

## Women at Warp Episode 192: “Lineage” - Transcript

**Jarrah:** Hi, and welcome to Women at Warp, a Star Trek podcast. Join us on our continuing mission to explore intersectional diversity in infinite combinations. My name’s Jarrah and thanks for tuning in. Today with me are crew members Sarah...

**Sarah:** Hello!

**Jarrah:** ...and Aliza.

**Aliza:** Hey hey!

**Jarrah:** And we have a special guest, Matt.

**Matt:** Hi.

**Jarrah:** So before we get into our main topic, we have a little bit of housekeeping to do first. Our show is made possible by our patrons on Patreon. If you’d like to become a patron, you can do so for as little as a dollar a month and get awesome rewards, from thanks on social media up to silly watchalong commentaries, loot boxes... You can join us for watchalongs, stuff like that. Just visit [patreon.com/womenatwarp](https://patreon.com/womenatwarp) to learn more. That’s [P-A-T-R-E-O-N.com/womenatwarp](https://P-A-T-R-E-O-N.com/womenatwarp). And are you looking for podcast merch? Check out our TeePublic store. There are many designs to choose from, and we’re adding new ones all the time. You can get them on t-shirts, masks, notebooks, stickers, all sorts of things. Find the TeePublic store at [teepublic.com/stores/womenatwarp](https://teepublic.com/stores/womenatwarp).

Now today’s episode was actually a patron suggestion from Matt. So, Matt, first, I wanted to ask you to tell us a bit about yourself and how you got into Star Trek. And then I’ll ask you to tell us about why you picked this topic for today.

**Matt:** So I guess how I got into Star Trek, I’m going to credit Le Var Burton and Reading Rainbow.

**Jarrah:** Nice.

**Matt:** So I don’t know if you guys remember the Reading Rainbow episode where he goes back behind the scenes of Star Trek: The Next Generation.

**Jarrah:** Oh yes.

**Matt:** But I feel like that was my first exposure to Star Trek. It's hard for me to remember exactly when I really started watching consistently. Somewhere between the start of season three and five. And I've been pretty much watching since then. And this episode I mentioned when I actually suggested talking about the mixed species as a metaphor for biracial people. And I just mentioned this episode because it was one that I remember thinking about when I saw it, when it originally aired, and I just—there were a couple of points that I thought were just particularly relevant to my own personal experience.

**Jarrah:** Awesome. Well, I'm sure we will get into that. And the episode for anyone who hadn't figured that out or read the title on the episode description is "Lineage," which is a Voyager episode. And I don't know if anyone would like to offer a brief summary.

**Sarah:** It's so hard to do a brief summary of this episode because this episode does not know what it's about. \*Jarrah and Matt laugh\*

**Sarah:** I guess the briefest summary is that B'Elanna finds out she's pregnant and freaks out that she's having a child who's gonna be of mixed heritage like herself, and wants to genetically alter her child to pass.

**Jarrah:** I feel like that is a great short summary.

**Sarah:** Mm-hmm.

**Jarrah:** I will mention that one of our listeners, Nada Bird Designs, said that apparently the description on either Paramount or Netflix—but couldn't remember which—it says something like, 'B'Elanna has a strange reaction to her pregnancy.'

**Aliza:** Yes.

**Jarrah:** And they were bothered by that.

**Aliza:** I think that was Paramount+, cuz I noticed that too.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, noooo. But yes, I mean that's essentially what this episode is about. So is this an episode that stuck with you from the first time you saw it?

**Sarah:** I went to rewatch this episode last night and realized I had had it confused with a completely different episode the whole time. And I have no memory of watching this the first time. So you're getting a very, very fresh take on this from me today.

**Jarrah:** Awesome.

**Sarah:** My impression of this episode is not good. \*Aliza and Jarrah chuckle\*

**Aliza:** Okay, similarly to you, Sarah, I only saw this recently and weirdly the first impression I had was based off of someone describing the episode to me. So someone told me about it before I ever saw it. And I was horrified when I heard about what the subject of the episode was. And then I watched it recently. And I was like, yeah, still bad, but I think actually overall, a really well constructed episode and, oh, Roxanne Dawson really acts her butt off in this, some of her best work as this character. So mixed feelings about the episode overall.

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Matt:** I think it certainly has its issues. I guess what it's trying to say, it's just that, I don't know if I'm alone in feeling this way, but the idea of changing \*chuckles\* the genetics of the child? Well, I didn't wanna change—wouldn't wanna change—the genetics of my child. It was more of, I wanted to change myself. And that's what the episode reminded me of. When I was a kid, I grew up in a town where there weren't really any other Asian people or half Asian for that matter. So, I just remember the experience of being picked on for that and thinking about, 'What if I could remove that part of myself, would that make me better accepted by my peers?'

**Jarrah:** You are definitely not alone in this. Many of our listeners wrote in and several people had similar experiences. Nada Bird Designs, who I mentioned earlier, said, "As a mixed person, seeing this episode as a child, it made me feel seen in a way that no other TV show or movie had. It's one of my favorite episodes of Trek. Though, of course, given it's from the Berman era, a few things could have been better." \*Matt laughs\*

**Matt:** Right. It was just a funny thing when I saw this back in 2001 or something. Did these people read my mind from when I was in fourth grade or whatever? Cuz I just—it instantly brought me back to remembering thinking about doing that to myself on the bus on the way home. I usually am one of the last people off the bus, so I had a lot of time to sit and think, cuz sometimes I'd

have a friend there for a little while, but most of the ride was just sittin' there thinking, and that was something that came into my mind for a while there, a couple of times, I think.

**Jarrah:** That's cool. When I was younger, my memory of it—obviously I am very white, so I do not have that kind of personal connection to the story, but I definitely remember two things that I appreciated about it the first time I saw it, which was around when it first aired, were...

I definitely remember the actress who played young B'Elanna and how she reacted to bullying. I related to that bit on a personal level, and I thought that she did a really great job. And I also remember really appreciating Tom throughout the episode. And I feel like this episode is a good example of his growth over seven years.

**Matt:** Mm-hmm. I actually watched it twice in the last couple weeks just to refresh my memory about it, and something that I did forget about it was that part of the reason B'Elanna wanted to do this was because of her own, I think, fear of abandonment. She equated her father leaving because of her Klingon side. And I was like, oh, I do remember that now, but it was never something that I personally related to, or was my part of my experience. So never worried about that, but that was just something that—a detail that I forgot, but I definitely remembered that Tom was doing his best to be supportive, I think.

**Jarrah:** Mm-hmm. Did you have thoughts, either Sarah or Aliza, about Tom in this episode?

**Aliza:** I felt like he did some good work of listening and really trying to get to the bottom of things and knowing, number one, this isn't like you, this isn't something that you logically are doing. And without completely—there was a little aside of like, oh, that's the hormones, but thankfully it didn't stay in that place.

**Jarrah:** Mm-hmm.

**Aliza:** Cuz that would've been annoying.

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Aliza:** But yeah, he just, he went deeper. He was like, there's something deeper here, and I really wanna get to the bottom of it. I like that. I really like how they showed healthy relationship dynamics and working through conflict in a

relationship, even taking a little space—kind of healthy sometimes, you know? And when they came back together, they were ready to start again and try that process again of communicating better. So, yeah, Tom, it's nice to see him in this. I also do wanna acknowledge the—I have to kind of step back because this is Star Trek. It's 24th century. And my hope when watching this episode is, I would hope that people would not still feel this way and be treated like this. I would hope that we would've evolved past this. She got bullied by her human family members.

**Jarrah:** Mm-hmm.

**Aliza:** Humanity is supposed to be, in Star Trek, this quasi-utopian society that has overcome a lot of stuff. And yet, and yet... \*Aliza and Matt chuckle\* This is still an issue that she went through as a child. So it's weird for me to look at it through the lens of 21st-century politics and social identities. But, if you do apply that lens to it, then Tom is coming from a privileged place where he's never had to think this way. He's never had to feel this way in his life. So I think that probably was to B'Elanna's benefit that she had a partner that could just be—stand strong in that and push back against that. But also, he probably couldn't relate to her because of that, in that more interpersonal way, he couldn't really understand what it really feels like to feel that way. So, yeah. All in all, I think they did a good job of showing Tom being a good partner in this.

**Sarah:** Yeah. I 100% agree with everything you said about Tom being a supportive partner. I wanna go back to what you said about her being hormonal. That's the thing that really bothered me in the episode, how she got pregnant and suddenly she's so hormonal she's capable of anything, and she's also not held accountable for anything she did, including violating the doctor's consent.

**Jarrah:** Mmm.

**Aliza:** Mm-hmm. Yeah.

**Matt:** Mm-hmm.

**Sarah:** That was really bad, and they kind of just skimmed right over it.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, I think that that is a big, thorny issue here that isn't fully explored, is that she alters his program without his consent to override his ethical subroutines. It's as if someone could say, 'Hey, I want you to go over there and steal from that old lady.' And I said, 'No,' and they forced me to do it. She is trying to make him do something that he knows to be unethical.

**Aliza:** Mm-hmm.

**Sarah:** And he's just not bothered by it. It's like, you know what, she's gonna be pregnant for another eight months and you're just not worried anything else is gonna go wrong here? \*Aliza and Matt chuckle\*

**Jarrah:** Yeah, I did like the part where Paris goes to get parenting advice from Tuvok, cuz there aren't really a lot of other parents on this ship, I guess except Samantha Wildman, who's just off somewhere all the time. But I always like when I feel like Tuvok is a good parental-advice-type person.

**Matt:** Yeah, that's actually something that I didn't remember as much, focusing more on the gene-editing aspect of the episode, but it was amusing to hear all of the crew members talking about their own little old wives' tales, or I'm not sure what a better term for that is...

**Jarrah:** 'Why don't you name 'em "Chakotay"?' \*Matt laughs\*

**Matt:** Yeah. Or I guess Bolians believe if you give birth near a warp core, it'll give the child a better disposition. That's an interesting one.

**Jarrah:** I've actually not heard another term other than old wives'—I guess "folklore" for those types of things.

**Aliza:** Mm-hmm.

**Matt:** Yeah. But I was wondering, how long have the Bolians had warp drive, that it affected their beliefs about childbirth? \*Jarrah laughs\*

**Aliza:** I love that. I love that little touch. Chakotay saying, "'Taya," what about "Taya"?"

**Matt:** Yeah.

**Jarrah:** I do wanna go back to the gene-editing thing, but I actually find the part—like all the crew members' reactions to her pregnancy and how that puts pressure on her. I don't want kids, but I find that extremely relatable cuz anytime I come anywhere near a baby shower I just feel like a cat being patted backwards with all the advice people are giving the person...

**Matt:** Mm-hmm.

**Jarrah:** ...and all their—and I know it’s jokey, but it’s kind of these weird norms and expectations that we put on pregnant women that just drive me bananas.

**Aliza:** Mm-hmm.

**Matt:** A point that Aliza made about the idea of how you’d hope in the 24th century we wouldn’t be facing this anymore. And I think Jessie Gender made the similar point to what I was just thinking about, that Star Trek is kind of in this funny position where it’s trying to make commentary about today, but set in the future, so you have to have people have experiences that are relatable to today, but at the same point you’re like, ‘We should be past that at that point.’ So I don’t know if this is something you guys think much about, in terms of how Star Trek portrays issues of today.

**Aliza:** Mm-hmm. Yeah, well, for me, it’s always been that Star Trek is only utopian just when it comes to Earth, like the way Earth has progressed, it had to go through really, really horrible, bad dystopian times to get to this peaceful equilibrium of a utopia. And so when you take humanity out into the stars, meeting other species, that’s where the conflict comes. So that’s how I view Star Trek. And I think that’s also how Star Trek has been able to become allegorical for modern-day problems. It’s not just saying, ‘Human-to-human conflict, go!, that’s it.’

**Matt:** Right.

**Aliza:** Like, ‘That’s the story.’ No, it’s actually saying we’re looking at our own human-to-human conflicts through the lens of inter-alien, interspecies, interplanetary conflicts. So yeah, absolutely. It is a really interesting position that Star Trek places itself in to have that social commentary. And also, yeah, that said, my point before about, I would’ve hoped that they would’ve been past this, I think we all know, though, we’ve all watched a lot of Star Trek, we see how Klingons get discriminated against. We see how Worf is treated on TNG. And we see how they’re always treated—Klingons are always treated as loud, and just too much and all that stuff, and all these things that a lot of modern-day people of color and other underrepresented minorities in the US experience, and stereotypes we get put on ourselves. So yes, it makes sense that they would use B’Elanna as a lens to tell the story through.

**Matt:** Mm. Yeah, you just also reminded me of the specifics of the bullying that B’Elanna experiences, that Klingons will eat gagh, right? So put a worm on her sandwich. She should like that, right? But stereotypes are just that, stereotypes,



and not everybody from—or even partially from—a different culture are necessarily going to meet the norms that you expect them to.

**Aliza:** Mm-hmm. Yeah, it also shows, as enlightened as humanity is, kids still can say and do things that are hurtful to other people, and not just kids, but yeah, I think there are lots of good things that this episode kind of points to. But I wanna turn to one of the things—just the major ick factor for me is obviously the genetic removing of a child’s ethnicity. Well, not ethnicity, but species.

**Matt:** Mm-hmm.

**Jarrah:** Mm-hmm.

**Aliza:** And yeah, it’s just like, oh goodness, it is a hard pill to swallow when you watch this episode that she would go that far. I know I’ve talked to other people who are parents about this episode, and they’re like, ‘I kind of see where she’s coming from. I can understand.’ And I’m like, I get B’Elanna’s a beloved character. I love B’Elanna. I think she’s such an awesome character, but I was just really, really disturbed by seeing her go so far as to, like you said, Sarah, just violate the doctor’s consent to genetically change the species of her child. And again, it’s hard for us as modern-day viewers to see that and not see the parallels in actual race and ethnic cleansing and all that stuff.

**Matt:** Right. Yeah. And, as a parent, I have two kids and I do remember before they were born, I was wondering what they would be like. And I had some of these fears about, are they gonna experience anything like what I did? Cuz one of the funny things about my experience is—I suppose when I was younger, I looked, I think a little more Chinese, but I look at myself and I don’t even see it really at all. I mean, I guess partially, I just see me as me and I don’t even know if I could—if I didn’t know that it was me, if I could guess ethnicity at all. And I think one of the most surprising things that I remember in high school was somebody that I’d known for a few years but didn’t know me when I was younger, she thought I was a hundred percent Chinese. I was like, ‘What?’ So, I wasn’t sure how Asian my kids would look, and would they experience any discrimination? We ended up living in a slightly more diverse town than I grew up in. So it probably wouldn’t have been as much of an issue, but, I don’t know, I think they look pretty white, so I don’t think I have to worry about that one. And no genetic engineering on my part to make that happen. It’s just how it happened.

**Aliza:** Yeah. I’m not mixed-race, I’m mixed heritage, but both my parents are Black. And so I really wanna hold space for mixed-race people, and I really



appreciated the conversation that you led, Sarah, with the mixed-species or, I forget what you titled it, but mixed-species characters in Star Trek episode that we did. That was wonderful to hear people talk through those things. So for me, I can definitely hold space for that, but I also worry about kids who—if you're mixed-race and you pass as white, I think that's hard too. That's not just as hard, I can't say that in terms of society treating you a certain way, but I think in terms of how you identify and the people that you connect with, I think that can be really hard for kids to go through too. So do you, as mixed-race people, do you ever, when you think about your kids, do you think about that side of things too?

**Matt:** For my kids, we've been trying to do our best to expose them to Chinese culture to the best of our ability. But it's hard because my dad being the Chinese side, he worked a lot. And so I didn't always, I didn't get an exact— particularly, even—Chinese American experience. Like, my parents didn't send us to Chinese language school or anything like that, and I didn't really end up learning the language. So I got exposed to it usually more when I was visiting family, as opposed to growing up. And I think my kids are kind of getting a similar experience, but I feel like probably myself and my kids would not really be all that accepted in the Chinese community, as well as, for me, I don't think—I always felt like I don't fit either place.

**Aliza:** Mm-hmm.

**Matt:** I think, for my kids, they could probably more readily be accepted in American, more white spaces than in Chinese, but I don't know if that's the case. That's just my guess.

**Aliza:** Yeah. I mean, it's hard, I think. Yeah. In either direction, it can be hard. I know, even though I'm not mixed race, I have Black on both sides, basically, I have one side of my family that's Puerto Rican and the other that's African American. And so I do relate to the feeling of being both and neither, and sometimes not feeling quite enough of one or the other or both.

**Matt:** Mm-hmm.

**Aliza:** So I totally relate to that. And I think I do have it easier because my racial identity is pretty clear to me, even though sometimes my cultural identity in my life has been kind of confusing to me.

**Matt:** Yeah. I think for me, I feel perhaps more of a cultural-identity confusion. And this is something that I think I relate to with B'Elanna because I don't think

that she truly embraces her Klingon culture and Klingon heritage, but there are points when she did, like what was the...

**Jarrah:** “Barge of the Dead”?

**Matt:** Was it “Day of Honor,” or...

**Jarrah:** “Barge of the Dead” at the end kind of? Well, there is the part where she’s trying to celebrate the Day of Honor.

**Matt:** Right. Yeah. That’s what I was thinking about. Mm-hmm.

**Jarrah:** I mentioned “Barge of the Dead” because I think that this episode “Lineage” fits into a pattern of B’Elanna episodes—that, to some extent, I think the writers had a hard time thinking of other types of conflict she could go through cuz she has so many episodes that are... I think largely many of them are very strong episodes, but they really repeat this theme.

**Matt:** Mm-hmm.

**Jarrah:** Although, also, perhaps that is accurate, because I feel like that level of inner conflict and trauma isn’t something that you just overcome in one episode. So we had our friends at Interspectional podcast comment that, “This episode is such an important story about B’Elanna, and how when we have children so much of our unresolved trauma bubbles up, even when we think we’ve dealt with it. And it deepens part of her history that we first learned about in ‘Faces.’”

**Matt:** Mm-hmm.

**Jarrah:** Which is the one where she’s split into two, the Klingon half and the human half. “And we see things come back up emotionally when she sees her father again in the last season. It just gets into an emotional nuance when it comes to dealing with prejudice and how it can influence your psyche in ways that you might not realize.” And “Barge of the Dead” was, I think, a season before this. And that’s the one where she thinks her mother is going to Klingon hell.

**Matt:** Mm-hmm.

**Jarrah:** And she needs to help relieve her mother of shame. And so for me this episode, when I first saw it, one thing I didn’t like so much was, to me, I felt like it was a step back for B’Elanna in that character arc. But, like I said, maybe

it's accurate that we actually do need to revisit these parts of ourselves fairly often in our real lives. It just wasn't that common in episodic Star Trek at the time.

**Matt:** Right.

**Sarah:** I feel like we should mention the “tragic mulatto” trope, because they always lean so heavily into that with B'Elanna, which...

**Aliza:** Mm-hmm.

**Sarah:** ...I mean, she's kind of coded as half Black, versus someone like Deanna Troi, who is half Betazoid and half human, but she's coded white, so she doesn't have this tragic story.

**Matt:** Mm-hmm.

**Aliza:** Mm-hmm. Yeah.

**Jarrah:** I guess you can debate what she's coded. But in this episode we see her human family is Latinx. And with her last name, and the actor's heritage... But either way, I think the trope applies. Do you wanna maybe tell a little bit about the trope for anyone in the audience who hasn't heard the “tragic mulatto” term before?

**Sarah:** Just that it's like, ‘Oh, this person who is half white and half Black is such a sad story.’ It's just a common theme.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. And it goes back in literature and in film way, way, way back. And often, in classic film and literature, the result is that character must die. And we see this in—probably the best example in Star Trek is “The Paradise Syndrome,” where Miramanee gets stoned to death and the result is that their tragic mulatto child cannot be born. And it kind of relieves the anxiety that the existence of that child would've had on Kirk's life. So that is something that has a long history, and it doesn't result in death in B'Elanna's case, but she's looking at annihilating that part of her child's heritage. So, it's heavy.

I think the other thing that it connects to that I feel was really topical at the time—so I don't know if this was part of the creators' decision—was also the debates around editing the genes of fetuses with disabilities.

**Matt:** Mm-hmm.

**Jarrah:** And so I would be surprised if that wasn't part of their thinking in creating this episode, was those debates. Although obviously it's another complicated issue and, at a time when, I feel like, not just your country, but much of the world has reproductive rights top of mind...

**Aliza:** Mm-hmm

**Jarrah:** ...it almost feels sometimes like maybe we can't even talk about these nuances because we have to focus on the fundamental rights. But it doesn't take away from the fundamental right to control your body that it is not ethical to deny the existence of someone based on their race or ethnicity.

**Aliza:** Yeah. Even when it's your own child. Yeah, absolutely.

**Matt:** So it's interesting you bringing that up because that's what kind of gets B'Elanna started in thinking about this process to begin with, because it turns out her daughter has a spinal-curve issue, or something like that. And when she was young, they fixed it with surgery. At this point, they can do some sort of gene editing to fix it. So apparently at least this episode's saying Star Trek thinks that it's okay to fix potential genetic disabilities with gene editing while still a fetus. But removing the heritage—the aspect of the person—that's probably going too far.

**Sarah:** What if that little girl grew up to be like Worf and be super pro-Klingon, but her mom had removed her ridges? She would be so mad.

**Matt:** Mm-hmm.

**Jarrah:** Mm-hmm. Yeah. And I think that there is probably a thesis that could be written about Star Trek and genetic engineering. I know there's some papers, but I feel like Star Trek is also swinging around in its stance on these issues in some of the newer shows, or becoming much more open to it potentially being okay in some cases. But I feel like this is definitely a line that they draw. The disability thing is a whole other thing entirely. It would be a completely different situation if we were looking at the child being born with a form of blindness like Geordi had. And then deciding to make a choice on that would be to me extremely a different case than fixing a spinal curvature that would have to be fixed to keep the child alive.

**Matt:** Yeah. That's an interesting one that you bring up also, because that brings up "The Masterpiece Society,"...

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Matt:** ...where someone like Geordi wouldn't exist, but they use his visor technology to save the colony. So Star Trek has had some kind of back-and-forth, I think, thoughts on disability. It does seem to waver a little bit, I guess, on that.

**Sarah:** So I looked up the writer of this episode because I was thinking to myself, 'Was this written by a white dude? I think it was written by a white dude.' And yes, it was, \*all chuckle\* but he was also a former ER doctor, so he had the medical background. And also, just for context, this was the time of Dolly the sheep and it seemed like all of genetic engineering was opening up to us at this time. So this was a hot topic.

**Aliza:** Right.

**Sarah:** I don't know what to think of that he had genetic engineering and all of Star Trek's sandbox to play in and he went to race.

**Matt:** I think it does make sense that this was written by a white guy. I mean, Berman, partially. But even though I can relate to B'Elanna's feelings, I think that it's a little problematic to me that it's being written by a white person who probably doesn't actually have this experience, a white person who hasn't gone through this experience of being bullied for their own heritage. I'm not sure where they—I'm kind of curious as to where they got this idea. Because I could see that from my own personal experience, but how'd they come up with the idea of this feeling of wanting to remove that part of yourself?

**Aliza:** I don't know if it's this episode, but I have heard that there's a white writer who wrote an episode that had racial overtones in it, similar to this one, if not this one, and they said that he—I think it was a he—said that his stepbrother or half brother is half Black and half white, and that inspired him to write these types of themes into the episode. Again, I'm not sure if it was this episode or some other Star Trek episode. And not to defend that choice to write about it when it's not their firsthand experience, but I think that might be something there.

**Sarah:** Oh yeah, I mean, the guy who wrote "Far Beyond the Stars" was white. And that episode's incredible, but they also had Avery Brooks direct it.

**Matt:** Mm-hmm.

**Aliza:** Right. Yeah, it goes back to that question of, ‘Are writers allowed to write outside of their experience, and if they do, what should they be doing to make an informed decision that they’re writing about these topics?’ Matt, sounds like you have some questions about that. Jarrah and Sarah, how do you feel about that?

**Jarrah:** Well, first of all, I’ll just say it was directed by Peter Lauritson, who I believe is a white guy. And yeah, I think it’s complicated. In a TV show, I think that there are many different steps in the production where people have the opportunity to input into the process, and so it’s a little bit less clear-cut than, say, a novel. So, for example, just say the original writer had an idea and then it was heavily reworked behind the scenes by a diverse writers’ room and passed between various people. I think that that can kind of address some of the issues in some ways. It’s hard to know without knowing, ‘How many drafts did this go through, and at which stage were these ideas inserted?’ I do feel like generally it’s problematic and you should be asking yourself when you come into situations like this, ‘If this story is important enough to tell, can we not find someone who has this experience to tell it, or can we not find a consultant that can read this script and let us know if it’s horribly off-base?’ But what I hear from the listener comments is not that necessarily it was an inaccurate depiction of some of the conflicts that people feel, but just that the choice to link it with the genetics was potentially triggering or problematic. And then the fact of his background also potentially brings in kind of an appropriation angle. Is that roughly reflecting what is kind of being discussed?

**Matt:** Yeah. I think that’s kind of what I would think too. That’s kind of my feelings. Certainly I would appreciate if a writer is writing about an experience that isn’t theirs, then they should be discussing it with people that have the relevant experience, so that, at the very least, we can see if there’s truth behind it. Otherwise, I can speak for myself, and saying how I felt doing that to myself, I guess that does feel a little bit truthful. But if that’s not something that other people ever really feel like, then are you just creating this sort of idea that people might think is the experience when it’s not authentic?

**Jarrah:** Oh, I’ll just add that James Kahn also wrote the story for “The Masterpiece Society.” So I now, yeah, I’m pretty sure he had some similar thoughts in mind.

**Aliza:** Mmm. One thing about “Lineage” that I wonder, if someone who had firsthand experience, life experience, of being mixed-race had written it, would it have ended the same way? Would B’Elanna have—so, first of all, the fact that she finally does come to terms with it and realize, ‘Okay, no, yes, I want my

child to still have my genes in her.’ But the breakthrough wasn’t, ‘Hey, you need to chill with this self-hatred stuff.’ It was, ‘Oh no, I’m not gonna leave you like your father did.’ And even though it’s very emotionally impactful and it’s really great TV writing—like I said before, I think this is a really well constructed episode of TV and episode of Star Trek. But what was the lesson she actually learned? Did she actually, once again, just like “Barge of the Dead,” did she kind of shave another—I don’t know what the metaphor is—shave a notch off of her self-hatred of her Klingon-ness? I don’t think so. I don’t know if she did. She kind of just was like, ‘Okay, it’s not the *worst* thing if my daughter has ridges like me, cuz her dad’s not gonna leave her.’ But all the rest of her self-hatred is presumably still there, still lurking under the surface. So that is one thing that I wish—I wish we could have had a little bit more of B’Elanna’s growth towards not hating her Klingon self.

**Sarah:** Totally agree.

**Matt:** Yeah, it’s funny cuz I think that’s something that I definitely struggled with over the years, and I think I’ve come to a comfortable place with myself, but I don’t know how much that will ever fully—how much that trauma will ever be healed.

**Aliza:** It’s a lifelong thing, right? We live in a society where we’re fed these ideas about certain parts of ourselves and thinking that they’re wrong, or less-than, or they should be this, they should be that. And yeah, it takes a lifetime to undo that work. So, yeah, for you and for everyone who’s listening who’s still going through that, please don’t feel like you have to have figured it out overnight. And maybe that is one good reason to see a character like B’Elanna. But I guess what I’m saying is, I just wish in all of the B’Elanna episodes, I wish we had gotten a little closer to her cracking through that self-hatred. I think this episode could have brought her a little further along, but then it didn’t quite get there.

**Matt:** Mm-hmm.

**Sarah:** I will say that’s one thing I think Worf does really, really well, is teaching Alexander about his Klingon heritage while he’s living in a human society, or a predominantly human society. And I think that’s what helped me grow up with a healthy perspective on being mixed-race, because I grew up visiting Japan and I grew up living in a neighborhood that actually had a lot of Japanese kids because there was a Japanese microchip company in town. They would bring over engineers who would bring their entire families. And so we would socialize with them a lot and we had some kids living right up the street,



we used to play all the time. So I don't think I had some of the difficulties that you guys had, and I think that's something that Worf is doing really well for Alexander is helping him appreciate his culture.

**Jarrah:** Mmm.

**Matt:** Yeah.

**Aliza:** Yeah, B'Elanna was resistant to that, cuz her mom tried to, but B'Elanna kept pushing it away. But I guess we see from this episode a lot of it had to do with her feeling like her father left because she was Klingon. So, yeah, I'm glad that we have both depictions of that, right? We have B'Elanna who struggles with it, but then we get to see Alexander be raised around a lot of humans but have his Klingon dad teach him, and then Alexander actually take that up of his own accord, too, and become a bekk later in his story. So it's good to have multiple representations of Klingon-ness.

**Sarah:** Yes. And multiple representations of being mixed-race. I mean, it seems like Molly O'Brien got raised with a lot of Japanese culture.

**Aliza:** Yeah.

**Matt:** Mm-hmm.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, I was gonna ask, Sarah, how you feel this episode and B'Elanna—do you see big themes that were jumping out from that bigger discussion that you had in the earlier episode?

**Sarah:** Yeah, just that they made B'Elanna have it so bad, while Deanna Troi had it easy, and Molly had it easy, and to some extent Alexander had it pretty easy, but B'Elanna just had it sooo hard.

**Jarrah:** Mm-hmm.

**Aliza:** Sarah, I think you're absolutely right. I never realized what you're saying about Deanna, how easy she had it as a mixed-species person, and her being coded as white. And you're absolutely right about Klingons and Blackness being coded into it—and not just Blackness, but Asian-ness and otherness and being exoticized, too. Yeah, you hit the nail on the head with that. I think that's why it's hard for me as a Black person sometimes, as much as I love B'Elanna and seeing her as a Latina character, and actress, just rock that role—it's also hard for

me to see her be so self-hating against the Klingon side, cuz it feels like a rejection of Blackness. It *really* does. That's how it hits emotionally.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. I was gonna say with Deanna there's clearly, like you were saying, the white-passing, but also, in her character, human-passing—that she has to tell people she's a Betazoid. Apparently her eyes are darker. But also, in terms of the way that they're exoticized, Deanna's the sexy kind of exotic, and Klingon isn't known to be the sexy kind of exotic, although, I mean, K'Ehleyr, man...

**Aliza:** Right? Queeeeen. \*Jarrah laughs\*

**Jarrah:** She [B'Elanna] has the angry woman part of the stereotype, too, which is also a racialized stereotype for human women in various races.

**Aliza:** Absolutely. And Latina women and Black women. Absolutely.

**Jarrah:** Exactly. So she has that whole aspect as part of her character as well, whereas Deanna is just more feelings-oriented, which is not a stigmatized trait in women.

**Matt:** Yeah. And it's funny when you mention Deanna, because I think she's one that I have to actually kind of remind myself that she's half Betazoid. She's not the one that I think of when I think of these human-alien allegories for mixed race. I think of Spock or B'Elanna. Deanna doesn't come up in my thoughts when I think of those kind of characters, and probably because she is so human and white-passing. She seems like any other character on TNG.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, and she [B'Elanna] also is going against the grain in terms of our 1995 societal norms by being the chief engineer and a Maquis. She's a rebel, she's not in Starfleet when she starts out, she punches a white guy in like her first episode or second episode. So yeah, I think that when we talk about Deanna, we talk about how some of her more feminine traits are often things that our society undervalues, but they're definitely normative for white women. And *everything* B'Elanna is doing is not normative for women in our society. So in some ways it's extremely cool, but I get that it's also then kind of hard—especially when people relate to her—to see her go through these really painful struggles.

**Sarah:** I don't know. I'm trying to put this thought together about how B'Elanna's a woman who gets to be angry, and Kira's a woman who gets to be angry, but they're portrayed in very different ways. Kira doesn't really have the

tragic story that B'Elanna has. I mean, she has tragic background, but it's not ongoingly tragic.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, it's not repeated every episode. I feel like sometimes maybe Kira has a bit more of an arc in that respect. I think B'Elanna grows a lot, but she continually comes back to this issue.

**Sarah:** It's more an identity thing.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, they've both been through trauma, but Kira literally survived an occupation, so maybe we cut her a bit more slack for that. But Kira definitely doesn't have the racial tension or the sense of not fitting in because she's a Bajoran. Cuz she bonded with her community as a result of the trauma she went through in the occupation.

**Matt:** Right. And, if anything, she might butt heads with the provisional government, but it's not an identity type of thing.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. Super interesting. Trying to think more about that.

**Matt:** One thing that I was thinking about before doing the episode was that, I was kind of interested in talking about this, but I saw some people on Twitter talking about one of our other favorite mixed-species characters, Spock, and concerns about, with Strange New Worlds, him dealing too much with his war between his human and Vulcan side. And that made me think about this episode and, this coming up, and I was like, 'Yeah, that's what this episode's about, and we're gonna talk about it.' And I think what some people I saw were saying was that—at least if I'm understanding them correctly—we don't wanna have to always feel like the mixed-race person has this inner conflict. And I think what that made me think about was—I can appreciate that because what it made me realize, like, I don't want to have this in me. If I could just change my past so that I felt like I could fully embrace both sides of it, I would love that. But unfortunately I can't change that, so I guess it's one reason why episodes like this still do impact someone like me.

**Jarrah:** Mm. Yeah. It's really interesting that this is such a recurring theme in Star Trek. And I think that it is positive to have more examples of these characters, because there is no one biracial experience. Everyone does not have, necessarily, the type of experience that B'Elanna had, or that Spock had, or that Deanna had. And when we have more examples, we can compare them better and talk about how that connects more to real-world situations.

**Sarah:** Yeah. So yay Star Trek for being a great big universe. \*Jarrah and Matt laugh\*

**Jarrah:** I did want to shout out a mention of a scene that we did not note, that Craig, one of our listeners, wrote about. He wrote about some of the other ones we did cover, but he also shouted out the scene where Icheb thinks the baby is a parasite, which I'm very fond of. \*Sarah and Matt laugh\*

**Matt:** I completely forgot about that until I watched it. Oh, Icheb. That was such an Icheb moment.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. We also had a comment from Ann Marie that was just like, "No one ever talks about what it feels like to come from a mixed background and then address what that means for your potential children. So effing powerful and bold." So I feel like that is maybe a good note to start to wrap up on, but I'll throw it out there for any final thoughts.

**Matt:** I kind of wonder—I've never asked my parents if they actually thought about that, now that you mention that. So I know what my experience was having my own children, but I kind of was like, well, they're probably gonna be pretty white-passing, so it may not affect them, I don't know, we'll see. But it now makes me wonder if my parents anticipated that their children might experience any of the kind of difficulties that I had. I have the feeling that—my dad grew up fairly poor in Hong Kong, and I think he viewed America as the land of opportunity and he was gonna be in a better place. And I suspect that he probably didn't anticipate really any issues, cuz he's like, 'America's gonna be a lot better than Hong Kong. So, no matter what it is, it's probably better.' But I do kind of wonder if they ever thought about that, or if it just didn't even occur to 'em.

**Sarah:** I felt like it was really weird that they wanted to know what their kid was gonna look like.

**Jarrah:** Mmm.

**Sarah:** I don't know. That felt very strange, cuz a lot of people don't even wanna know what gender their kid's gonna be. And so, wanna know what your child's going to look like when it comes out? What if environmental factors change that, and it doesn't look like that? I was thinking about Ann Curry. She's a news anchor on one of the networks, or she was, and she used to be on the local news here in Portland. She's half Asian, and her biological child is blond

and blue-eyed, 100% white-passing. And so she goes out in public, and people would assume her child was adopted.

**Jarrah:** Or that she's the nanny or something? We hear a lot about cases like that.

**Sarah:** Yeah. So I don't know why I was connecting that with them, wanting to know what the child was gonna look like, but that just seemed very strange to me. \*Matt chuckles\*

**Jarrah:** Interesting. I'm not surprised by that. You know those apps that make your face look different? I feel like I've seen one that you can merge your face with someone else and it shows you what your hypothetical kid should look like. And it's very creepy. It's like one of those ones that down-ages or up-ages you based on a photo—and also you should always be suspicious of those apps. But anyhow, I'm not surprised by that at all. I think people, not to do with race necessarily, just think about, 'Is my baby gonna look like me?' And people also think a lot about how much they look like their parents, and which parent they look more like. And as soon as the baby's born, you start getting comments being like, 'Oh, it looks so much like whichever parent.' And I've heard from friends who have had babies who are like, 'Everyone says it looks like the other parent and I'm starting to get worried about what if she isn't gonna ever look like me.' So, to me, that's not surprising, but it has a whole more sinister level. Oh, and also the hologram baby just looks weird. Creepy. Because of, I guess, early-2000s CGI.

**Sarah:** I know, it was one tiny step above that dancing baby on Ally McBeal. \*Jarrah and Matt laugh\*

**Sarah:** With a really creepy CGI baby.

**Jarrah:** Yes. Oh my gosh.

**Matt:** I forgot about that until you just brought it back into my visual memory.

**Jarrah:** Sorry for that. The dancing, dancing Miral. And I think Miral is also maybe the coolest part of "End Game."

**Matt:** Mm-hmm.

**Jarrah:** And I know [Miral] has more of a role in the beta canon of the novels as well as I believe Star Trek Online. And I just love that Miral is a character generally. So, pro that.

**Matt:** Speaking of “End Game,” getting a little off topic with the episode...

**Jarrah:** All good.

**Matt:** ...my head canon is that all the positive aspects of what we see in the future still happen. Like, I firmly believe that Harry Kim is a captain. \*Jarrah laughs\* I do not like all these jokes that Harry Kim’s still an ensign. I’m like, ‘No, he’s captain, he went out on a four-year mission in deep space.’ If Garrett Wang wanted to do the show of Captain Kim on a four year mission, I wanna see it.

**Jarrah:** Awesome. Well, often when we do episode reviews, we also have the opportunity to rate the episode, and you can rate it out of whatever you’d like. So for example, I will rate this episode 7 out of 10 parasite babies.

**Matt:** Hmm, that’s a good one. Yeah, I mean, ahhh—I have such mixed feelings about this one. I might go with six parasite babies. I like that scale.

**Sarah:** I just feel like this episode was so all over the place in terms of like, what is it about? Is it about genetic engineering? Is it about internalized racism? Is it about fathers’ rights? Is it about people being really annoying when you’re pregnant? So I give it 2 out of 5 dancing babies. \*Matt laughs\*

**Jarrah:** I think that’s totally fair. And we didn’t even really talk about the fathers’ rights piece. I’ll say that I think Tom is really supportive and great in this episode, but obviously it is problematic if it gets into the territory that is like, ‘The father gets to decide what the woman does with her body.’ And it is treading into that territory, if not getting there. We’ll just add that.

**Matt:** That’s a good point, an angle that I didn’t really think too much about.

**Jarrah:** I mostly give it my higher rating just purely because of the number of people that wrote in from mixed backgrounds who said this meant a lot to them. And so I’ll weight that pretty highly. But yeah, it is Berman-era, it’s got some issues.

**Matt:** Mmm-hm.

**Sarah:** I was just really excited that, at one point, Tom says, “Computer, dim the lights,” and my lamps actually dimmed. And that’s the first time Star Trek has done that for me.

**Jarrah:** Nice. Awesome. Well, that’s about all the time that we have for today. So, Sarah, where can people find you elsewhere on the internet?

**Sarah:** They can find me on Instagram @sarahmgulde, S-A-R-A-H-M as in Mary-G-U-L-D-E. And they can find my fanzine Star Trek Trek Quarterly at startrekquarterly.wordpress.com or on Facebook.

**Jarrah:** And Aliza.

**Aliza:** You can find me @AlizaPearl on Twitter and Instagram, apizaliza on Twitch, and therealalizapearl on TikTok.

**Jarrah:** And Matt, thank you so much for joining us today. Do you have anything you’d like to plug, or where can people find you elsewhere on the internet?

**Matt:** Thanks for having me. So, nothing to plug, just happy to join you, cuz big fan. And if anybody wants to find me on Twitter, MGCTrekkie, and yeah, I just mostly talk about Star Trek.

**Jarrah:** That’s the best way to use Twitter, IMO. Thank you so much. And I’m Jarrah, you can find me @jarrahpenguin on Twitter and Instagram. That’s J-A-R-R-A-H penguin, and I’m also at trekkiefeminist.com. To learn more about our show or to contact us, visit womenatwarp.com, email us at crew@womenatwarp.com, or find us on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram @WomenAtWarp. Thanks so much for listening!