

Women at Warp Episode 201: Labor Standards in Star Trek - Transcript

Grace: 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 is Grace, and thank you for tuning in. With me today are Jarrah...

Jarrah: Hello!

Grace: ...and Andi.

Andi: Hel-lo!

Grace: Now before we get to our main topic, we've got a little bit of housekeeping to do first.

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Looking for podcast merch? We got you covered. Check out our TeePublic store. There are so many designs with new ones being added all the time. Jarrah, I think you just put a design up on there?

Jarrah: Yes, I definitely made a t-shirt that says "To Baldly Go." So if you like puns and also experience hair loss, you have a shirt now. So you're welcome.

Grace: There is a shirt just for you.

Jarrah: Yes. Find it and all of our other merch at teepublic.com/stores/womenatwarp.

Grace: Awesome. You can also find our convention merch on our website at womenatwarp.com/shop only while supplies last. So check out them supplies. Anything else? Any upcoming events for either of you?

Jarrah: Nope. I'm basically hermitting.

Andi: Yeah, agree.

Grace: Hermitting is good. Hermitting is good. It's that season for hermitting. It's the season for getting bunkered down for hermit times.

Jarrah: Exactly.

Grace: Yes. It's the bundle-up season.

Andi: Cozy.

Jarrah: Cuz you know, if you hermit, you can't get accidentally split in two in a transporter. Your console is unlikely to explode. You're pretty unlikely to have a giant barrel fall on you. All that stuff you avoid when you are hermitting.

Grace: I feel like we're just encouraging people to never leave their houses now. *Jarrah laughs* Like, we're giving someone who's really got a reason to not wanna leave the house a reason to never wanna leave the house extra hard now. *Andi laughs*

Jarrah: I'm not saying don't leave the house. I'm just saying maybe before you join Starfleet ask some pointy questions about what are their health and safety practices. *Andi laughs*

Grace: Which brings us to our topic for today. Our topic was a patron suggestion from Christina.

Jarrah: Yay!

Andi: Yay!

Grace: Yes, thank you so much. We love getting suggestions. Please continue to send them. What she sent in to us was, 'I know it is fiction, but why is it that there never seems to be anything like HR or OSHA on these ships? What do you see as some of the prime examples of this and how they could be solved/avoided?'

Jarrah: Yeah, this is a great topic. I am very excited to discuss.

Andi: Yeah. I think it's, at this point, a running joke that I'm like, 'Where are they? Why have they not stepped in?' Cuz this is workplace shenanigans and I think that we forget sometimes that Starfleet is a workplace. But I do wanna caveat that none of us work in HR. None of us are labor lawyers. What we

know about these things is, you know, an outside perspective, and for the most part this is just for fun and just to talk through it, because I think we all know that, as much as these sorts of standards are important, probably not as important in fiction as they are in real life.

Grace: Yeah, they're not the main priority with the person who's trying to write a conflict usually.

Andi: Exactly. So please don't write us a letter about how we take everything too seriously. This is for funsies.

Jarrah: Yeah. I think the closest I can claim in terms of my own experience is that I did work for several years for unions. So I have a sense of—kind of a union worker's rights perspective on a number of these issues, and a fairly good understanding of Canadian labor standards.

Grace: Canadian-specific standards though.

Jarrah: Exactly. But if I say something, for example, like that I think that they should all have seat belts and why don't they have seat belts...

Grace: For the amount of jiggling and getting thrown around they get, even when just sitting in those chairs, you would think they'd have something like that.

Jarrah: Yes. Or if I say something like, 'They should all have EV suits whenever they beam down to a planet instead of just assuming it's Class M and therefore we can rely on the transporter filters to filter everything out,' don't assume that I actually am like, 'Star Trek sucks because it doesn't do this.'
Grace and Andi laugh Cuz that's not... We're just gonna take a kind of speculative eye to this stuff about like, 'If Star Trek had, as its primary concern, these things, what would you see?'

Grace: And if you were coming at Star Trek as a representative, theoretically, of HR or OSHA, what would you be on the lookout for?

Andi: First of all, if I was a HR professional in Starfleet, I would quit immediately. *Jarrah laughs* I would just be like, 'No, y'all be easy. This is not for me. Goodbye forever, because it's a mess.' I'd also like to point out that I think it's interesting—so, different workplaces have different ways of tackling these things. For one thing, you're not gonna have some of the same regulations apply to like an office building as you are to a factory. But also specifically for

this topic that we're talking about today, I think we're thinking of Starfleet as military, or at the very least quasi-military. And I'm pretty sure that those standards are also different from what I experience working in a nine-to-five office.

Grace: Yeah, they are housing and feeding them and they are all together in the same place, so there's a communal level of living implied here.

Jarrah: That is a really good point, and one that I definitely anticipated someone would raise, cuz my thought was that, when you think about the military, you do not think, 'Safe job.' That said, there is a lot of work that does go into health and safety in the military and branches of the military. Even the DoD in the States and the Department of National Defense in Canada have safety programs, recognizing that, in addition to preventing suffering and death, safety efforts increase efficiency and contribute to morale. It is expensive to train people to serve in the military and they don't really want them just having a barrel fall on them. And so, you know, we're talking about efforts relating to...

Grace: Can we talk about the falling barrels though for a second?

Jarrah: We must talk about the falling barrels. But I just wanted to say that military bodies have HR departments. Obviously that has not prevented some of the major issues we have seen with assaults and harassments, but they do have those departments. And then of course they're focused on safety things through equipment, like vehicles, armor, weapons, and preventative health screenings.

Andi: Well, and the other thing you mentioned that I think is important to talk about a little bit is the morale aspect, because it really is like, can you think of something more demoralizing than, 'Oh, they don't care if I die. Why am I running out there to risk my life and they don't care enough to make sure a barrel won't crush me?'

Grace: Why are those barrels stacked so high?

Jarrah: 'They always bring me and one other guy in a red shirt down on these things.' Like if you've read John Scalzi's novel *Redshirts*, it gets into that idea of like, you know, basically who's gonna die next and the morale concerns. It's a joke, it's a satire, but yeah, that would be really crappy. I think sometimes we think of this stuff as like, 'Oh, health and safety is kinda uncool and preventing good stories,' but also preventing people from dying unnecessarily.

Andi: Personally I am pro that.

Grace: I am pro good workplace standards and practices, personally. Although someone's gonna take that out of context and be like, 'Oh, Grace is pro standards and practices. She loves seein' stuff get censored.' No. I am pro workplace safety. I have no desire to shake hands with danger at the workplace.

Andi: Agreed.

Grace: And I'm shocked that—I'm probably gonna make at least one other shaking-hands-with-danger reference during this episode, which, for those of you who don't know, was a safety video from the seventies...

Jarrah: Oh my gosh. Amazing.

Grace: ...that had a weird country soundtrack.

Jarrah: I will say that there is one canon reference of something kind of like OSHA, which I guess, if you're not American, stands for "Occupational Health and Safety"—is it "Administration"? "Occupational Safety and Health Administration"?

Grace: I think so.

Jarrah: Okay, cool. In *TNG* "Eye of the Beholder," we hear that the disappearance of Marla E. Finn from Utopia Planitia was investigated by the OHSC, which Memory Alpha says is likely "Occupational Health and Safety Command." So that's the only mention we have that there is a body like that in Starfleet.

Andi: But it is comforting to think that you're not gonna get spaced and then no one is gonna care, you know what I mean?

Grace: I mean, you would hope.

Andi: Maybe we don't need to see it on screen, but I do like to think that everyone who dies while in Starfleet and on a mission or whatever—if it was hinky, like there was an investigation, I would hope that Starfleet would have something in place to be like, 'Explain more about how Tasha Yar got eaten by goo.' I would like to know more about that and make sure all the protocols were taken care of.

Grace: You wanna believe there's some level of oversight, especially considering all of the weird stuff that happens.

Jarrah: Yeah, and we do learn in *Strange New Worlds* that Starfleet also has something that's basically a Starfleet employee-assistance program, for like trauma counseling for people.

Grace: Good for when you see your coworker get eaten by goo. *Andi laughs*

Jarrah: Exactly. Yeah.

Grace: Cuz you're not just gonna bounce back from that.

Jarrah: No, no. You need specially trained counselors like Dr. Migleemo to help you process your traumatic colleague Gorn death.

Grace: Or for when every other week when a console explodes in somebody's face.

Jarrah: Yesss. Oh my gosh.

Grace: Why do they have consoles that explode so much? Why, when they've got people who can make time travel and all sorts of other sci-fi nonsense? 'No, we can't make a workstation that won't possibly blind you.'

Andi: Sadly, the reason is it looks cool. Which is sad for our poor bridge crew who are constantly getting sparks in their eyes.

Jarrah: Okay, spoiler alert for the most recent *Lower Decks* comic—there is a fun little joke at the bottom of one page that basically says that they've been routing enemy phaser fire directly into their power grid and that they make a discovery that has justified thousands of exploding consoles. *Andi laughs*

Grace: Oh my gosh.

Andi: That's a very *Lower Decks* thing to do, to be honest.

Grace: Yeah, yeah. I appreciate it.

Jarrah: Yeah. So it's all just part of some big Starfleet science project that had some collateral damage. *Andi laughs*

Grace: Some? Some?

Jarrah: Yep. Oh my gosh. Yeah, the exploding consoles, the no seat belts: also a thing.

Grace: Again, just anytime you see the things getting moved around in one of the shuttle bays or something, you gotta ask yourself, ‘Okay, what’s the protocol here? Are they just going through the motions? Is there a safety system that you have to go through to move boxes from area A to area B, or stacking barrels unreasonably high?’

Jarrah: Yeah. The other thing that I was thinking about with bridge stuff is just in light of, you know, current trends in occupational health and safety and ergonomics. So first of all, the locations of some of their consoles for, like, just say Riker and stuff—they have to kind of pivot to the side. That’s maybe not super ideal. But also we have a lot of people that seem to stand their entire shift, and a lot of people that seem to sit their entire shift, and we don’t have a lot of convertible workstations.

Grace: Yeah, what are the ergonomic options like for if you’re just gonna be standing at the helm?

Jarrah: *laughing* I understand this would be completely unworkable on TV.

Andi: This why we caveated it at the very beginning of the episode. So if you get on Facebook and start yelling at us, we’re just gonna point you to the transcript and be like, ‘Here’s where we told you this is for fun.’ But yeah, I have to think that there is a lot of lower-back problems. They probably need a full-time masseuse, let’s be honest.

Grace: Ooh, yeah. I mean, if they have an on-ship barber, they should have an on-ship masseuse and physical therapist and all that. That’s just sensible.

Andi: Definitely. Cuz I know they have neck problems from the hunching over the consoles like little gremlins.

Grace: The hunching and the standing in one place for long periods of time. You need standing pads for that, like if you’re working on a factory line. Either that or they’ve got really good insoles in those Starfleet shoes.

Jarrah: Or is the doctor just giving them hypos all the time? This wasn’t a work injury, but we do see O’Brien get hurt kayaking. He hurts his shoulder and

then Dr. Bashir is just like, ‘Oh, you have to stop using your shoulder like that.’ So it does imply there is some point at which the Federation medicine won’t work, but also he hits him with a hypo. So maybe they just are medicating them all the time so that their backs aren’t sore.

Grace: You gotta wonder.

Andi: That doesn’t seem sustainable.

Grace: No.

Jarrah: I agree.

Andi: Maybe just, uh, let them sit. *Jarrah laughs*

Grace: It would be a lot less exciting though if they all just had desks on the bridge, wouldn’t it?

Andi: Cubicles?

Grace: Yes.

Jarrah: *In Worf voice* ‘I do not sit on the job. Sitting is not honorable.’

Andi: Or like the open plan, open-plan offices?

Grace: Oh my gosh. I’m just imagining people with their little word-of-the-day calendars and stuff on the bridge.

Jarrah: Oh my gosh, yesss.

Grace: I mean, it would make sense, but it would make it definitely a lot less exciting.

Jarrah: I feel like everyone sits on the *Strange New Worlds* bridge and *The Original Series* bridge, other than the yeoman bringing in coffee, who doesn’t apparently have a chair normally, but yeah.

Andi: Her chair is Kirk’s lap. *All laugh*

Grace: Oh good lord.

Jarrah: Oh dear.

Andi: I mean, that brings us into another aspect that I kind of wanna talk about, which is like, what does Starfleet do for sexual harassment workplace shenanigans?

Grace: Yeah, and definitely bringing us into the HR portion of that, especially cuz we've got so much workplace romance and relationships going on on Star Trek.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Grace: Just, in every series, it's inescapable.

Andi: I could just imagine that they have to do the annual 'Holographs and You: What's Appropriate and Not Appropriate in the Workplace Holodeck.' Cuz I have to imagine that Barclay after his holodeck adventure was sent to an HR professional who kindly sat him down and was like, 'Okay, we're gonna go through your conduct here and just talk about ways that we can improve you not putting together holograms of your superiors and either banging them or attacking them.'

Grace: Yeah, wouldn't that be kinda the modern-day equivalent of finding a bunch...

Andi: Porn on the hard drive?

Grace: I was gonna say like finding a bunch of copies of *Playboy* in someone's desk with your boss's face pasted in there and stuff. *Andi laughs*

Jarrah: Oh dear.

Grace: Which is definitely gonna cause a kerfuffle in HR to say the very least.

One of the episodes that I watched in preparation for this episode was "Blood Fever" from *Voyager*, where you straight up have Vorik coming up to B'Elanna and saying, 'Well, you've only got so many people to choose from because we're stranded here in space.' And that alone feels like something that you could report to a superior for making you feel uncomfortable. But also in the context of him saying just straight up, 'I think we should mate.' So there are many levels of uncomfortable at play here. And then he gives B'Elanna a case of the hornies. Which I feel like that's a given that that's a no-no. I feel like,

after that, Vorik probably should have been confined to quarters. *Andi laughs* We've got the one guy who's been confined to quarters cuz he killed somebody, but I feel like there should be at least a, 'Hey, hey, no, no, no. HR violation. Please stay in quarters for a couple weeks.' And instead they hook him up with a holograph he can bang for a while to get it out of his system.

Jarrah: I think it's supposed to be that he got it out of his system cuz he fought B'Elanna. But still, even though he did get through pon farr—and same with “The Enemy Within” where Kirk—which has multiple OSHA things cuz we have a transporter accident, which is a health-and-safety risk at break in Star Trek—and the idea is once he's back as one person that Rand is just supposed to be like, 'Oh, well it's fine cuz he wouldn't do it now cuz he's a different person.'

Grace: She's supposed to just comfortably go back to work with that.

Jarrah: Yeah, and same with B'Elanna. And it doesn't actually matter. The person is—I wouldn't blame Rand or B'Elanna for being like, 'I am hella uncomfortable working with that person now.'

Grace: Yeah. I wouldn't wanna work with that guy either. I'd be like, 'Hey, uh, one of us needs to get transferred out of engineering and I'm the head engineer, so it's not gonna be me. Take away one of his pips or something.'

Andi: Yeah. But we talked about, like this is an example inappropriate sexual harassment-type stuff. But I also was wondering, when I was thinking about this, I was like, 'What about consensual workplace relationships? Do you have to fill out a form to say, “Hey, I'm dating this person,” or even, “Hey, I'm banging this person”?' Cuz I know that there are different rules for different workplaces, but dating and being in romantic relationships with your coworkers is generally frowned upon. But sometimes there is a procedure that they have that's like, 'You can date as long as you...'

Grace: '...make HR aware and aren't in a situation where one of you has authority over the other.'

Andi: Yeah, exactly. So there is a standard operating procedure for those, and I think Starfleet should have that, 1) because Starfleet is insanely horny, but also [2)] because a lot of the time they're going out on missions for years at a time.

Grace: Five-year mission, yeah.

Andi: Yeah, the idea that there wouldn't be any banging in the holodeck is just silliness. And you would have to prepare for that sort of thing.

Grace: And is there counseling for the cleanup crew for the holodeck? *Andi laughs*

Andi: No, it's just some guy with a squeegee mop.

Grace: Oh, god bless him.

The thing that also makes me super curious is, if you're dealing with multiple species and say you've got a species that experiences pon farr, overlapping HR and OSHA, what are your rights to privacy with that? And what are you obligated to share with your superiors in terms of, 'Hey, I'm gonna be out of commission for a few days. It is a medical emergency. Please take my word for it.' Versus, 'I've got the seven-year hornies.'

Jarrah: Yeah, no kidding. That's a great point, cuz yeah, most places it's basically you don't have to disclose if you have an illness unless it directly impacts your work. And even then you can usually get a doctor's note that doesn't say what the issue is; it just says you need time off. But if you need an accommodation, sometimes you need to disclose that. And sometimes it's an issue that is very obvious what it is, and you can't really hide it, versus something that would be a more invisible issue.

Grace: And in theory, the same should go for pregnancy, in terms of being able to say, 'Hey, I need time off for this. Please respect that.' Because you hear tell of stories of people losing their jobs when they become pregnant, or being told, 'Well, you're gonna have a kid so you're gonna be a less reliable employee.' Stuff like that. So, if there aren't protections around that, there should be. And also the right to privacy if you are pregnant.

Another one I was watching again for this episode was "Unexpected."

Jarrah: Oh yeah.

Andi: Which one is that one?

Grace: That's the one where Trip grows extra nips when he gets pregnant. But the thing that I didn't expect in "Unexpected" is that the episode starts out with an unsafe environment of Archer taking a shower, and then the gravity just goes off and he's floatin' in the air and then just falls down in the shower. That's not

a safe environment to work in/live in. What kind of testing did they put this ship through? It's like they're jury-rigging *Enterprise* together while they're on it, like they're still testing it while people actively live on it. And I'm like, 'Wow, thank god this is the infancy of Starfleet, cuz that would be so unprofessional if they'd been around for hundreds of years.' But the fact is that the characters mostly respect that Trip is pregnant and doesn't wanna talk about it and doesn't wanna spread it around. Except we do get that poor yeoman walking in and hearing Phlox talking about Trip's nipples. And I feel like that alone would be an HR violation in terms of just, 'Whooha. Okay, I did not consent to come into that conversation.'

Andi: I wanna go back to what you were talking about, about privacy, because I feel like this is one of the more egregious examples we have of Starfleet just being out-of-pocket, and that they regularly have conference room tables about people's private medical issues...

Grace: And in that episode they do have a point where they bring up, 'Yeah, there's a pregnancy involved' on the viewscreen in front of, like, all the other crew, and it's super uncomfortable. There had to have been a way to do that more tactfully.

Andi: Not do that?

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: Yeah. Another thing that I wanna bring up that we kind of talked about but didn't really dig into is the idea of different cultures...

Jarrah: Yeah.

Grace: Yes.

Andi: ...and how they would probably have different, you know, taboos and ideas of what is appropriate and topics that are off-limits and topics that they're comfortable to talk about. And so I just think that that would be interesting. I know that, for a lot of us that work in offices, one big thing that has been coming out of 2020 and the civil unrest of 2020 has been diversity, equity, and inclusion officers, where they literally will hire a consultant that works with HR to work on training and also work with employees and hiring and all of these things in order to try and have somebody whose job it is to kind of take a look at those issues and make sure that they're being handled appropriately. And I have to think that it would be an even more important job on a ship like this, where

you're not even talking about different races within a species; you're talking about full-on different species from different quadrants trying to understand each other and work together in close quarters. I think they should have some DEI staff on these if we're putting together our HR team.

Grace: Our HR dream team.

Andi: Yeah.

Jarrah: Are you saying that people like Bones shouldn't just be able to call a Spock, like, you know, a green-blooded pointy-ears son-of-a...

Grace: Hobgoblin? Yeah, there should be at least a couple mandatory Starfleet counseling sessions from that alone.

Jarrah: Yeah. Not to mention, I feel like now in this light I'm thinking Neelix continually calling Tuvok "Mr. Vulcan" is a bit like a microaggression.

Grace: Oh, absolutely. Yeah. I know I'm jumping around a little, but another one that's coming to mind for me is—remember that time on *TNG* when they had to have a conference talking about how Counselor Troi's mom was just really, really going through intense menopause and it was making her horny for the captain? *Andi laughs* I don't feel like the conference room is the place for that conversation. Especially cuz poor Counselor Troi has to have a meeting about how, 'Yeah, my mom's kind of a horn-dog right now.' *Andi laughs* I would not wanna have that conversation with my coworkers.

Andi: This is why I was talking about, like, if I were an HR professional, it would be like that GIF of Grandpa Simpson walking in and walking back out again.

Grace: Which is funny considering the context in that episode too. *Andi laughs & sighs* Oh, good lord. Yeah. To say nothing about having to have the safe-candle-lighting talk with your crew.

Jarrah: Oh my gosh, yes.

Grace: Practice safe candles.

Jarrah: So many candles.

Grace: Can you imagine the waiter who must have had to walk up during the conversation of, ‘I was reading a particularly erotic chapter of my grandmother’s diary,’ and him just being like, ‘Ooooookay, I’m...can you please...can you please monitor your own conversations in Ten Forward for, you know, other people? Like, at all? We’re a society without money, and I’m definitely not gettin’ paid enough for this.’

Jarrah: Yeah. Well, I mean, “Unexpected” in *Enterprise* is another example of that. And we have many examples of them meeting alien races and going off and shagging, and these are potentially people they’ve never encountered before. Do we know, even, what kinds of diseases they could get, or whether they could get pregnant or not?

Grace: If you’re boldly going forward and you hook up with some space hottie, but it was part of your job cuz, you know, you’re a part of Starfleet, do you get workers’ comp for getting an STD?

Andi: Okay, so, I would say, I don’t know the answer to that question, but I am so glad you brought up workers’ comp.

Grace: I also wanna know what workers’ comp looks like in a society without money.

Andi: Yes! I was thinking that too. And so much of this in human life, in real life, is governed by liability and insurance, and most of the redress that you can ask for is monetary. It’s like, ‘Okay, I was injured cuz you didn’t take proper care of the barrels and then the barrel crushed me. That’s your liability, and now you have to pay me money.’ What is the redress that we get from *this* system in which there is no money in the bank?

Jarrah: Yeah.

Grace: None of the options I can think of that seem feasible are good. Like, time off to cope and to recuperate seems like it should be a standard thing, but...

Jarrah: Yeah. So, I feel like the closest we see to that—we definitely should come back to “Ethics,” cuz we don’t see that in “Ethics”; we just see Worf have to grapple with his medical decisions—but I think is Nog losing his leg, which is in war. So in that case we’re seeing the types of supports they have. So it would be kind of more equivalent to the supports you would have through Veterans Affairs, where you would have access to medical and counseling and theoretically replacement of your income, but there’s no need to replace your

income cuz you didn't have income. So you just—I assume you're not getting kicked outta your quarters.

Grace: The horrible mental image that I have from my experience with corporate culture is—and this is gonna just prove to you all how embittered I have been by that—is a Chuck E. Cheese prize room. But for if something horrible has happened to you at work. You can pick between, 'A house that you own, ooh, we don't really have that level of ownership in the future cuz, you know, no money and all that,' or like, 'Oh, a trip to Riiiiisa.' Like, 'What can we give you that is meaningless to us but will make you feel less pissed off about being horribly injured on the job?'

Andi: You're saying you're worried that they'd throw them a pizza party for morale?

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Grace: Yeah. That's my fear. Yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah. I was just reading this new graphic novel by Kate Beaton about the work...

Grace: Oh, *Ducks*?

Jarrah: Yeah, work in the oil sands, and there's this whole thing about the number of days without a time-lost accident. But if you have accidents where the person didn't count for time lost, but it was still a serious accident and it just wasn't getting counted. So it's all about your stats and how they count them. So that's a good question, what would you... I would like to think Starfleet would have, you know, support if someone didn't want to return or wasn't able to return to their previous position, support for retraining, like helping to navigate the system of, 'What are my other options for a future?' But yeah.

Andi: Well, and I think in our current system, in our real-life system, part of the reason why money is what you get is because that's the only thing that will actually be an effective consequence. If we're talking about a world in which we've moved past money, which I want to go to there...

Grace: I want to go to there, and a world where the healthcare is free and we don't have to get that money to be able to survive after a workplace accident.

Andi: Yeah. So part of it would be, ‘Has the problem been addressed? Will this happen to somebody else?’ ...

Jarrah: Exactly.

Andi: ‘Or have you fixed it?’ A lot of the times, for personal settlements, it’s because you need to use that money to pay for your healthcare. But if you’re getting your healthcare for free, then maybe monetary remuneration is not actually what people are looking for. Maybe it’s just, ‘This won’t happen again.’

Grace: And does Starfleet get to interact with a *My Cousin Vinny* workplace comp lawyer? *Andi laughs*

Jarrah: Yeah. Starfleet has to beef up their investigations, they have to beef up their prevention. I had a friend who, one of their jobs was basically researching cycling accidents. So anytime there’s an incident with a cyclist accident, they’d have to go and basically watch the traffic where that happened for a number of days at different times and make recommendations for how that accident could be prevented in the future. That idea, but on, like, ‘Hey, a lot of consoles have been exploding. We need to do an inquiry into this and figure out how we prevent this situation in future.’ It’s not so much about individual recourse, but it’s about preventing that from happening to other people.

Grace: Yes—that there would be a solid action in response to the accident. Like that there’s an accident-response team.

Jarrah: Yeah. So, when Kirk got split into good half and evil half, they fixed that transporter problem, but they didn’t fix the problem where two people could get merged into one person and then the captain could just...

Grace: And we found that out with Tuvix, yeah.

Jarrah: ...arbitrarily decide to kill them.

Grace: Maybe they could’ve taken Tuvix, put him back in the transporter, and make an accident so he split into another two people: a good Tuvix and a bad Tuvix. Then they could keep the good Tuvix and de-split the bad Tuvix.

Jarrah: Amazing. I want the Star Trek Department of Labor Standards spinoff.

Grace: Yes! That sounds amazing. I wanna know that they exist.

Andi: The other thing too is they're lucky that insurance doesn't exist in this because the risk of the transporters—they would never get insured.

Grace: No. I mean, McCoy for all his hemming and hawing is right: those things are death traps.

Andi: Yes.

Grace: You could not get me in one of those.

Andi: Nope. Not even a little.

Grace: No.

Jarrah: Okay, so let's talk about "Ethics."

Grace: Let's talk about "Ethics," yeah.

Andi: I mean, we've laughed a lot about the barrels, but I think this is a really good example of the whole topic that we're talking about in that, What kind of workplace safety regulations do they have? Clearly minimal. And then what do they do to take care of you after you are injured? And in this case, it gets really sticky.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah, and it interacts with cultural norms, cultural beliefs, and there are questions about, you know, What should Worf be entitled to as a Klingon who believes his life is over? Side note: listen to our episode on disability in Star Trek if you want to hear a critical analysis of that...

Grace: Yeah, because this is definitely a disability issue.

Jarrah: But what is he entitled to as a Klingon? And does someone from Starfleet need to be able to provide that cultural, kind of religious validation for him, even if it's against their morals?

Grace: And even if he was to remain paralyzed from the neck down, would there be accommodations made for him in Starfleet? Would he be able to continue serving in some capacity? Not to say, 'Yeah, the disabled should be able to get back to work after their accidents too.' I'm saying it would be

interesting to see more extensive accommodations for different types of disability in Star Trek.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Andi: So I think one reason why “Ethics” is a good example of this is because they don’t actually answer most of their own questions that are brought up in the episode, which has always made it, in my opinion, one of the best moral-quandary episodes, because there are really no great answers. And I can see points for everything. And so it becomes an issue where the questions are as important—if not more important—than the answers we get in the episode, because we don’t actually get any of this answered definitively.

Grace: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Jarrah: But we definitely should have seen, as a B plot, an investigator coming on the ship to be like, ‘What happened here?’ And maybe Picard’s in trouble. Who’s accountable for health and safety on the ship?

Grace: Yeah. I’m now just imagining—does each floor of the *Enterprise* have a fire-escape captain? In office buildings sometimes on different floors there will be a safety captain, like the person who’s got the earthquake kit under their desk and stuff. Does that apply to Starfleet?

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Grace: And how many per ship? What are the rules there?

Andi: I was thinking too about—I don’t know about you all, but we have an ethics officer as well. Is there a public-safety officer? Is there an ethics officer? Is there a sexual-harassment person?

Jarrah: A privacy officer?

Andi: Privacy, yeah. I don’t think they have these things.

Grace: There’s many questions here about the hierarchy of Starfleet and which needs they’re meeting.

Andi: If they did do an HR team though, can you imagine? They’d have to bust in the Avengers all the time.

Grace: But with HR, the HR Avengers. Oh my god.

Andi: Yeah, and just be like, ‘Stop! This is not safe.’

Grace: They would barrel roll into the room and go, ‘Cut that out.’

Andi: ‘Only you can prevent workplace accidents.’

Grace: ‘Hey, where’s the safety rail?’

Jarrah: Oh, that’s another thing. The number of times in engineering and stuff where they have, you know, catwalks—and this is not just Star Trek; Star Wars has a major issue with this—and railing height? The railings are not high enough so that, if the ship shakes, someone will literally just fly off the catwalk and die. And in most of our world today, there is a requirement that the railings be at least waist-height or higher, so that, if you get thrown towards the railing, you’re very unlikely to flip over it.

Grace: I’m gonna bring it back to “Unexpected” one more time, because there’s a point where Trip is pregnant and it’s supposed to be implied that he’s getting all mother-hen-y and anal-retentive about safety, but he’s on an elevator down to engineering and he’s like, ‘Hang on, if you have your hand on this part of the handrail and the elevator goes up, that’ll slice your fingers off. That’s unsafe! What if there was a kid or someone really short onboard and the guy he’s talking to says, ‘But why would someone put their hand there...*on the handraaiiiil?*’

Andi: *Andi laughs* Oh my.

Jarrah: One good example I wanted to talk about briefly was “The Cloud Minders.” Which is not a Starfleet thing, cuz I was trying to think about, What are examples of times when we see labor practices that are non-Starfleet? And a big one is mining; we see a lot of miners. We can definitely question their clothing and equipment that they have, and how safe those would be. But in “The Cloud Minders,” Starfleet is going to this planet to get zenite, I believe. And the people that are the miners, the Troglytes, are considered to be intellectually inferior, but they’re starting a revolution. And the ruling class, the Stratos dwellers—basically, it turns out that the Troglytes are not actually intellectually inferior, but they are being poisoned by the gas in the mines. And so Kirk gives them filter masks! And it’s delightful. And honestly, I think an episode that holds up pretty well for a third-season *Original Series* episode.

Grace: Thinking about how some of the other work environments we see portrayed on Star Trek, in terms of mining and junk—think of the, what is it, iridium processing that they did on Terok Nor, and how that was a giant death trap and all that. And now I'm wondering, if you're part of a society that becomes part of the Federation, does that mean that there's Federation safety standards that suddenly any operations you are running need to adhere to? Cuz I've been in office situations where that happened, where they were under new management, or like, 'Okay, now we are under this company's safety and wellness standards.'

Jarrah: And this is a discussion in our countries, right? About, if we're gonna do business with foreign countries, then shouldn't we require that the goods that we get from those countries were produced under certain types of labor and safety standards? There are ongoing campaigns in several sectors about that. But it seems like, from *The Original Series* at least—and I would say definitely into *TNG* in terms of mining—that I feel like we see them go to places where there's some sketchy mining situations happening. And they're just like, 'But we need our dilithium or our whatever.'

Grace: Ohhh yeah. Mining is just kind of the media go-to worst, most miserable, dangerous job. And that is carried over from *The Original Series*.

Jarrah: We also see a lot of scientists at isolated outposts that have really weird things happen to them. But it's kind of implied—and *Lower Decks* jokes about, like, 'There's all these weird scientists, and Starfleet just spends all their time trying to protect them.'

Grace: Yeah. Let's look at the world at large though. How many weirdos do we get to see have people bend over backwards to protect them when they're in a position of influence?

Jarrah: Yeah. I think the thing with Star Trek is it's usually just some rando and his wife, and they've been on this planet by themselves for like 30 years. And then it turns out they're actually salt vampires or something.

Grace: Or something like that, yeah. Or the wife's been dead for 50 yeeears!

Jarrah: Oh my gosh.

Andi: Spooky.

Grace: What a world, what a world.

Andi: Actually, when you brought up “The Cloud Minders” and their revolution, Jarrah, I was actually thinking about, too, we don’t really see a ton of exploration of ways to fight back on these sorts of conditions through unions. Except for, I know there is some in *DS9*.

Grace: Yesss.

Jarrah: Yeah. We should definitely talk about Quark’s.

Andi: Yeah. So, in general, when we’re talking real life, one of the most effective ways to bargain for better health and safety standards is through your union. So, I think it’s interesting that we get—these miners need to unionize, is what I’m saying. And if they want to do that, they should take some lessons from *DS9*.

Grace: For those of you who haven’t realized it, *Women at Warp* is a very pro-union podcast. *Andi laughs*

Jarrah: Yeah, I follow Chief O’Brien’s, ‘He wasn’t just a hero. *All join in* He was a union man.’ But yeah, Quark clearly doesn’t have sick days. So Rom doesn’t get sick *on* the job, but he isn’t able to take time off when he *is* sick. And then, you know, again, his employees are on their feet all day.

Grace: Which is extra crappy because he’s [Rom] a single dad.

Jarrah: Yeah. He’s [Quark] garnishing their wages. He’s trading sexual favors for raises and all this stuff. It’s gross. But then the workers do fight back, and they win some concessions.

Grace: Yeah. As should be their right as workers.

Andi: All we can say here at *Women at Warp* is organize.

Grace: Hi. We’re gonna take it real for a minute here with *Women at Warp*. Have you talked to your labor organizer lately?

Andi: And if you don’t have one, maybe you should be one.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Grace: *singing* Da-da-da-dum!

Jarrah: I also wanted to raise, Why do holodecks even let you turn the safety off?

Grace: I couldn't tell ya. Why do white guys ask at Indian restaurants for them to give them full spice and then complain about it afterwards? *Andi laughs*

Jarrah: The computer should be able to be like, 'Um, no, I am not going to make that bullet that is going to actually kill you.'

Grace: 'Mmm, inadvisable. No.'

Andi: Or at the very least, you should have to have clearance or like an SOP about why you would need the safety standards to be turned off.

Grace: You'd need to be able to have a very special set of circumstances to be allowed to do that.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Andi: Yeah. And I, off the top of my head, can't even think of why you would be able to.

Grace: I couldn't tell you either.

Andi: Convince me. Convince me, people. And no, Dr. T'Ana, 'Because it's hotter' doesn't fly with us. *All laugh*

Jarrah: We could also pick on the miniskirts and heels as not necessarily always the best, safest clothing for people.

Andi: They look great. But if you're running for your life from someone who has been possessed by an ancient mask, you're gonna break your ankle.

Grace: I always think back to the original movie version of *A League of Their Own* and the injuries incurred apparently in the women's league baseball with trying to not have their tiny skirts flip up while sliding bases.

Andi: Yeah.

Jarrah: It is amusing that in *Star Trek: Picard*, on The Artifact, the Borg cube, there is a sign that says how many days it's been since an accidental death or

assimilation or something. Oh, assimilation—how many days has it been since an accidental assimilation. So there's a workplace joke in there.

Grace: Oh, goodness.

Jarrah: Before we wrap up, I wanted to briefly just talk a little bit about the history of these things in our world. We talked a little bit about like, 'Hey, unionize,' but there is some feminist components to this history as well.

Grace: Hell yeah.

Jarrah: So, Christina, our patron who suggested this topic, also referred us and recommended an episode of the podcast *Stuff You Missed in History Class* about Alice Hamilton, who basically helped to start the field of occupational medicine and safety. She was basically one of the very first—an early woman to earn a medical degree. She did a whole bunch of science about mostly lead poisoning of workers, and she was an active social worker. She was the first woman professor at Harvard and she pioneered—did all this research for the U.S. government, for the government of Illinois, and has a pretty cool history. So recommend you check out that podcast.

Grace: It's true. Jarrah's been recommending it to everybody all week.

Jarrah: Yes. I also maybe went down a rabbit hole where I started rewriting *Hamilton* lyrics to be like, *singing* 'My name is Alice Ha-mil-ton.' *Andi & Grace laugh* In addition, there's also a lot of women's feminist history in terms of some of the biggest disasters that brought the need for occupational health and safety into...

Grace: Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, for one thing.

Jarrah: Yes.

Andi: That's the first place my mind went to.

Jarrah: Yeah, exactly. So the Triangle Shirtwaist fire... Later on, Alice Hamilton had already been working for decades before we had the radium girls in Canada. We had les allumettières, which are the women match makers—but in other countries as well, where they were making matches with white phosphorus which was a seriously bad, bad chemical. And obviously men in mines and things were also the victims of workplace accidents and disasters and

diseases, but some of these major accidents where women workers organized really helped to get these issues to the national attention.

Grace: So look up the history of your rights as a worker. You will find some fascinating stuff in there, and also know what your personal rights as a worker are.

Jarrah: Yep.

Grace: Because your health and safety is very important.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Andi: Agreed. And you have to advocate for yourself. You can't always trust that your employer will have your best interests at heart.

Grace: Don't we know it? Sometimes you get a raise, sometimes you get a pizza party.

Andi: Sometimes you get phosphorous.

Grace: Ooof. *Andi laughs* On that note, Jarrah, where can people find more from you online?

Jarrah: You can find me on Twitter @jarrahpenguin, and you can find my blog at trekkiefeminist.com.

Grace: And what about you, Andi?

Andi: Easiest place to find me is Twitter, where I tweet under FirstTimeTrek.

Grace: And I'm Grace. You can find me on Twitter @BonecrusherJenk, and looking up my rights on the handy poster that your workplace is entitled to have on the wall, saying what your rights as a worker are in the state of Washington. *Andi laughs* Know 'em, love 'em.

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.

Grace, Jarrah, Andi: *Chanting in unison* Un-ion! Un-ion! Un-ion! Un-ion!