

Women at Warp Episode 198: The Bell Riots are Sooner Than You'd Think

Sarah: Hi, and welcome to Women at Warp: a Star Trek podcast. Join us in our continuing mission to explore intersectional diversity in infinite combinations. My name is Sarah, and thanks for tuning in. With me today are Dr. Juniper Simonis.

Juniper: Hello.

Sarah: Denny Wagner.

Denny: Hi.

Sarah: And a medic who will be participating anonymously. Hi medic.

Anonymous Medic: Hi.

Sarah: 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 per month and get awesome rewards from thanks on social media, up to silly watch along commentaries. Visit <https://www.patreon.com/womenatwarp>. Looking for podcast merch? Check out our TeePublic store. There's so many designs, with new ones being added all the time, and on so much more than just t-shirts. Find it at <https://www.teepublic.com/stores/womenatwarp>. So before we jump in, let's get to know our guests a little bit. If you wouldn't mind telling us a little about yourself, and your history with Star Trek, and your involvement in protests, starting with Juniper.

Juniper: Yeah, so my name is Juniper Simonis. I use they/them pronouns. I live out in Portland, Oregon. I am a PhD ecologist and a lover of science, both real and fiction. You know, from a young age, I've been the child of someone who's been a modest Trekkie. So I grew up with a passing love for Star Trek, but never really became too Trekkie of a Trekkie myself. But I'm pretty into and aware of Star Trek. So I have been involved in a number of social justice causes that have involved protests.

Sarah: Awesome. Denny, can you tell us a little bit about yourself, and your history with Star Trek, and your involvement with protesting?

Denny: Yeah. Hi. Yeah, I live in Minneapolis on the ancestral lands of the Dakota and Anishinaabe people in the state of Minnesota. Yeah, my history with Star Trek is I've been a Trekkie my whole life. So I - when I was a really little kid, my mom and I would watch reruns of the original series on our little 13 inch black and white TV while we were eating dinner during the week and I was obsessed with Uhura, just thought she was the coolest thing ever. And yeah, I've been a Trekkie ever since.

And my involvement with protests started primarily here in Minnesota. We have had some pretty intense resistance to some fossil fuel projects. So I've done a lot of organizing and protests with – alongside and following the lead of indigenous water protectors to try to stop those projects and protect the water and the land. And then since I live in Minneapolis in 2020, when George Floyd was murdered, that of course became a thing here. And there was so much opportunity for protest. And for a while there, I felt like I was out there almost every night. But yeah, so there, there's just been a lot to do in the place where I find myself.

Sarah: And medic can you tell us something about yourself, and your history with Star Trek, and your involvement with protests?

Anonymous Medic: Great, thanks again for having me here. I, also like Juniper, have had Star Trek be part of the mouldure of my childhood. My dad was also a big fan of watching Star Trek which is really interesting. I come from an immigrant family, first generation. My father himself doesn't speak English fluently, but he ardently always watched Star Trek and all these science fiction shows. So I had that going on as a kid. And that was really what exposed me to science fiction as a whole was through television as well as through books and comics.

As I got older, I don't, you know, I moved away a little bit from the Trek fandom, but it was always part of my life just because I have a lot of geek circles that I run around in, and that just tends to be like the Venn diagram of everything that you love all the time. And, but I've been actually, I recently got back into Trek when I started watching *Discovery*, and *Lower Decks*, and *Picard*, and now *Strange New Worlds*.

So this whole new wave of Star Trek media has really caught my attention. And I think it's been really invigorating for the community as a whole. I really love it. And, you know, in terms of protest, I've been active as a protester for many years. And then, you know, several years ago when the Black Lives Matter movement started in 2013/2014, I got more involved on a proactive, localized

level. And later on, I decided to become a street medic for those who are just hearing this term for the first time, a street medic is a volunteer medical person – they don't have to be a professional – that is trained in first aid and emergency trauma medicine and protest tactics that are there for marches, demos, you know, events, occupations, what have you, to assist in emergency medical care and other medical needs for the protestors on the ground. We also serve off-ground needs as well. And I've been involved for that in several years. I'm part of a street medic collective based on the east coast.

Sarah: Awesome. And we'll definitely get more into that later in the episode. So to get started, the general structure of this episode is going to be talking about the *Past Tense* [DS9 Season 3, Episodes 11 & 12] two parter and The Bell Riots, and then talking about protesting, and how to protest, and how to get involved if you've never been involved before, framed in terms of The Bell Riots. So my hope for this episode is that it gives people who were looking to become more involved, the information they need to actually get out there and become more involved.

So going back to the beginning and talking about *Past Tense* parts one and two, they originally aired on January 2nd and 9th, 1995. Written by Ira Steven Behr, Robert Hewitt Wolfe, and René Echevarria, is set in San Francisco in September, 2024, which at the time was nearly three decades in the future. But now it's only two years for us, like we're almost there and we seem to be right on track. I don't know how you guys feel about it, but I feel like we are definitely getting there.

Denny: Yes.

Anonymous Medic: On track in the darkest timeline.

Juniper: Yeah. Like with a lot of things with Star Trek, you know, they, they were pretty prescient with quite a few of the social things and hilariously off with some of the technological things.

Sarah: And the fashion. Like I'm glad that fashion prediction hasn't come true.

Juniper: Fewer gray jumpsuits, which is nice to some degree, I guess. And the jumpsuits that we have these days are a little bit more colorful at least.

Sarah: This was the first episode, and they're into season three at this point, first episode, not to feature any scenes on the station, but it does feature Clint Howard. This is the second of his four Star Trek appearances across four series

and four species, bless Clint. I hope like 30 or 40 years from now, whatever Trek they're doing, like digitally edits Clint into little roles here and there. Inspirations for The Bell Riots included the Attica Prison Riot and the then current state of the homeless population in L.A. in the 90s. It was not completely disjointed from real life in that in 1994, just as production on the episode was finishing up, the mayor of L.A. actually proposed what was essentially a sanctuary district. And this year in Portland where Juniper and I live, our mayor actually proposed what was essentially a sanctuary district. I don't know if you saw that in the news Juniper.

Juniper: I did. And yeah, I know watching this episode again, or the set of episodes again, I was like, wow, no, this is, this is – they're trying to do it right now!

And it's, I mean, it's the same thing. Like everybody's like, wait, do you mean concentration camps? Like what? What do you – you mean a ghetto? Like, what are you, what are you talking about? Like putting people into spaces and fencing them off? And then fences become walls and then walls get guarded and then people can't leave. Right? Like, it's right there. We're very, very close. You know, this is something that they do in a lot of other countries around the world and in the U.S. as well. You know, they're undesirables, you put 'em in a place and you, you close the door. Right? And everybody can go on their, their life. No mind to be paid.

Sarah: Yeah. And just so no one thinks we're exaggerating the thing that was proposed was compulsory camps for the homeless patrolled by the National Guard. I mean, it was a sanctuary district.

Denny: Wow.

Sarah: But speaking of Portland, I do just want to note that before all the time travel nonsense happened, Sisko was going to go visit his sister in Portland. So sometime in the future we get Sisko's.

Juniper: Yeah. I saw that.

Sarah: So, I feel like this episode is really Deep Space 9, doing what it does best, which is like ditching metaphor or, or setting these situations on alien planets and just getting straight to the point. It's like far beyond the stars. It's like, “Nope. We're just gonna talk about racism.” This episode's like, “Nope. We're just gonna talk about homelessness, and talk about class issues, and the

importance of protests.” And what, what did you guys find were your big takeaways from this episode? High level.

Anonymous Medic: On a high level. What I found most fascinating about the, the origins of the sanctuary districts is the fact that it originally had very good intentions. They were supposed to provide free housing for everyone who arrived. It was specifically for people that are looking for jobs, but because of also institutional flaws, that is where this idea, which would have really helped people from the margins, rise up, became a tool to actually push them back down.

And that is what I find really interesting. It wasn't like, “oh, fascism arrived overnight, and this is what happened to these people.” It was a genuine lack of accountability for our government institutions to do what they need to do. And I was particularly struck when, you know, Sisko and Bashir were talking and Bashir was asking how could've this happened?

And Sisko didn't have a straightforward answer about why, how this could have happened. And I think, you know, it says a lot about the timeliness and also the timelessness of this episode when you actually tried to confront larger systemic issues. And simultaneously there is a paper trail. There is, you know, a timeline of how things happen, but usually it happens in a way that if you're not paying attention, it can feel overwhelming when it suddenly hits you. And I thought that was very astute of the episode.

Sarah: Yeah, I do like that line, it's like right at the end of the show where Bashir's like, how did they let things get so bad? And that's the line that always makes me cry. And I'm just like, I don't know, but I'm so sorry, Dr. Bashir.

Denny: You know, the exchange that those two had in the first part is actually the one that sticks with me most and that sort of caught me as I was rewatching it because Bashir again is just sort of lamenting how we could get this bad. And Sisko says, “It's not that they don't give a damn, they've just given up. The social problems they face seem too enormous to deal with.” And that just felt to me like, well, that's exactly the world we're in right now. You know, I think everybody, to some degree, is just dealing with the enormity of it. And it's so easy to just throw your hands up and say, “what could we possibly do on the face of all of this?”

Sarah: And I think Bashir's response to that was something along the lines of like, “it's one thing to let people suffer because you hate them, but just letting them suffer cuz you've forgotten how to care is something. I just can't wrap my

head around.” You know, that's not exactly what he says, but something like that. And you definitely feel that.

Anonymous Medic: Yeah. Another takeaway that I got from the episode was it really addressed the different types of protest that people turn to and, you know, The Bell Riots are popularized by extreme use of violence against the protesters, but also the conversations the protesters had amongst themselves about how to treat the hostages, about how to present themselves and for the media. The use of the media as a tool of protest was also pretty accurate to a lot of conversations I hear in organizing all the time about whether, you know, the character Michael Webb, who is one of the residents of the district was saying, “Oh, you have to show up,” you know, at, you know, “at the processing center in your best clothes, you have to show that you are worthy of being helped” while you have characters like B.C. who takes a more violent route because B.C. believed that violence is the only way people actually pay attention. So, I think having that dynamic is also what was really striking about these episodes. They didn't try to homogenize opinions about what was the right way to protest. They've talked about like diversification of tactics and I thought that showed how complex that political situation, and a hotbed situation, can be when it can easily be glossed over as something very like cinematic, and action packed, and reduced the conversation to what it could mean.

Denny: Yeah, I agree. That was one of my main takeaways too, from this episode was the ever competing principles of violence versus nonviolence and movement work. And if anything, like with the B.C. character, I was actually disappointed in the way he was presented as kind of the fool who wasn't going into it with any strategy whatsoever. He just sort of was a moment to moment, kind of reacting to everything. I wish that they would've presented him as a more thoughtful, intentional character because I think that that argument between the sort of the variety of tactics that can be used is really interesting. And ultimately right, the episode, basically, I mean, Sisko says it himself, that he's right. I mean, if it hadn't been such a violent uprising, it never would've turned into that watershed moment as he calls it.

Juniper: Yeah. And one of the things that I think is particularly ridiculous given that this episode was, you know, written and shot and aired before most of us who are on the internets these days had anything faster than, you know, prodigy, is the role of the internet in facilitating individual protestors, sharing their stories and the humanizing aspect of that. I mean, that's a clear through line that you see still today where the media, by and large, tend to be beholden to forces financial and otherwise political, et cetera, that are outside of the folks who are most impacted. And so, there's a disincentivization or whatever for the media to

actually tell the stories of the protesters. And that's almost always gonna be the case. And the huge thing that this episode got right was the ability of social media, via the internet, to humanize protesters via direct connection with the audience without needing to be, you know, spoken for via the more general media.

Sarah: And so in addition to media being used as a tool of oppression, I think Denny, you wanted to talk a little bit about I.D. being used as a tool of oppression.

Denny: Yeah, it was just something that struck me. I think that was in part one when Sisko and Bashir are kind of getting processed and Vin, the security guy, was scanning their stuff or whatever on their, that really advanced console. Vin says when they don't show up, he's like, "it's like you two don't exist."

And I just thought that was such an interesting, kind of really great, simple line of dialogue, 'cause this idea that you don't exist if you don't have I.D. right? Is so central to the immigration debate in this country. And it's, you know, ideas now being used as a means of voter suppression. And you know, this idea that you just, you can't be human, you have no rights if you don't have this government issued card. Right? And just seeing how that played into these sanctuary districts and who was allowed in or, so forth, I just thought was kind of prescient too.

Sarah: And I thought another way they dehumanized people in this episode was by using slurs for what they perceived as different kinds of people in the sanctuary districts. So, when Sisko and Bashir get picked up, they get labeled as "dims" or, you know, who are supposed to be people with mental health issues. They talk about "gimmies" and I wasn't as clear on who the "gimmies" are supposed to be, but just, it sounds like just people who need jobs.

Juniper: They're "welfare queens," gimmie, gimmie, gimmie.

Sarah: Oh, gotcha.

Juniper: Yeah.

Sarah: And they also refer to "ghosts" who are the people who prey on their fellow neighbors in the sanctuary districts. And I thought it was thoughtful of them to invent the slurs that, obviously, people would be using in that situation. 'Cause that's what people do, right?

Juniper: Oh, totally. And you know, I wouldn't be surprised if those slurs, at least at some level, came out of the sanctuaries themselves, right? Like, because what happens when you put folks into this kind of a place is that you let... you force them to create their own stratification systems and say, "Oh, I'm not as bad as that person. I'm not a gimmie. Oh, I'm not a dim. Oh, I'm not a this or a that." And it allows the, you know, the people in control to kind wipe their hands of it and let the folks in the sanctuary kinda tear each other apart. And that then gets reinforced by the, you know, the larger social structure as well.

Anonymous Medic: I was curious too, about like the origin of, you know, those derogatory terms, because my impression was that even though, like the social worker was introducing this slang and it wasn't, you know, a government label or anything, but I could also imagine the guards giving these people those nicknames. Like I don't nec... and that terminology just carrying over to the people who are coming in as they're being onboarded, as part of like, you know, this is the type of culture you have to be wary of these people and these people.

And already, as Juniper mentioned, you get a sense of, you know, stratification and a sense of scarcity in these districts. And it also made me think that as much as, like, they were trying to create these districts to help people, it was almost proof of concept of denying them help. Like, "look, these are how these people actually are." That means it justifies the budget cuts. It justifies, you know, the lack of resources given to these people. And, so, I do think the commentary is also reflective upon it's a cycle of not just like people being naturally organizing to be contentious towards each other, but being placed, you know, in a situation where they have no choice. And that is the options that they're given as soon as they walk in the door.

Sarah: I mean, it just, it gives people a way to not care anymore. And I mean, it just, it just shows that language is powerful and that the writers were aware of that. One thing that kind of confused me about the "ghosts" was that nobody with a criminal record was supposed to be allowed in the sanctuary districts. And yet you had people who were essentially violent criminals preying on other residents. Did anyone have any thoughts about that?

Denny: Yeah, I sort of, I sort of laughed when I think Sisko was, that was part of his long exposition about the history of the sanctuary districts. He's like, "yeah, they don't let, they don't let criminals in here." And I'm like, well, that's first of all, completely not believable and yeah. And then you turn around and there's a whole class of criminals inside the sanctuary district, you know, I think it's – but I was wondering, like, I don't know if the writers would've thought about this this much, but the idea that they're not gonna let people in with

criminal records feels to me like government propaganda, right? Like something they would say to the general public say, “see these people that we're putting in here are gonna be safe and they're gonna– we're gonna help them get better and get jobs. And we're not letting any criminals in. Oh my gosh. That would just be awful.” But you know, they're not, they're not actually gonna be able to control that.

Juniper: Yeah. Similarly does sound a lot like propaganda, especially when you realize the degree to which folks who are in the homeless, or itinerant, or mentally disabled and in need of services, communities, et cetera, are far and away, disproportionately going to be targeted by police. So like in Portland, there's been some really good work done by a reporter for the, the show *Reveal*, her name's Melissa Lewis, looking into the arrest records and data from the Portland police. And it's pretty consistent that about half of the arrests that Portland police make are of people who are unhoused. And so the specific overlap between the kind of community that would be in a sanctuary and the kind of community that would be targeted by police, means that almost invariably they can't make it so that somebody without a criminal record couldn't be in the sanctuary because the vast majority of people who would be in the sanctuary, almost certainly would've been put in there because they would've been picked up and gotten a criminal record at some point.

Sarah: So, I wanna talk a little bit about our main characters from the station. So Sisko's the one who knows what's going on here. He has studied his 20th and 21st century history. He's aware of what's going to happen, what needs to happen. I thought Bashir was used really interestingly in this episode. He says he never studied 21st century history because it's too depressing. And I couldn't agree with him more – it's even more depressing living it – but he was used as this opportunity for exposition. So, he was like the Watson to Sisko's Sherlock. And Sisko has to explain to him and us everything that's going on.

Denny: Yeah, it was a lot like, just from a storytelling standpoint, this was an exposition heavy, especially part one. But yeah, I mean, I think it works. It's nice to hear. I mean, I think we need to be given that context. It would've been interesting if we could have seen it somehow, but –

Juniper: Yeah, I feel like there's a lot of telling and I mean, there's a good amount of showing, but you know, also by the time the second episode comes to a close, I was like, wait a second, there's not a third episode? They like, they closed it really quickly. And I feel like there's just, there's so much here that's very rich, that they could have spent a lot of time actually allowing the characters to experience rather than talk about it. But they just, they had to cram

so much into two very short episodes and so, like, they ended up having to do just a boatload of exposition.

Sarah: I remember seeing an Ira Steven Behr interview, not too long ago, about Past Tense and he was talking about the B plot where you have their friends from the ship beaming back into different times trying to find them. And he's like, "I'm sorry, that was pretty stupid and we didn't wanna include it. We wanted to spend more time with Sisko and Bashir but, you know, powers that be made us put it in."

Denny: Yeah, I think it was tonally just really jarring to jump between those two plots because, you know, we got these heavy moments with Sisko and Bashir and then Kira and O'Brien beaming in to hippies getting it on in a van. I mean, it was just like, what is – why was that necessary?

Sarah: It really wasn't.

Juniper: And also there was some really, I had some personal cringe about it, but they were like, "where are we gonna go? Which time frames? I've narrowed it down to these ten options." I'm like, O'Brien, that's not how this works. Right? Like, you're talking about like a – we don't know how many chronitons, right? Yeah, how many chronitons were out there? So we don't know what the concentration was so it could have been one of these couple of distinct options. And it's like, no, if you don't know what the concentration was, then it's a very continuous set of options. Not distinct options, unless there's something about chronitons that I don't know, which is probably what they're assuming is happening, right? Like they're gonna do their ... the little hand wavy about it. But I ... it was a ... it was a little bit ham-handed, but it was also like, not from my perspective – as somebody who comes into it with science – it wasn't even like a very scientific way to approach the problem that O'Brien was faced with, which was kind of frustrating.

Sarah: It's okay. There are things Deep Space Nine does well and time travel is not necessarily one of them.

Juniper: The time travel aspect of it, which I know is not really what we're talking about, but I know, I think it kind of is. It ... just the whole timeline thing? We're like, we're the only shift. There's a ... there's a chroniton bubble or whatever, the one – the thing that they called it. I'm like, oh my gosh, how ridiculous of a device do you have to like, create, to make this episode work,

right? Where like, oh, the entire timeline of everything— everything has shifted. The entire universe has shifted except what is inside our ship. Love it.

Denny: Which just makes Kira and O'Brien all the sillier, right? Because at the end they're like, "we've only got one left. Well, I don't know, just pick one randomly. It's only the entire universe hanging in the balance, whatever." That's just crazy.

Juniper: I'm not gonna ... I'm not gonna think about it. I'm just gonna ...

Denny: Yeah.

Juniper: Point and look, you know, like a plane.

Anonymous Medic: Well, there's nothing like inserting stakes by having a ticking clock or a limited number of chances to get x right so yeah ...

Sarah: So Bashier and Sisko end up in the sanctuary district when they're found, but when Jadzia gets found on the street, she gets treated very differently. Does anyone wanna talk about that?

Juniper: At least they didn't have Brynner, you know, playing being poor, 'cause that's sort of a trope that you'll see sometimes in this kind of a situation like a, "Oh, I'm ... I just happen to be playing it, being poor and I find this person who needs my help and I'm gonna help them." But there is this sort of damsel in distress aspect, and they had the, like the need to separate the three of them so that Dax could be put into that category was kind of weird. And so ... it's sort of very odd. The like, the physical way where like she shows up, like down the staircase a little bit, and they're like up on the street a little bit, like, was all that mattered as to whether, like, where they ended up, which is kind of real, right? Like, you know, the, whether, you know, whether the police grab you depends on whether or not they see you, but, you know, I can't imagine that Dax would've been that much better off than Sisko and Bashir, just because of sort of where they landed. But you know, maybe that's part of the point too, right? Like that, you know, somebody who comes into this situation, naively could just as easily end up in a sanctuary as in a high rise, I think is an interesting point to be made.

Sarah: So the point they were trying to make, and they've done interviews about this, was that Jadzia was a white woman and Sisko and Bashir were men of color, but I think it was really poorly executed.

Anonymous Medic: Yeah. So like, you know, I can definitely understand that was the intention and I definitely read the scene that way, you know, in the fact that, you know, not only like Sisko and Bashir were picked up immediately but, you know, it's something that when Dax was found, I think Juniper was right, that Dax was put into this like fragile white womanhood. And so she needed to be rescued, you know, and was – and it is very significant that Brynner, who was a white man, was the one who picked her up and found her and was able to help her. While, you know, these two, like patrolmen for the sanctuary district were like, “Nope, these two are definitely trouble. We have to take them there. We have to investigate them.” You know? So there is definitely a level of privilege and how both, you know, these situations were treated. What I also thought was very interesting is the fact that, you know, Dax was able to use her privilege as a white woman to help find her friends. I think because she had that ability, you know, it was shown like, this is how things like, you know, this happened in action and it does provide a commentary. Think about what it means to be an ally or a collaborator. I know like if, you know, Dax was very sympathetic towards the situation in the district, I wonder if their positions were switched and if she was in the district and the two men weren't, you know, how her choices would've played out differently, like, would she still have that same level of ability, you know, or would that be taken away as well?

Denny: That's a great question. I was pondering that too. There's also a certain aspect to the privilege of beauty, I think. Just because she is so attractive and, right away, Brynner is like, “Oh, damsel in distress,” and you can tell he is kind of, like, into her right from beginning, in that sort of gross man kind of way. And you know, it's just that, that was another thought I had. Like, if she hadn't, you know – she'd shown up like really dirty or disheveled or something, would he have even noticed her? Right?

Sarah: One thing you had mentioned, prior to recording Denny, was talking about this episode and how it relates to late-stage capitalism. Would you like to talk a little more about that?

Denny: It was just sort of, it seemed like the whole thing. It was interesting to ponder like how this is a possible direction that our society could go. And for those who aren't familiar with the term late-stage capitalism is this idea that is just used to refer to kind of the declining everything, that's tied in with capitalism. So the economy, and the erosion of social structures, and just how all of that is stemming from an economy that is not sustainable in the way it's currently designed. And so it was just interesting to me to think about, you know, how a sanctuary district would fit in with that when we have a system that cannot actually contain and handle all of the people, if they're not having

jobs, and they're not being actors within that system. At one point, I think when Sisko and Bashir were being processed by Lee, the social worker, she ... she's explained to them "Here's what's gonna happen now," and she says, "So you'll have to stay in the sanctuary district until you can find jobs. Oh, but there aren't really any jobs to be found. So you're gonna have to stay here until that changes." And I was just thinking about how, wow this is how this works in the real world, too. Right? Like, "Oh, you can't get a job? Okay. Then we're gonna take away your home, and we're gonna take away your possessions, and whatever financial wealth you may have. And now you just have to pull yourself up by the bootstraps and make it all work somehow, but we're not gonna help you at all." And that just sort of that's how that all connected for me.

Sarah: So that kind of relates to my next question, which is, who are the villains in this episode?

Denny: I love this question.

Sarah: Right? It makes you stop.

Anonymous Medic: I would say that from a storytelling perspective, there's a lot of antagonistic forces at play, you know, but there isn't like a cut and dried villain that we can pinpoint and say like, "oh, it's this person's fault. Or this person, once they're taken down, society will like balance out and restore itself." And one of the big takeaways too, is that they present a problem, but they don't present a solution. You know, they present temporary stop gaps but they don't say, "And here's how you can fix everything if you do this one thing right now." And I thought that was extremely realistic. I also think, simultaneously, that it can feel very depressing and very disempowering not to suggest what a possible solution could be. You know, there's, you know, some progresses towards change because of the riots, but we all know in the greater timeline, things will continue to decline until you know, this World War III scenario happens.

Denny: Yeah, I think deciding who the, the villain is, it's really hard to do without bringing your own biases to that, right? I think some people can watch this episode and say B.C.'s the villain. And then others, and I would count myself among them, see him as just another victim in all of this. You know, it's again for someone like me — who's kind of an anti-capitalist — I look at it and say, well, it's the state and the system, that's the villain. And all of these people, even the security officers like Vin and is it Bernardo, I think is the other one's name, you know, they're all just, and Lee, the social worker, they're all just victims of the system that is keeping them all down and putting them all in these positions that probably none of them actually want to do. And I think you can

even make the argument that Brynner, the white privilege guy is to some extent, a victim of it all too. I don't want to feel too bad for him, 'cause he seems to be doing pretty okay for himself but, you know, even he sort of says, right when he is introduced, he sort of self-deprecates and it's like, "oh, I'm just another drone." Like, "I'm a sellout." So on some level he knows that he's, you know, just a player in all of this as well and has some accountability for it. But, I don't know. I think some people can look at it and say, the police who barge in at the end are also the villains.

Juniper: Yeah. I think this is a, it's a really deep question in a really, really good way. And I think really the villain is us. Those of us who live during the time that they're talking about and live during the time leading up to the time that they're talking about because we set the stage, right? Yeah, I completely agree with what you're saying there, Denny of like the governor at the end, you know, sending, sending the national guard or the S.W.A.T. team in, or whatever is perhaps the closest to a single person that is malicious without really any redeeming quality around them. 'cause I don't think Brynner is malicious at all. And I mean, he ends up actually playing a really vital role and being a very, very supportive privileged white guy. But he, you know, exists in this system that we've all created.

I totally agree that B.C. is not a villain in the way that you might think of like, oh, the, the guy who wants to resort to violence is some villain or whatever. Like I totally understand, you know, him being put in a corner and needing to fight to survive, but even throughout all of that, you still see these great glimpses of his humanity. Like the whole Walking Dead Frank Grimes hat scene with the kid. Danny, right? Where he like gives the kid his hat, right? Like that whole situation. And like, it really humanizes him. Like you see, you see behind the mask that B.C. has to put up in order to survive in the sanctuary. And you realize that, yeah, he's not a villain here at all. He's just trying to survive very plainly.

And I think what, in a lot of ways, you know, when you have this sort of like "society is the villain" or "we are the villains" it does make it harder to resolve, but it also means like, kind of whatever they were doing – and by them, I mean, Sisko and Bashir and Dax— whatever they were doing by going back in time and coming back, they're not actually gonna fix that. Right? Like, they can't fix society. They can only do the, like the, the things to mend the timeline. But when they go back to the future, we, the audience, are still left with the storm that is going to create what they came back in time to. And so we have an obligation to prevent that villainous behavior from getting to that level or growing. And I think that is a really powerful introspection that I got out of this

episode, or series of episodes, from watching it. It's like, what are we doing now that's going to create or perpetuate the villainous leaders and society that the DS9 crew come back into.

Denny: You were talking about the governor Juniper. Isn't it interesting that we never see the governor? I think that is such a great creative choice. You know, we have the stand-in of the detective that is the mouthpiece for that, but never seeing the governor and any actual leader in the system that's causing all this, I think, is so great. 'Cause it allows our imagination to fill that in.

Juniper: Totally. And I think the use of the Attica Riots as a touchpoint or touchstone kind of a reference point for some of the story, I think is really useful. It's very illuminating and, you know, the Attica riots, to those who aren't familiar, happened in the early seventies, 1970s in Attica, New York and a pretty significant and you know, substantial – let's see how many days was it – it was about a week. It was four days, four or five days, and 40 ... 43 people ended up dying. When the National Guard basically stormed the prison to put down the riot and they shot everybody. Including guards and prisoners. But that was all done really at the behest of New York governor Nelson Rockefeller. And so you have these very prominent, big names of people. Like, even if you don't know much about, Attica, you probably have heard the name Rockefeller like Rockefeller Place, like 30 Rock, right? Like these are big names of people who were very influential, and very rich, who have military might at their disposal to put down a prison riot. And it was a prison riot that was, you know, a large proportion of which were African-American men who are disproportionately incarcerated in America, right? And so you have a lot of racism, and classism, and social structure stuff that comes down then at the behest of the governor in that very same kind of way that it plays out in the sanctuary in these episodes.

Anonymous Medic: No, it does feel pertinent to talk about the Attica riot, but also think about in even the past few years, I – following the abolitionist movement against prisons and seeing protests at places like Rikers, where these problems are still happening. Or conversations about where new prisons are being built and seeing local organizers fall on like both sides. Some people take the whole N.I.M.B.Y. stance. Other people say, why should we build more prisons, period? And seeing how the Attica riots were particularly inspiring, and also it feels that it's just repeating a pattern that has long been, you know, happening and people are still trying to push against.

I also think that one of the things about the Attica riots, that is also pertinent, is not only are these, you know, people of color that are placed in a situation to me, like – and maybe either of you could have different interpretation — it does

feel like only when people of color die, particularly when black people die, to a point that feels, you know, to a breaking point or a certain cultural breaking point, do people actually react. And I think that's one of the indirect commentaries of the episode too, is that the number of people in The Bell Riots who died, and while the sanctuary district was very like racially representative and diverse, you know, seeing the number of people of color there who are also victims. And there was a young black boy in the closing scene, like after, when they come out of the occupied building who was just walking around, asking where, you know, for help, that also struck me as like, you know, framing of marginalized pain in order to provoke reaction, really struck me as being emotionally, you know, astute and present.

Sarah: So, I feel like this is a good point to start talking about practical information that listeners might need if they're going to a protest for the first time, or they don't have a lot of experience. So Denny, I wanna start with you and ask, how does someone get involved in protesting or how do they find information about protests to join if they've been uninvolved up to this point?

Denny: Yeah, I mean, I think there are lots of different ways. I'll just say from my experience. Like, for the protest after George Floyd was murdered here, it was social media. You know, it's gonna depend on the movement, and the reason for the protest, and what security culture the organizers are putting in place. But, generally speaking, if they're looking for huge turnout, they're gonna have to advertise it. So, you know, finding on social media, the community leaders, the organizations that tend to be involved in those protests and then following them and keeping an eye out for any events they set up or, you know, just the them spreading the word about protests.

And then, you know, once you start going to those, then you start to meet people and you'll start, you know, just sort of naturally forming connections to find out about things that are maybe less advertised and more targeted if that's what you're interested in. But that would be my main recommendation.

Anonymous Medic: I'd also add that there are different ways that you can protest. One of the things that have really come out in the last few years, that ... what is the efficiency of protesting as an online action versus like, as if – you know, in person action. What does it mean to protest by attending events versus financially supporting organizations as a form of protest? You know, right now, we're facing another big protest wave, I suspect. So, right now I'm talking about the overturning of Roe vs Wade, and a lot of the immediate reaction from people who have never protested before. Is that, what do I do? How do I find help? Or, “Hey, I ... if you want to go camping, I will help you go camping,”

which as like sweet and you know, as the gesture is, I think it shows that people aren't aware that pro-abortion organizations have existed for decades. And there are other ways of supporting that even if you are a newcomer to a certain movement or an issue that you have compassion about, there's always an organization that has, you know, the knowledge base that can really help you and help be that entry point and you don't have to suddenly throw yourself and do a thousand things at once, you can start by doing the things that you are capable of and knowing your own boundaries, I think is super important as a protestor. Being aware of, you know, how to keep yourself safe and also being aware that what you do as a protestor may never be like spoken about on a podcast or online anywhere, or written up in a newspaper, but it's still super important. And one of the things that I am continually wary about with the idea of protesting, as you know, as something seen as super online is that it creates this misconception that all forms of protest, you know, must be public. And there's many, many deep ways of advocacy that go on behind the scenes.

Denny: I second, all of that. That's great advice.

Juniper: Yeah, and I was just gonna add that somebody mentioned earlier the diversity of tactics, and I think this is also a great place to bring that back because associated with that is also, you know, the concept of “to each and from each,” right? Like whatever you can bring and whatever you need, right? And so bring what you can bring. For me as a scientist who, you know, as a PhD in ecology, there aren't a lot of me with that training and educational background in a protest space, right? And so, you know, maybe most of the time ecology doesn't really matter. Like in, in the context of like what I'm doing on the protest, you know, like I'm marching and I'm yelling and I'm doing that kind of stuff or whatever, right? Like, you know, being an ecologist doesn't matter necessarily. But when all of a sudden, toxic chemicals get like put out into the air and we're all experiencing this, like suddenly my scientific expertise and training become really important.

And if I am busy making signs, chanting, you know, disrupting something, whatever it is, I might not be able to do the things scientifically, or whatever, that would be the most beneficial to everybody else in the community that's protesting. And so being able to think about what it is that you can bring that others might not be able to bring, I think is really, really critical because the diversity of tactics requires a diversity of the actors. And diversity of techniques of action and figuring out what you can bring to a protest that other folks haven't, or can't, is really, really beneficial and really empowering to you as an individual. It was definitely empowering to me when I, when I put two and two

together about the importance, the things that I could bring in this particular space.

Sarah: Yeah, I've seen the photos of you climbing down in the storm drains the morning after the protest collecting evidence, and I was actually hoping you could tell our audience what they should know and be prepared for when it comes to the chemical weapons being used by the police.

Juniper: Yeah, so there's a lot to know and don't worry, there won't be a quiz. It'll just be real life, right? So like, you don't need to remember all this stuff off hand, but it is good to have reference places, and locations, and sources of information. And that was one of the really critical things that I realized through the work that I've been doing. That a lot of these weapons that are used – if you are a protestor and you get impacted by chemical weapons or whatever weapon X, Y, Z – there's not a lot of information for you to know where to go to get specific context and details about what you have been exposed to and what the consequences of that exposure are.

And so one of the things that I've been working on a good amount is actually just trying to get a lot of this information and content together. And so through a group that I started called The Chemical Weapons Research Center, we've been collating like a lot of resources and content for folks, and that's up on our website at ChemicalWeaponsResearch.com. But, if you are going to a protest in any kind of a context, whether you are protesting about Roe, or about police brutality, or about the KKK marching through your town, right? Whatever it is, if the police are going to be around, and they're going to be responding to a protest, you can guarantee that they have at their easy disposal, right at reach, right at hand, a significant array of chemical weapons. Thanks in large part to the U.S. military and military industrial complex and such, there is a proliferation of chemical weapons around the world. But including in the U.S. at the local, state, and federal police level, and these weapons are weapons of war, but they are banned in a lot of contexts in war, but not in internal police actions.

And so some of the kind of big take homes that folks really should be aware of is that the police who use these weapons, generally speaking, do not know what they're using, the training that's required, these specifications, the understanding and know-how that is required in order for a police officer to be able to use a chemical weapon, is very minimal. Regularly, police officers, corrections officers, et cetera, use chemical weapons in ways that harm themselves and others on the police side of things in, you know, inadvertently.

And I think that goes to show sort of the ineptitude that can be in play sometimes. But what that means is that when you are at a protest, and police are around, it is always possible that chemical weapons can be put into the air at a moment's notice. This is really critical because, depending on your condition – maybe how old you are, what kind of skin health you have, or lung health, or eye health, or mobility access you have – when chemical weapons get dispersed into the air, they can have large and wide varying impacts on people. And knowing what an irritant could do to you will allow you to have a better plan for what to do when police show up. If you're somebody who has asthma and you see police with gas masks on their hips, or on their faces, it might be a time to think about where some routes for exit might be, etcetera. Definitely in the context of weapons that are chemical, and also physical, knowing where routes of exit from the protest to clean air is going to be really, really critical and knowing ways to get yourself decontaminated as quickly as possible is going to be also really vital.

Generally speaking, when you have larger protests where this kind of thing can happen, where police can respond with force of different kinds, including chemical, you are often going to have protest medics, or medic stations, or similar kinds of spaces where folks can render aid, and that's another thing that you wanna be paying attention to; be mindful of. Okay? Here are where folks might be able to help me if I need medical attention, or here's somebody that I could potentially find down on some people. However, it's important to know that police often will target medics, and will target medic stations, and will intentionally contaminate them. And so in any of these situations, you wanna have a couple of options of where to go. You don't want to be relying on, okay, if this is happening, I need to go this way and I only have this way to go. Having a plan B and even a plan C when it comes to making yourself safe is going to be very important.

Sarah: So to summarize, it sounds like folks should assume teargas or something like that is probably going to be used and be prepared to either protect yourself, escape it, or treat it.

Juniper: Yes.

Sarah: Awesome. And then medic, I want to ask what you usually end up doing at protests and what do you want people to know before they come?

Anonymous Medic: Yeah. You know, I want people to know too that, after what Juniper had talked about, it could feel very intimidating to go to a protest. And that is what I want to address first is that the number one weapon that

police and authoritarian groups use is fear. It ... and that is why they do so much theater around protests. That's why they have so many cops suddenly working overtime and they bring in the horses, and they bring out, you know, equipment that the layperson may not be familiar with. Like, oh my gosh, they have all these, you know, weapons that they could use against us. They have dogs, etcetera, etcetera. That is our number one weapon. It is fear. And once you have a population afraid, they're easier to coerce and control. So what I do want to tell people that are listening right now is that you can be prepared. It will not overcome your fear, but it will help enable you to make more clear-headed decisions in the moment and not be overcome by fear and, knowing this, there's a lot of ways you can prepare before going to a protest. One is just to make a, you know, like a casual assessment about what you think the risk factor would be for you to attend this space. Like I – in all my years that I've worked as a medic, a handful have like actually turned hot and violent to this, you know, in a sense that was concerning.

Most of the time, the injuries I treat are heat related illnesses, is people fainting from heat exhaustion because they did not drink enough water on this hot day or they have, you know, minor scrapes and bruises. And so I do wanna you know, have people think about what is a realistic, you know, risk factor for yourself and what is a realistic risk factor for this event. And there's stuff that, you know, even like the casual person off the street can do to prepare themselves. One, as Juniper said, have an, you know, a plan. Come with your friends. You're not alone. Make sure if you have asthma, or if you have certain medication requirements, you have them on you in their prescription bottle or in their prescription box.

Because in case of arrest, you might be detained, you know, for several hours. And you know, and if having that medication is important to you to take on a regular basis, you have to have it on you. Other things to be aware about is just, have a check-in. I always have a person that I check-in with that's not going to the protest and be like, "Hey, I'm leaving now. If I don't check in again by this hour, text me to make sure that I'm still okay." So, do that with you and your friends with you and like someone out – you know, who's not going to the events, make sure that that person not at the event, you know, basically they're your emergency contact, so they should know your legal name, and your birth date, and any important information that they should know in case you're arrested or injured, etcetera, etcetera. So, you know, if you need to, like contact that person, that person's contacted, they know exactly what to do to help you.

Sarah: It sounds like that's maybe a good job for you. If you're not a person who should be attending protests physically, you could be that check in person.

Anonymous Medic: Yeah, exactly. When you're at the event, there are a lot of very easy, low maintenance things you can do to ensure your health and safety. You know, on top of like having medication, you know, on you that you may need, if you are aware that chemical weapons could happen at this event, bring a change of clothes, even if it's just an extra shirt, that would really help in case you are exposed. The one thing that, like, we medics do in case of chemical weapons attack, and this is particular to the location I work in, I know other parts of the United States have, you know, different types of chemical weapons that are used, but where I am from the most common is pepper spray. And for pepper spray, the one thing a layperson can have is a bottle of water with a sport tip at the top. So they could perform eye flushes on each other, or they can like help spray off chemicals. You know, when they are affected, my collective does health and safety trainings where we include eye flushes as part of the training. It is something that you can also see online but the one thing I also wanna stress wherever I go is please do not use milk. Please, no milk. I know it's a misconception that had brought on in this current wave of protesting, because for many different reasons, but milk is not proven to be any more effective than clean water.

You know, water is portable. It is cheap. It is accessible. If you're hot, you can drink it and don't get dehydrated. You can share it with friends. And if you are worried about security culture at all, you know, if you're, if you're carrying around a huge jug of milk, it makes you a target. If you use milk to treat another patient, first of all, it's not effective treatment, but also they have milk on them and that makes them a target. And also, you know, people have allergies, milk can go bad on the march. There's many reasons why water, you know, is just a much better, safer, and more effective option.

Juniper: Yeah. Just to add in on that water, water, water. Getting a hose, a garden hose, and getting some pressure behind it and spraying it off of you is gonna be much more effective than trying to wipe it off of you, for example. And definitely nothing but water in your eyes. If you had a high school chemistry class, there was an eyewash. There wasn't milk coming out of that eyewash. There was water coming out of that eye wash. It doesn't matter if you got an acid, or a base, or neutral substance, a powder, a liquid, or colloidal mixture in your eye. Water, water, water, water, water, water, water is going to come out of that eye wash, right? So, really think about it that way when you're flushing somebody else's eyes out, make sure that you have their consent, make sure that you're using a decent amount of pressure to help flush, but obviously not to destroy their eyeball with a hose, right? But, only water.

Sarah: I am gonna have water, water, water, water, water, water, water, stuck in my head, the rest of the day. So as we wrap up here, does anyone have any quick, last thoughts about the episode or about protesting? Either one?

Denny: Yeah. I just wanna say all that information that everyone shared is really good. I wanna just maybe ground it all a little bit. If you are new to protesting, like in organizing spaces, we talk about a spiral of activation and, if you're new, you should not start by being in a direct confrontation with police. That is not – not only because it's not safe for you, it will overwhelm you, but it's also having someone who isn't comfortable in that situation actually makes it unsafe for all of those around them too. So, if you are new to protesting, do not get overly ambitious, just go and maybe stay near the back if that's how you feel comfortable.

And like medic was saying earlier, know your boundaries, know what you're comfortable doing and what you're not comfortable doing, and stick to those. Like, don't let anyone pressure you into breaking those boundaries, don't let anyone pull you into a situation, and that anyone can be you, too. Like, it's happened to me before where my heart is like, "I need to go get in the middle of that because people I know are there," but, for reasons it was not a good idea for me to be there cause I was not prepared to deal with that heightened situation. So, you just gotta know that. And the other thing I just wanna say is, by and large, most protests that are organized by known entities and groups are not gonna turn into that type of escalation.

You know, it ... it's going to be pretty darn safe. That having been said, there is always the risk of danger so all this advice is really good, but don't let it overwhelm you and scare you from going out there, if you feel called to do that because most protests are gonna be a pretty safe space for you.

Anonymous Medic: And I also wanna emphasize that there is a, you know, saying in protest culture that "we keep us safe" and you're not going in there alone. Just as I gave, you know, a bunch of advice for someone new to protesting, how to prepare themselves, everyone else is bringing knowledge and everyone else is there because they're there for their community.

So, if you feel like you're at a protest and you need help, you need aid, you know, more often than not, I've seen fellow protesters help each other in emergency situations, even before, you know, medical is called to be on the ground. So, even having that mindset that we are here together – we are here to aid each other if need be, we will come with enough supplies for ourselves,

enough snacks and water to share – even those ideas can be super helpful, you know, as a mindset to have when coming to a protest event.

Denny: It's one of the most beautiful things about it, I think, is just seeing how without like really intentional and super organized planning, like everybody shows up with what they have and it's always enough. Like people are covered and you're absolutely right. I've seen that time and time again too, or perfect strangers will help each other. It's really, it's really amazing to see a community come together like that.

Juniper: Yeah, I think it's one of the most empowering things that I've done in a while is taking to the streets with other folks, right? Standing up for something that I believe in with others is incredibly empowering. And there's really not a lot that matches that. And I think doing it in a communal way where we support each other, and we take care of each other, is really beautiful and really powerful. And I think the thing that I kind of wanna leave folks with is really thinking about what you can bring individually as a person that other folks might not have. Because that knowledge, that expertise, that insight, whatever it is, that money, that food, that water, that time, those wheels, those feet, that cart, that chalk, whatever it is that you can bring that you can add to the cause is going to be appreciated, it's going to be supported and thanked. And these fights are going on everywhere all the time. There are protests around the world every day, about everything from ending occupation of territories, to keeping water and land free and clear of development, to ending the prison state and abolishing various aspects of police brutality, right? Like, there are protests all over the world, all over the country every day. And finding a cause that speaks to you and a job that speaks to you within that protest space is really, really empowering. And I encourage folks to get involved in whatever might be speaking to them at this time.

Sarah: And that's about all the time we have today. Juniper, where can people find you on the internet?

Juniper: Yeah, they can find me on various socials at Juniper L Simonis. That's J U N I P E R L S I M O N I S or at ChemicalWeaponsResearch.com.

Sarah: Awesome. And Denny, where can people find you on the internet?

Denny: They probably can't. I keep a pretty low profile. You know, I have a Twitter and Instagram, but I never use them. So there's no point in finding me there, but they're more likely to find me either out in the streets here in Minneapolis or, for Trekkies, find me on the next Star Trek cruise.

Sarah: Awesome and medic, I won't ask, but thank you so much for participating today.

Anonymous Medic: Of course, I'm really glad to be here.

Sarah: And I'm Sarah, you can find me on Instagram where I post one item a day from my Star Trek collection at Sarah M Gulde - S A R A H M, as in Mary, G U L D E. And you can find my fanzine Star Trek Quarterly at StarTrekQuarterly.wordpress.com or on Facebook. 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, Instagram @WomenAtWarp. Thanks so much for listening. Bye everybody.