me tell you. Yeah. Let me tell you.

GRACE:

Tell us, tell us.

REKHA:

It's an interesting- I mean I could probably talk about this question alone all day long. I mean feminism and image, you know, there's so much about it that is complicated. On the one hand it's you know every person has a right to dress and portray themselves however they want to. You know, within reason. *laughs* Nobody is getting hurt, we're fine. And there is a strength I believe- I don't know if any of you are familiar with the very controversial feminist views of Camille Paglia. But you know, there is a real *pause* strength to the beautiful physicality of a woman's body and standing in it and being like "Yeah. You like my legs? Here's a leg here's my leg. Can you handle? Can you still talk to me and look at this leg." *all laugh* Or whatever it is you know? So there is a strength there, and there's no need to shy away from that. And yet it is not my value. Right? And it's very- I'm not looking for pity but it's very interesting. I think it's important to talk about the kinds of judgment and what is considered okay in society. So last week somebody messaged me, and this isn't the first time something like this has happened. Somebody sent me a message on social media saying "I just wanted to tell you you're ugly" *audience member can be heard yelling*

AMY:

Oh, real nice. I got you. I did a photo shoot for Discovery jackets with Volante design, and I'm not a size zero, and people were like "You're too fat to be in Starfleet." And I was like *pause* I feel you is my-

REKHA:

Bullshit. Mary Wiseman looks great in that outfit. *audience cheers* She's hot right? Yes. And that's not her value.

AMY:

Well you know in Spider-Man, the new Spider-Man movie, they go out and Mary Jane dresses nice and Peter Parker says to her "You look very pretty" and she goes. "And therefore I have value?" *all laugh*

REKHA:

Was so great. So great. Yeah. But you know, it just gave me pause and I thought "I have a strong feeling. I'm very curious to ask my male friend actors if they ever get messages like that. I have a feeling they probably don't." So somehow there's this belief system out there that if you're an actress you need to be beautiful, if you're a woman you need to be beautiful. No. Some of the most successful, wonderful, talented people in film are not by society's standards, by like you know what we see in magazines, considered to look like that. Which to some people, many of us, don't find that all that beautiful! *audience claps*

MICHELE:

Right. It's very complex.

AMY:

We could go on with this but we're going to go to the next question. Go ahead.

AUDIENCE MEMBER2:

Hi. I was hoping that you all could comment on the queer coding of warrior women villains? Particularly Intendant Kira and Emperor Georgieau.

AMY:

Yes. The mirror universe people are often portrayed as as queer or bi.

GRACE:

I definitely have an opinion.

AMY:

Go ahead Grace.

GRACE:

It also feels really telling that the primary bisexual depictions that we've gotten in Star Trek are mirror universe when it's something that's being used and being tied directly to the concept of a hedonistic or dangerous lifestyle, which is a really *messed up* way to represent it. We see a lot of queer coding in a lot of villain characters in general. I talked earlier about how Yar and her relationship with how women characters who're just kind of butch are portrayed, and have never really gotten their fair shake. And we do have this massive history, in terms of film, of characters who are sort of coded as being if you're a woman if you're masculine, if you're a male character and you're kind of swishy, those are seen as traits that we adhere to characters that are *mock scandalized voice* *unwholesome* if you catch my meaning. So always the bad guys. My favorite is that you can look at just about any major Disney villain and be like "Oh yeah I could read them as gay." And it makes a lot of sense that if you look back kind of into the Hays Code and the representations of queer characters there's this idea that if they are explicitly or even "nudge nudge wink wink" treated as a queer character then they have to be punished in some way, or they can't be treated as someone who's good or-

AMY:

And they're like overtly sexual, where they're like draping themselves like Intendant Kira. I knew that you are going to ask that question also, so it's OK.

GRACE:

We have this sort of standard characterisation of, across the full spectrum of queer representation, of anyone who is not straight is a predator. And that is incredibly harmful. And that is again missed the hell up.

AMY:

Very messed up. But thank you for that question.

GRACE:

Thank you so much.

AMY:

Yeah. We could do a whole panel on just that to be clear.

GRACE:

I did an episode on it.

AMY:

If you want programming like that, let Creation know. Go ahead.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 3:

Hi. I want to thank you guys for bringing up the topic of anger. I feel like a conversation about that isn't complete without B'Elanna Torres.

ERIN:

Yes! I forgot about her, and thought about it halfway through and I'm so sorry I forgot about her.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 3:

Because her journey, I feel they of course use the Klingon side of her to exhibit that anger but as a woman I relate to her a lot because we are taught to reject that anger. To reject that angry part of us. The episode where she split into the two halves and understands and realizes that her strength *comes from* that. And how she over the course of the series comes to accept that, and that Tom likes that about her. And you know, it's just beautiful.

ERIN:

It really is, and I think that it's portrayed so beautifully in the episode title I forgot. But when she's pregnant with her and Tom's baby, and she is *freaking out* because she doesn't want to expose her kid to the same racism that she experienced being half Klingon. And they flashback to a lot of her dealing with her emotions as a child. And I just- it's one of my favorite episodes.

GRACE:

That one's a good feature.

AMY:

Yeah. Dealing with emotion as, you know, kind of starting with Spock and then breaching out of it into the Star Trek canon, you know, it seems to not only- that seems to be a gender neutral topic. I mean dealing with the inner conflict, it is an essential tenet of Star Trek. And I feel like B'Elanna really follows in the footsteps of Spock.

ERIN:

And it's funny too, because when I was in graduate school I met a friend there that we bonded over Voyager but she- her person was B'Elanna, mine was Janeway, and hers was because B'Elanna gave her the license to be an angry engineer. And like, she always wanted to just hit things with her wrench! *all laugh*

AMY:

Oh! Tig Notaro's character on Discovery. *chorus of "yeah!" from panelists* Fabulous. I love her.

GRACE:

So much to love.

AMY:

OK go ahead. I think we have time for one more. Maybe one- two more. Go ahead.

MICHELE:

Hi Jeannie.

JEANNIE:

Hi, I'm Jeannie. OK, this is for any and all of you. Who do you think, what character, you could take in a fight?

AMY:

That / could take in a fight? I would lose to all of them immediately. *Michele laughs*

GRACE:

Get creative. Get creative!

AMY:

thinking That I could take in a fight..

MICHELE:

Could I dictate what the fight is?

JEANNIE:

Yes.

MICHELE:

OK.

AMY:

Lip Sync Battle?

MICHELE:

How about a stretching fight, a workout fight? I will get in a leotard and I will take both *Grace cackles* Crusher and Troi down! *audience claps* Knocked down! No more of this *old lady voice* seesaw with your legs out. *all laugh* Ladies, it is happening.

ERIN:

Oh man- well so- not me personally, but when you asked the question it reminded me of Q. And Q for me, I am not a chaotic alignment. I'll put it that way. Q is chaotic and it stresses me out. *laughs* But I love that Janeway takes him on. *laughs* And like, kind of doesn't put up with it. Which I love. Like, in terms of like the fights with the ones that I thought I could never take on because Q stressed me out so much.

AMY:

Interesting. Like a showdown with a Q. Interesting. I would lose. I would. I freely admit that I don't like heights. I don't like roller coasters. Like, I am badass in my intellect but not in my physicality. Let's put it that way. Anyone else? Are we-

GRACE:

Harry Mudd, because if you think you can be cattier and more underhanded than me, then I will go full yenta on your ass. *all laugh*

AMY:

Grace is coming for you all. Well Landry already took everybody on. So what about you Rekha?

REKHA:

Oh I don't know-

AMY:

Who's left?

REKHA:

I mean, I like the idea of taking on Q just because it would be so fun to lose. *all laugh*

GRACE:

Only the best people get to fight Q.

ERIN:

It'd be a story.

REKHA:

I know, I'd be like “*goofy laugh* you're cool.” *all laugh*

AMY:

This person over here is dying to ask his question. We have time for one more, go ahead.

JAY:

Rekha, I promised I would not get on your case again like I did last year.

REKHA:

Oh Jay, but you can't help it.

JAY:

I'm afraid I have to, in light of this panel.

REKHA:

All right.

JAY:

And I know it's the writers. It's the writer's fault.

REKHA:

Yeah. Always.

JAY:

The blame for what happened. But do you think- in your opinion is there such a thing as being, as the writers write for your character, being too ambitious? Too well driven by a higher authority to get results and as a result it was your character that made a frickin fatal mistake?

REKHA:

You're on point Jay. You're on point. I was driven by an authority, which we all found out later on was from the *goofy voice* mirror universe. Loser. *all laugh* He led me astray. And yeah I paid the price. He should have paid that price.

AMY:

Get Jason Isaacs out here, you guys can have a showdown. There's your showdown! *panel cheers*

MICHELE:

Do it!

AMY:

Lorca vs. Landry.

GRACE:

Is there something to be said about your character being *led astray* by an errant male.

REKHA:

Well yeah. I mean, that was absolutely a "me too" situation. *Grace gasps* That's what that was. And you know, there was a scene that we actually- that got cut, but where you would have seen it more explicitly. The only moment where people clued on to what was going on there and the subtext is when I- you know he's-where I say I'll do anything for him. I can't remember the exact line. Everyone's like *suspicious noise* "Anything?" Yes. But there was actually a scene where we were we meet in a closet sort of clandestinely.

AMY:

A closet?

MICHELE:

A closet?!?

GRACE:

As one does.

REKHA:

It was cut.

AMY:

No, I want to see this cut footage. All right. This is what we're going to have to do, to all tweet CBS and say show us the closet.

MICHELE:

intense voice Show us the closet!

REKHA:

No. No, it was cut before we shot it.

AMY:

Oooh.

REKHA:

On the day we were supposed to shoot it they snipped that scene only. I think it was like, too risqué or something.

AMY:

Well, we have had a fabulous chat. Thank you all so much for being here. Why don't just really quick tell us where we can find you three ladies, and we know where to find Rekha.

ERIN:

I'm @DrErinMac on Twitter, and I'm giving a whole handful of talks-

AMY:

Lots of panels.

ERIN:

On the CBS stage. So come see me, I'll be at one o'clock today doing the Physics of Star Trek. It's really fun.

GRACE:

radio news voice You can find me on Twitter @BoneCrusherJenk. You can also find me in the dealer's room. **Michele laughs** I podcasts. I do this all the frickin time! I'm at the Roddenberry Podcast Network booth. And you'll probably find me passed out at the carnival buffet line at about 2:00 a.m..

AMY:

Michelle, where can we find you online?

MICHELE:

Online I'm @MicheleSpecht everywhere. Michele with one L. And this weekend you're just going to find me geeking out, and I'll probably scream, and want to hug you, and you won't know who I am but just go with it. It's just easier.

GRACE:

It's safer.

MICHELE:

Don't fight it, don't fight.

AMY:

And I'm @lightstar1013 on Twitter and Instagram. And I will be doing another panel today, one tomorrow with LeVar and Michael Dorn, and Kate Mulgrew on Saturday. *panel cheers* Thank you so much everyone.

ERIN:

Thanks guy!

REKHA:

Thanks.

GRACE:

So? So what do you guys think of my panel?

JARRAH:

Like I said, it was so great. It was a really great balance of people from different backgrounds on that panel and I really particularly loved how you threw in the discussion about queer baiting women villains.

GRACE:

I could not. I literally could not.

JARRAH:

And a lot of people come up afterwards and tweet to specifically thank you for that. That is a really important part of the discussion, something we've discussed on the show, and yes very awesome to have that happening on the Vegas mainstage.

GRACE:

It was pretty incredible. I've been doing conventions and podcasting for a little over a decade now and I've never gotten a response like that. So I'm just blown away by the amount of people who A) thought this was a topic worth talking about and B) enjoyed hearing us talk about it. It was incredible!

JARRAH:

I feel like the Star Trek Las Vegas audience, you know we've talked about before, how when the first year I did the women's panel which was now five, six years ago that there were, you know, they wouldn't necessarily- weren't into letting us call ourselves "women." It was "girls" and they weren't really into letting us these the label feminist. But over time *pause* it was obvious there was a real appetite for this content and that the audience wasn't going to like let them get away with that forever. So the panel grew and the dialogue grew. Also, there's massive appetite I think for more queer content, as well as content on things like disabilities, mental health, other things that haven't really been, you know, that they've only really scratched the surface at STLV. And hopefully that they're going to see that there's a real demand for that and move more in that direction in the future.

SUE:

Yeah. That's a conversation that I continue to find myself having last weekend, or last weekend *as of* this recording. That five six years ago they wouldn't even print the word feminist in the program. And this year Grace was able to talk about queer issues on the main stage, as were several other panels and panelists which is wonderful. So I mean I think creation has made a lot of steps in the right direction but they also still have a long way to go.

JARRAH:

And it's also not proactive really. Like, some of the gender stuff is *now* because there was pressure to add more women moderators or emcees on the main stage. And that's happened a little bit, although it's I believe still all white people. But a lot of it is they're still relying on fans to submit those panels, and if we have listeners who are like "Hey I would be a totally great person to host a panel on *pause* say representation on Trek" or any other topic, and you want advice on how to submit the panel then shoot us an email and we're always happy to give feedback.

GRACE:

Any final thoughts before we head out for the night.

JARRAH:

Stay tuned for yet more Star Trek Las Vegas programming next week.

GRACE:

gasps The party never stops. Now Sue, tell us where can we find you online?

SUE:

You can find me on Twitter @Spaltor. That's S P A L T O R.

GRACE:

And you Jarrah, where can people find you?

JARRAH:

You can find me @JARRAH-penguin on Twitter, or at Trekiefeminist.com.

GRACE:

And I'm Grace. And you can find me on Twitter @BoneCrusherJenk and reigning dominion over all of these grasshoppers I've adopted as my own. *all laugh* I feel like a mother now, and I got to tell you it's pretty rewarding. Loud, but rewarding. To learn more about our show or to contact us visit womenatwarp.com or find us on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram @womenatwarp. You can also e-mail us at crew@womenatwarp.com. And for more from the Roddenberry podcast network visit podcasts.Roddenberry.com.

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