

# Women at Warp Episode 202: Cultural Exchange in Trek

**Andi:** Hi, and welcome to Women at Warp, a Star Trek podcast. Join us on our continuing mission to explore Intersectional Diversity in Infinite Combinations. My name's Andi, and thanks for tuning in! With me today are Grace...

**Grace:** Hello, everybody!

**Andi:** ...and Kennedy.

**Kennedy:** Good evening. \*Andi laughs\*

**Andi:** Now, before we get into our main topic, we do have a little bit of housekeeping to do. 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 watchalong commentaries. Visit [www.patreon.com/womenatwarp](http://www.patreon.com/womenatwarp).

And I wanna say that we also do something called "Spore Jumps," in which we talk about non-Trek topics. And they just did *What We Do in the Shadows*.

**Grace:** We did *What We Do in the Shadows*, so it's what we did in the shadows, and we had a great time recording that. I got to find out Aliza can do an impression of every major cast member of that show. \*Andi laughs\* I'm too impressed to be jealous, honestly.

**Andi:** It's actually why I brought it up, because she was so amazing on that episode I heard about it. \*Grace laughs\*

Alright. And looking for podcast merch? Check out our TeePublic store. There are so many designs, with new ones being added all the time, and on so much more than just t-shirts. Find it [teepublic.com/stores/womenatwarp](http://teepublic.com/stores/womenatwarp).

And lastly, if you were at home FOMOing your heart out over the Murf plushie—that was the convention exclusive for New York Comic Con—we have good news.

**Grace:** \*Gasps\* We do?!

**Andi:** We are doing a giveaway!

**Grace:** Wooooo!

**Kennedy:** \*makes air horn sound\*

**Grace:** That little gooey can be your little gooey buddy!

**Andi:** Email us at crew@womenwarp.com and tell us what you are most excited for for the new season of *Prodigy* and we will choose one lucky someone at random and send you your own very snugly Murf plushie.

**Kennedy:** So cute!

**Grace:** So cute.

**Andi:** I want to snuggle with him.

All right, cool. So our main topic today is cultural exchange and Star Trek. And basically we were trying to think of the ways that we see formal, like organized, cultural exchange in Star Trek. You know, exchange students, and, you know, officers swaps, and all of those fun sorts of things. I just found it to be a really interesting topic because I was lucky enough to be an exchange student when I was younger, and it really made a huge impact on my life, and I wanted to explore what it says about Starfleet and the Federation and their priorities. What kinds of things that we gain from programs like this and why we should value them.

**Kennedy:** Excellent. I always wanted to be an exchange student, or host one. We weren't that cool. \*Kennedy & Andi laugh\* So a little jealous on that one. But yeah, my favorite aspects of Star Trek are when we get an opportunity to see what these other organizations operate under, you know what I mean? Like, what kind of officers they crank out, what kind of people live in those societies, what type of things are different, what types of things are similar. That's the whole point of boldly going where no one has gone before. And with previous series, really with Trek being so Starfleet-focused, we very rarely got a chance to see any of that. So it was kind of like being on a team, right? You're playing another school and you get to that school and it's completely different and you almost don't know how to act because their stuff's so nice, and their locker rooms are all nicer than yours, and they got showers and towels.

**Grace:** They've got the good astroturf here. What do we do? \*Andi laughs\*

**Kennedy:** This is actual grass? Yo, this is like, this is like a blend of Kentucky bluegrass and rye, y'all.

**Grace:** I can't handle it. I'm not fit to play on this soccer field.

**Kennedy:** That's how I feel—that's at least how I envision someone who is at Starfleet Academy doing a semester or a weekend at the Vulcan Science Academy and being like, 'Dag, is all your stuff brain-activated? Like you don't have any user interfaces at all. It's just all your brains, huh? That's okay. Let's see how those physics classes end up.'

**Andi:** That sounds better than what my experience was with getting an exchange student, because mine was from Europe and she was like, 'What's wrong with you?' \*Kennedy laughs\*

**Grace:** Wowww. No, that's very similar to my experience. My family hosted exchange students for about eight years on-and-off from around the world. And, let me see, we had a lot from Latin America and throughout Europe, but mostly from Japan and Korea. Which means I now get to say I have friends across the world, which is really fun to have. And I myself am a two-time exchange student, when I was 16 in Mexico and when I was 17 in Costa Rica. So, yo hablo español pero necesito practicar.

**Kennedy:** Yo necesito practicar tambien. It's all good.

**Grace:** Claro, claro.

**Andi:** Dónde está el baño? \*Andi laughs\*

**Kennedy:** Oh no. Right, so me and Grace will handle the sticky stuff.

**Grace:** Good news is I can at least communicate some basic stuff in Spanish. But I will definitely say a high point of hosting exchange students, which has just led to a skill that has been incredibly handy through my life ever since, is learning how to simply explain concepts in a way when there's a language barrier, is a really good skill to have. And also the ability to pantomime is always a good skill to have. There was a point when I was in Italy where I was staying at a hostel where the owner didn't speak English, but she spoke Spanish, and I needed to translate for a guest on whether the water was good to drink, and that was a whole experience. You never know when it's gonna come in handy.

**Kennedy:** Yeah. And that's another layer, right?

**Grace:** Exactly, yeah.

**Kennedy:** Just because it's in the future doesn't mean that the universal translator is always gonna work.

**Grace:** Yeah. And there will always be cultural differences and things that just don't crop up in other cultures that need to be explained to them.

**Kennedy:** Right. Which I think is why it's so important to include *Enterprise* in discussions like this. So I'm really glad that you all included this, because they are the beginning, right? Whether you like the series...

**Grace:** The *verrry* beginning.

**Kennedy:** Whether you like it or not, this is where we come from, okay? So suck it up, like... \*Andi laughs\*

**Grace:** It's a long road getting from there to here. It was a journey, okay? Respect the journey.

**Kennedy:** Just sayin'.

**Andi:** I find it very interesting to think about how they started to build a foundation for standard operating procedures for first contact, and how to deal with species they've never met before. And it feels like, if you're in the very beginning stages of doing that, you're probably going to mess up a lot and learn a lot.

**Grace:** Which is probably why they thought it'd be a good idea to have two alien exchanges on the flagship of the Federation. 'Cause then they have twice as much alien information and alien perspective.

**Kennedy:** Yeah. Plus, I mean, T'Pol had to go somewhere, right? Could you imagine? ...

**Grace:** T'Pol had to go somewhere.

**Kennedy:** ... Not only is this a space startup, right? ...

**Grace:** \*laughs\* I never thought of it like that before, and it's not wrong.

**Kennedy:** ...but you're literally biologically unaccustomed to being around this other species. You get a whole other appreciation for T'Pol because you don't think about... I mean, I'm human. you're human, you're human. We all know what human beings can and do smell like from time to time.

**Andi:** And they give her so much shit over it.

**Kennedy:** She didn't know. Could you imagine? Oof. \*sighs\* And, let's face it, those jumpsuits, you know they didn't breathe well.

**Grace:** Those had to be just tubes of polyester filled with sweat. \*Andi laughs\*

**Kennedy:** Swamp ass, swamp ass in space.

**Grace:** The *USS Swamp Ass*. That's where they dropped T'Pol.

**Kennedy:** I mean, you said it. She was like, 'I wanna quit.' \*sings\* 'I wanna gooo home.' \*Andi laughs\*

**Grace:** Of course Phlox was there 'cause he's like, 'Oh, this is a new and different experience. Funnnnn. I know a lot about different alien cultures and now I get to live amongst one.'

**Kennedy:** Right.

**Grace:** 'I'm sure they won't be weird and judgey. Oh, no, wait, they're weird and judgey.'

**Kennedy:** He totally thought this was going to be a camping trip with chaperone duties. Just literally keeping things together. He thought he was going to be the cook, so to speak. 'Just sit here and patch you up as you go. Everything's gonna be great.' And then he's like, 'Oh, oh, humans.'

**Grace:** 'Humans. You guys are complicated!'

**Kennedy:** 'Y'all are like this all the time, huh. All the time? Wow. Alright.'

**Grace:** 'I can't wait to tell all my wives about this. Oh wait. You guys are weird about polyamory? Okayyyy, whatever.'

**Kennedy:** ‘This is goin’ in the log.’

**Andi:** I do think it shows though that the fact that they set up specific programs to integrate other species onto the different ships shows that this is something that they cared about....

**Grace:** Yeah, definitely.

**Andi:** ... This is something that they wanted to include in this organization that they were building, that it would be open to other species.

**Kennedy:** Yeah, for sure.

**Grace:** Especially because the Vulcans were half of the involvement in first contact, so they definitely wanna keep things on a cool level with the Vulcans and be like, ‘Heyyyy, I know we just started our space startup, but you guys were there from the beginning. You wanna get involved a little bit?’ And they’re like, ‘No, we don’t, but we are gonna send our foxy lady science officer to spy on you, ish.’ I say “‘spy on, ish,’” but let’s talk about how, with *Enterprise*, we really do get just the most base level of trying to do cultural understanding with some of these ‘alien of the week’ episodes. The one I’m thinking of is “Unexpected,” which has a lot of issues with it. But for one thing, you would think Trip would have a little more sensitivity for T’Pol’s whole plight with being the one Vulcan on this ship full of humans, dealing with the smell and their food and all that. When Trip had to go on that alien ship and just pitched a massive shit fit over having to do the decompression chamber thing—and it looks like it wasn’t pleasant, and there are multiple points where he’s like calling back like, ‘Guys, this doesn’t feel right. Can I come home? Please let me come home.’ And they’re like, ‘No, suck it up. It’ll be fine.’

**Kennedy:** I’m sorry. Are you really surprised that Florida Man is vocal about an inconvenience? \*Grace & Andi laugh\* He may be Space Florida Man, but let’s face it: Trip is as country as country can country, okay? He’s gonna complain, especially if his little mediocre existence has been inconvenienced.

**Grace:** \*in a whiney voice\* ‘I’m having a hard time. Feed me hydration cubes by hand.’

**Kennedy:** Just, I mean, you know, we gotta start somewhere. And I feel like, as much as people’s gripes with *Enterprise* as a whole can be expressed toward.... If it wasn’t for that, how would we know? How would we know how cool it is

to ride in a car if we've never ridden a horse for four hours? You know what I'm sayin'?' ...

**Grace:** That's true.

**Kennedy:** ... How do you know how cool it is to fly on a plane if you've never had to only be able to ride a train from somewhere? So I feel like, if nothing else, it serves as an opportunity to give us perspective. 'Cause, like you were saying, Andi, there was no protocol. There were no expectations except, 'Alright now, fight nice.' And these are all ex-military dudes who think they're enlightened because they went to brunch with Zefram Cochrane two times. Like, come on, come on. I know a boys' club when I see it. Those admirals, all those flag officers, were total grown-up dudebros. And that's why the Vulcans were disgusted. The Vulcans were like, 'Listen. We gotta put somebody on this ship because I don't trust these little half apes out here with all this equipment to not only not blow themselves up, but somebody else up. So let me put T'Pol here. Let me put a doctor. Do we have any Denobulans? Cool cool. I'll take the first one you got.'

**Grace:** 'The vibes are off with these little round-eared weirdos.'

**Kennedy:** 'I don't like it. I don't like it. We should never have given them torpedoes. I'm tellin' you.'

**Grace:** And then we see that go really bad in this episode, in the situation that, because of Trip not fully understanding some cultural stuff, and also them not respecting him needing to know this cultural stuff, he gets pregnant against his will. And it's definitely treated as more of a joke than it probably should have been.

**Kennedy:** Right. Tell me you've never been pregnant against your will without telling me you've never been pregnant against your will and we'll see how funny that is.

**Grace:** Yeah, no kidding.

**Andi:** And I just wanna say that, you know, when we were pulling together episodes to talk about for this episode, there are a lot. And there are a lot of episodes that have aspects of cultural exchange, maybe not formal, maybe informal, maybe just a little bit, maybe a scene here or there. So as we go through these, if there is one that we miss, feel free to write in the comments about one that you wanna discuss because there are so, so many.

If we're going in chronological order from *Enterprise*, I think the next one we probably should talk about is *Discovery* and Michael Burnham, who actually attended the Vulcan Science Academy. And when we first meet Michael Burnham, they're treating her almost like a Vulcan because she was so immersed in Vulcan culture that that's like her affect, and the way that people treated her was completely different.

**Grace:** And you *know* the Vulcan Science Academy had to be rough with her being the one human there, for one thing. And also if we establish the previously mentioned smell thing from *Enterprise*, then they're like, 'Oh, the smelly human is back.'

**Kennedy:** Right. Plus the trauma of losing her entire family. And, you know, having Sarek as your dad? That's gotta be rough, you know? Talk about expectations. Sheesh!

**Grace:** Michael cannot catch a break

**Kennedy:** No breaks for poor Michael Burnham, especially when you consider the fact that not only was she in some type of roundabout cultural exchange, even though against her will, to the Vulcan Science Academy, but then, after she had become completely immersed in Vulcan culture, she now becomes an exchange officer on a Starfleet vessel and has to learn all over again how to be human. And I just—what a mind freak. Tryin' to curb my language there.

**Grace:** Having to be a long-term exchange student and then, after you've fully acclimated to that culture, come back and have to be an exchange student to the culture from which you originated sounds so mind-bendingly rough.

**Kennedy:** Right. And then particularly in her case, because she was othered in every instance where she was an exchange student, or officer, if you will. So it's not like signing up for a program and choosing to be reassigned or whatever. She was othered *initially*, from childhood. And now here she is—even though she's amongst her own people on this Starfleet vessel, now she's othered because she was educated by a different culture. So there's loads of nuances to explore when it comes to that experience in particular, especially when you consider, no spoilers, but what happens *of* it. What these two extreme instances of heavy influence and this cohesive cross-educational program or career track or whatever the terminology for something like that would be, where you're being forcibly exposed to two completely different things and you are then able to take the best of those two polarized experiences and create an ability to do things that most people can't. It's kind of like the gifted kid peaking in high



school, except there was no peaking for Michael. It just kept happening for her. And obviously we don't know what the result is because we're still in the middle of the series, so to speak, and it's happening cohesively as we are. But man oh Manischewitz,

**Grace:** Michael, deserves a vacation so bad.

**Kennedy:** Listen, if season five doesn't have a couple episodes where they're just on Risa somewhere...

**Grace:** If any series has deserved a Risa episode, it's *Discovery*, seriously.

**Kennedy:** Listen, it sure as hell isn't *Next Generation*. They got posh—that fancy-behind Galaxy Class diplomat-hosting ship.

**Grace:** They're all having band practice every other night, they've got an on-ship theater, you know there's like a bowling alley or some shit.

**Kennedy:** Please.

**Andi:** There are a lot of episodes I think we could talk about in *TOS*. And in fact, I would say *TOS* has some of my favorite what I think of as ambassador episodes, which are episodes where, for whatever reason, they decided that week there were gonna be ambassadors on the ship from different cultures. My personal favorite of these types of episodes is "Journey to Babel," which I love.

**Grace:** "Journey to Babel" is just such a quintessential *Original Series* episode also. It's one of the ones I go to if I'm showing someone original Star Trek for the first time.

**Andi:** Well, the thing I like about it is so much world-building comes out of episodes like that, when you're kind of digging into these different cultures and stuff. Even throwaway things become kind of interesting world-building. But overall, the ambassador episodes are not ones that I really wanna explore because a lot of them—it's not super cultural exchange in the same way that we're talking about it. It's more like, these are political discussions and diplomatic discussions, which are important and definitely deserve to be talked about, but not really the focus that I was thinking of, which leads me to what I was thinking of, which is basically the episode that prompted this whole episode was I wanna talk about "A Matter of Honor," which is exactly the first thing that I think of when I think of these kinds of exchanges. And "A Matter of Honor" is

the one where Riker goes and serves as the XO on a Klingon ship, and it is de-lightful.

**Grace:** I love the attitude that Riker goes into it with also, just the excitement of the whole thing, and his whole hyping himself up by trying all the different Klingon foods. I love that. ‘Cause it’s just him being like, ‘No, I’m gonna experience the whole thing. I’m gonna sample everything from this buffet of Klingonhood and take in all these new experiences,’ which is exactly the way you should take in an experience like that.

**Andi:** I really love the gagh scene with him and Pulaski and Picard, because one of the things that I learned most when I was doing my exchange experiences was, I grew up in the Midwest and our food culture is veryyyyyy—I’m trying not to be insulting—basic? I don’t know. I didn’t really learn very much about food, and the food culture is very much—it’s bland. We are the ones that gave Americans a bad rap for putting mayonnaise on everything and making jello dishes. So this is the food culture that I came from. And then when I was traveling, it was just such a different experience and it opened me up so much. And one reason is, it’s not even just about the food, it’s about how different cultures eat. Mostly I lived in the Middle East and I lived in China, and both of those food cultures are very much like, you put everything on the table and everybody shares. They don’t just grab a meal, you know, whatever. They sit down as a group and have meals, or at least a lot of them do. And then also when I was in France, I was like, ‘Oh, actually taking the time to create and enjoy food.’ They will spend hours, hours putting together really delicious food. But it’s also about how it looks, and those sorts of things really made a huge difference and an impact on how I saw the world. And so I just love this scene where Riker’s like, ‘Here is all the Klingon food. I’m gonna try everything. I’m not gonna be grossed out by it if I can help it. And I’m just gonna have the most experiences that I can.’ ‘Cause when I was in China, I would literally just be like, ‘Bring me that. I don’t know what it’s gonna be, but I’m gonna try it and it’s gonna be a good time, even if it’s terrible and I hate it,’ you know? And I just really love that scene.

**Grace:** Contrast that to Pulaski and Picard who are just like, ‘Ewwww, gagh.’

**Andi:** To be fair, gagh does not look good. It does not look yummy to me, but I would try it.

**Kennedy:** I’ll say this. I really appreciate you sharing that, Andi, because as someone who didn’t get to experience it, I was looking at this through a different lens, right? Obviously we commend Riker for being fearless, right?

For wanting to try new things, for not being gross about it, right? And keeping an open mind. But as someone who comes from a culture that has been appropriated in so many different ways, over so many different generations for so many weird reasons, it makes me think of what's known as cultural gatekeeping, where it's a social tactic that is used intentionally to preserve parts of the heritage that are cultural, that are verbal, that are spiritual, whatever the case may be, against it being plagiarized in some way or capitalized upon or whatever. But the problem with cultural gatekeeping is that it prevents an exchange like the one you described from happening. So I think it's one of the other reasons why episodes like this are so important, because it gives the audience an opportunity to see how. Want to be done and that even though it might not always be easy, right? Riker was struggling on some of those things he was eating. You could tell he was too cocky to admit that he was a little grossed out by some stuff. But you know, he was struggling. Even Worf, who's Klingon, didn't grow up eatin' that stuff. So even he was like, 'Uh, yeah, you're supposed to eat this and you're supposed to...'

**Grace:** He's like, 'No, I love heart of targ—urghh—it's so gristly—ughh.'

**Kennedy:** Yeah, exactly. So there's nuances in this particular episode that I think are a really great example of what Star Trek is about. This is how it works. You're gonna mess it up. It's not gonna be easy, but if you make the effort, you'd be surprised at what the outcome would be. At the very least it starts a dialogue like this one.

**Grace:** And then, with the B plot of this episode, we get in contrast to that Wesley running into a—was it Benzite? Benzite. And immediately assuming that they're the Benzite he has already previously met. And that's just such a, 'God, Wesley, be cool.'

**Kennedy:** I mean, he's a kid.

**Grace:** And he asks him, 'Oh, it must be difficult when you all look the same.'

**Kennedy:** Cringe, bro. \*Andi laughs\*

**Grace:** Uhhh, Wes!

**Kennedy:** You know what? That also needed to happen. It needed to happen not only for Wesley, right?

**Grace:** To get knocked down a peg, yes.

**Kennedy:** But also for people who had comparable experiences to Wesley, because they were also young, brilliant, painfully awkward cis het white males who don't have exposure to other cultures save for what they see on TV, reading books, and nowadays on the internet, you know what I mean? So I feel like, all of the Wesleys who saw that episode air, if you didn't cringe, you're probably a Trek bro now.

**Grace:** Wesley's cringe is the rest of the world's gain.

**Kennedy:** Yes!

**Andi:** Well I think it also—just like, you're gonna mess up when these things are new to you. And how you handle it is what's important. But I think it's interesting that you bring that up, Grace, because—so, Maurice Hurley, when he was talking about what they were trying to do with this episode, he basically said that they wanted to do culture-swapping to explore what it must be like to be the only Black face in a room of 40 white people. That's what Worf, in a sense, is doing. He's the only Klingon on basically a human ship. So he said, 'Let's spin it. Let's put somebody on an all-Klingon vessel and see how that works. What is it like to be a fish out of water?' And I think that comes through, but it also is interesting to me that that's what they were going for, because the actual episode goes more into what people can learn from each other when they are the one person in the room.

**Grace:** You'd also think they'd bring Worf into the episode more with that being the intent.

**Andi:** Yeah.

**Kennedy:** But I think this is the perfect setup, because it plants the seed of this, right? I don't know, just like what you were saying, Andi. I think it leans more to what can happen in these situations when it really could be doing both, right? Because all this does is establish canonically, like, yes, Starfleet and Klingons have an exchange program. They swap officers. Everybody learns things. It's a sign of goodwill and good faith, right? Cool. But then when we go on to the next episode where we see this happen, in "Sins of the Father," that whole comparison between being a Black face in a room full of white ones, you see what that's kind of like in the opposite direction with "Sins of the Father," right? We meet Kurn for the first time, and while the general shock of, 'Oh my god, there's a Klingon,' or, 'We have to deal with the Klingons now' is done with, because of Riker's work in "Matter of Honor." Even down to the part where he had to challenge the captain for first officer stuff, 'cause he was acting

nonsensically. The point is, Riker had to do what he came over there to do, and now it's not so shocking to see another officer come over here and do what they got to do. And in "Sins of the Father," we get to see—it becomes a little bit more normalized. Granted, it's a couple seasons later, so a lot of stuff has gone down between, you know, everything and everything. But my point is, we almost have come to expect—they set up an opportunity for us to get an officer from another ship. Maybe not Klingons. It could have been literally anybody else, you know? But the fact that it was Kurn specifically explores the nuance of cultural exchange when you've been othered your whole life and you're learning your own culture again. One of the things that makes Worf so appealing to so many people, as we all know, is he's Klingon of a highborn house but was raised on Earth with humans. And then when he gets around other humans he tries to act like he's the most Klingony Klingon that ever Klingoned until some Trill woman has to—Trill person really, 'cause Dax is trans, hello—has to call him out and be like, 'Hey, look, look, look, you don't even really care about all this. You drink prune juice, my guy.' So Worf is now always portrayed as, and depicted as, trying to quantify his own Klingonness. So when you have a bona fide raised-amongst-Klingons Klingon like Kurn, you get cool moments over the dinner table where they bring out Earth's best food and...

**Andi:** It's one of the funniest scenes on *TNG*. I laugh every time I see it.

**Kennedy:** No, it's so good. He eats the flowers is what kills me. \*Andi laughs\*

**Grace:** Why not? Try everything on the table.

**Kennedy:** Right. Again, here he is with an open mind. He may not have agreed with everything, but that's what he's here for. He's gonna do his job. And when he says something like, 'Oh, this replicated bird meat must be palatable to humans,' and Geordi's like, 'Oh, it's good enough for Worf,' we look at Worf and Worf's like, 'Oh, oh, oh,' right? But that's a very unique experience for a marginalized individual where you've grown up othered because you're not in a community full of the same demographic as you. But then not only that, when you're faced with meeting these people for the first time, or at least examples of your "own" people for the first time, are you doing it well enough? Are you Klingoning well enough to fool other Klingons into knowing that you're Klingon too, or will you get called out on it? How is one's Klingonness quantified, you know? So it offers all of these different questions that I think are really, really important to consider. And if it only is something to surface value, like, 'Oh, here's Kurn doing Riker's job,' and, 'Oh, this is what it's like,' then cool, right? That's still mission accomplished, as far as the episode is concerned.

But if you really take the time to look at all those different nuances that are included there, it makes “Matter of Honor” I feel like a part one. It’s like a prequel to the Worf-and-Kurn saga because it sets up “Sins of the Father” so very, very effortlessly.

**Andi:** Good episodes.

**Kennedy:** For sure.

**Andi:** I do wanna turn a little bit to *DS9* because they also have a really good episode that explores a lot of cultural exchange that happens after a conflict, as a specific attempt to move forward and solve problems together in a way to put the war behind them. And so specifically talking about “Destiny,” which is the episode where there are two Cardassian scientists and one Cardassian spy pretending to be a scientist...

**Grace:** Dun, dun dun.

**Andi:** ...that come to *DS9* and are working on a scientific project as a way to move the peace forward between the Cardassians and the Bajorans. And basically the reason why they framed it that way—so Robert Hewitt Wolfe said that at the height of the Cold War with the Soviet Union there were sympathetic scientists, people that we could work with and talk to, and they wanted to explore that as the first joint project between two powers in an uneasy peace. So I thought that was interesting because I think “A Matter of Honor” and “Sins of the Father” kind of explore—it’s a culture exchange between two allies that are trying to deepen their ally shit. In this case, it’s two former enemies that are trying to become not enemies. You know what I mean? And I think that’s a different vibe.

**Grace:** It’s a whole new kettle of complication.

**Andi:** Yeah. And you can see that in the episode, in that there’s not a ton of trust. They’re trying to build trust, but the trust is not inherently there.

**Grace:** Quark’s trying to offload all his Cardassian product on them, and they are not having it.

**Andi:** It’s pretty funny, but yet there’s this undercurrent of, you know, just distrust and like things could go wrong and set things back in their progress, you know?

**Kennedy:** Yeah. Lets you know how tentative that progress really is. My favorite element of that episode is how it's kind of like a gender-role swap as well. And we learn that Cardassian sciences are a field dominated by women, and how part of the distress that is present—it's not only because we're kind of beefing, we're not quite plant-based yet me and you, we kind of got, you know, we kinda beefin'—but the other level of distrust that these two scientists feel is because they're paired with Miles O'Brien, who's a whole male as far as they're concerned, and they're like, 'Dudes can't science though. You let your dudes science? Dudes can't science. Are you serious?'

**Grace:** Who let this pretty little thing into the lab?

**Kennedy:** They were straight up like, 'Seriously, you're pairing me with a dude? Alright, here we go. Don't lick your finger before touching anything.' \*Andi laughs\* So I really wished that we had had more of an opportunity to explore that dynamic in particular. I would love to see a Cardassian science team turn out a whole ship. Just be like, 'Who ties your shoes for you? Who feeds you humans? 'Cause you obviously can't science. Move! Let me do this. Move, geez.' And then them being hostile and antagonistic is flirting, so she was really feeling Miles. She was feelin' him. First she was like, 'Oh, this dude can't science.' And then she was like, 'Oh, this dude can science. Ooohhh.' \*Andi laughs\*

**Grace:** He's got brains and nice hair.

**Kennedy:** 'I like it so curly, human hair. This is cute.' She was like, 'Oh, you think you can science, huh?' And Miles was like \*in an Irish accent\*, 'Shake, of course I can.' Like, 'What are you talking to me like this for?' She's like, 'Okay, whatever.' Come to find out, she was really feelin' him and had to learn. So, like I said, there's so many nuances to this episode, and that element in particular—I would love more Cardassian scientists, please.

**Andi:** Well, and I think that they are a good example of some really common pitfalls when it comes to cultural misunderstandings. One is when your prejudices are different, and your biases are different, and you're like, 'Wait a second, what?' And then secondly, the fact that courting and flirting and romance can be very different depending on what society you're from, and what's a signal in one society might be nothing in another society, and it causes a lot of—I love that at one point she called it a 'cross-cultural misunderstanding,' and I really liked that phrase 'cause she was so embarrassed. She was like, 'I think this is a cross-cultural misunderstanding.' I was like, 'Yeeeeeah.'

**Grace:** And she has to be like, ‘Oh shit. I just told a coworker that I’m very fertile. No, no, there’s no coming back from that. Ohhh god.’

**Kennedy:** Oh god. I would be mortified.

**Andi:** And it was so cute. He felt bad ‘cause he was like, ‘I am not interested.’ And then he was like, ‘Oh, was that too harsh? Oh, it’s not that I don’t think you’re attractive. It’s just, you know, I’m married.’ And she was like, ‘Please don’t.’ I was like, ‘Just stop. Let me leave.’

**Grace:** ‘Just let me go find a hole to crawl into for a little while and I’ll see you at work tomorrow.’

**Andi:** ‘There’s no saving this. Let me just have my dignity.’

**Kennedy:** ‘Let me just go to the nearest airlock. Don’t touch me. ‘I’ll just...’

**Andi:** ‘Beam me into space.’

**Grace:** ‘I’m just gonna hide under my hat hair for a minute.’

**Kennedy:** ‘Gonna geet myself out the closest airlock. Thanks.’

**Andi:** But the thing that’s nice is it all went somewhere. That interaction and that relationship actually ends up saving them all, because she made this connection with Miles, even though she was thinking it was romantic but it wasn’t. They still made a connection. And that connection is what gave her the courage to be like, ‘Um, actually this bitch is not a scientist. She’s a whole-ass spy. And she fucked us all.’ And I really love that. It shows that this mission did what it was supposed to do. It moved forward the trust between these natural enemies and it helped maintain the peace process that they’re all trying to make work at this point. It’s a good episode.

**Grace:** Yes it is.

**Kennedy:** I’m just sayin’, Gene’s vision. \*Andi & Grace laugh\*

**Andi:** It would’ve been more Gene’s vision if they’d banged. But still.

**Grace:** You can’t have everything. You can’t entirely live up to Gene’s vision.



**Andi:** Well, and another thing that they kind of touch on, but it's not super, a huge part of the episode, is the differences in the scientific methodologies, the way that it would depend... At one point, O'Brien's talking about how he had to change Terok Nor because it wasn't up to Starfleet code. So the differences in both engineering standards and then also just the way that they science and the rules that surround it are interesting. It's not a huge focus of the episode, but I still really enjoy it.

**Grace:** I like that we get the little moment of one of the scientists being like, 'And then we can transfer it over onto here, onto Terok Nor—Deep Space Nine. Sorry.'

**Andi:** Deep Space Nine.

**Grace:** And then she corrects herself and they move on.

**Andi:** I will say to you that these two Cardassian scientists are really delightful. Great Characters.

**Grace:** It's fun getting to see Wendy Robie do more stuff also.

**Kennedy:** Listen, I would watch fiftyone more episodes of those two just bopping about the galaxy fixing people's stuff, and stuff.

**Grace:** Oh my gosh. Space stations and shit.

**Kennedy:** Yes, yes.

**Andi:** I do think it goes to show like, instead of diplomats, they sent scientists and it actually worked out really well. And it was super cute—when they first get on the station, they're like, 'Um, we practiced this. Was this good?'

**Grace:** 'We're not diplomats,' I think they say.

**Andi:** And everyone was just effortlessly charmed by this. 'Cause they were like, 'We're trying.' But I think that that idea of science as a diplomatic inroad is interesting and is explored even further in our next episode, which is the *TNG* episode "Suspensions," which is the one where Beverly decides she's going to be a scientific diplomat and invites a bunch of different scientists onto the *Enterprise* to test this Ferengi scientist's invention. He says he has invented a new kind of shielding, and Beverly literally says that she wanted to be a

scientific diplomat. And I think that's really interesting and a cool way to frame a cultural exchange.

**Grace:** Absolutely. And we get to have a fun murder mystery episode where Beverly gets to be the detective.

**Andi:** Yeah. Jeri Taylor said that she wanted to give a vehicle for Beverly, and that they'd felt that Troi had already gotten some good episodes, but she [Beverly] didn't have one. They wanted to give her something atypical, not a female role. The idea of her playing a private eye was very appealing. And I think it is. They originally thought about doing this with Worf, which I guess kind of makes sense because he's the security officer, and so a natural fit for a detective story, but I'm so glad they gave it to Beverly instead. She just does not get enough Beverly episodes, and it's really fun to see her be detective-ing. It's cute.

**Kennedy:** Hear, hear.

**Grace:** Yeah. We get to see her Hercule Poirot it up for a while, and it's great.

**Andi:** Yeah. And I actually think the mystery is good. I didn't figure it out the first time—the first time I saw it, I didn't figure it out right away. And I like the way they really did frame it as a detective story where it peels back one layer at a time. And the fact that you had all of these suspects, right?

**Grace:** It's such a great locked-room sort of mystery setup.

**Andi:** Exactly.

**Grace:** You've got your—you meet your suspects, and then you have to figure out who's sketchy.

**Andi:** So one of the things that's interesting is that each scientist is from a different place and is of a different species, right? And the biases that played into how they reacted to each other. This is especially true of the Klingon scientist, Kurak, which also is interesting—we don't get to see Klingon scientists very often. We *definitely* don't get to see Ferengi scientists very often, and I just thought this was a really good episode to unpack the stereotypes that they have about each other. Like, 'What do you mean there's a Klingon scientist?' 'What do you mean there's a Ferengi scientist?' And when it started to get down into who murdered someone, there's definitely some unconscious bias towards Klingons in this area.

**Kennedy:** Mm-hmm. Don't get me started. That's because Klingons are the Black people of the galaxy. I said it. I said it. I said it. I mean, you know. Hey, you know what it is.

**Andi:** There's a reason why, in their first appearance, they're all in black and brown face.

**Kennedy:** Just, I'm just sayin' like—and I don't use the term “Black people” just to note folks of African descent. I mean people who've always, who've forever been othered based on what they look like as opposed to, you know, how they worship or where they come from or anything like that. There's a very specific type of bigotry that occurs when it has something to do with something superficial and stereotypes like that. So, yeah, I feel like an episode like “Suspicious”—I mean it was, you know, it is what it is. You kind of look at each other sideways, like, ‘You thought it was the Klingon too. Stop looking at me like that,’ you know?

**Andi:** Well, and I think that, you know, not in the same way, but I think the Ferengi are also portrayed as an other.

**Grace:** Definitely in this episode, yeah.

**Andi:** Like it's acceptable to treat them poorly. And this is something that I think we see in *DS9* being corrected, because we have actual three-dimensional Ferengi characters, for one. But we also see someone like Dax, who's really open to and fine with Ferengi, contrasted against most of the Starfleet people who are very disdainful of Ferengi. And then we also see how that impacts Ferengi characters like Nog, where he had to push through a lot of bias that, like, ‘Ferengi only care about money,’ ‘Ferengi are just greedy,’ ‘Ferengi will always betray you.’ And, I mean, it's not like that's a completely irrational response to what we have seen on screen. But this is one of the first episodes in which there is a Ferengi character that is *not* that. He is a scientist. He cares about science. His motivation is not even to sell his invention or make money, profit off it.

**Grace:** He just wants to be acknowledged as a scientist.

**Andi:** Yeah, as a scientist. And you have to think that that motivation comes from the fact that no one thinks he can do it because he's a Ferengi.

**Kennedy:** Right. The other cool, introspective element of that as well is—my theory anyway—is that the reason why we as audience members recoil at the

idea of Ferengis so much is because we are still very much deeply entrenched and conditioned by a capitalistic society. So even though Ferengi culture is a caricature of hypercapitalism, we're still living in that. And I think, because there's such cognitive dissonance that's involved with participating in such an inherently destructive system, when you see a blatant caricature such as Ferengis' participation in capitalism, it gets a little jarring for people. So they instinctually wanna look down on Ferengi because they internally on some level, I think, look down on themselves for behaving that way.

**Grace:** There's some projection, definitely, yeah.

**Kennedy:** Yeah, for sure. There's some weird defensive projection almost.

**Grace:** Isn't there even an episode where Quark gets a monologue at Sisko? Like, 'No. Everything that you hate about the Ferengi is stuff that the humans have done even worse.'

**Kennedy:** Yeah.

**Andi:** Yeah. I was gonna bring that up because I agree completely.

**Grace:** It's such a great monologue.

**Andi:** It's such a great monologue, and at the end he is like, 'You're not better than us. We're better than you.'

**Kennedy:** Woo!

**Andi:** And it was fire.

**Grace:** Yeah. It's great anytime you get to have an alien go, 'You're not better than me!'

**Kennedy:** Yeah, but I also feel like it helped change Sisko's mind about Nog, his son's friend. Because not only was he still challenging his own conditioning, his own biases with allowing his son to be friends with this Ferengi boy...

**Grace:** This trouble-making little Ferengi boy.

**Kennedy:** Right, he not only had to realize and respect his son for his dedication to this kid, but also, when Nog realized that he wanted to go to

Starfleet, I think it was conversations like the one he had with Quark that told him about himself and where humanity comes from that helped put him into perspective. So, man, if that ain't—that's one of my—I mean, there's so many favorite things about Sisko—but one of my favorite things about Sisko...

**Grace:** There's so much to love.

**Kennedy:** ...is the fact that he was able to get over himself when it came to his own prejudices against Ferengi people.

**Andi:** Well, we've been talking about specific episodes that explore cultural exchange, but really all of Star Trek is a cultural exchange. The ship has different species on it. DS9 is very much not only a station with a crew from all different places, but there are people traveling there on the regular from different cultures. So like *every* episode of Star Trek is a cultural exchange episode really. Because the relationships that they build between each other help open their eyes to prejudices that they didn't know they had, like Sisko and Quark. Because if Sisko never met Quark and never built a relationship with Quark, and Quark didn't have that moment where he slapped Sisko in the face, would Sisko have grown as a person in this way? Probably not. Which is why cultural exchange is really important. Because you need to be open to other ways of thinking about things and other ways of doing things and being able to reexamine your own biases and the way you do things in order to grow and learn more about other people and how they handle their problems.

**Kennedy:** And, to that point, as a little bit of a side note, it's interesting in Sisko's case—and I'll leave it here—because he is constantly doing that. All the way up until about “Badda-Bing, Badda-Bang,” he didn't want anything to do with Vic Fontaine, or a casino in the fifties, or playing like it was cool for everybody back then. And it wasn't until Kasidy Yates sat him down and was like, ‘Okay, you're not wrong, but this isn't then. We're just having fun. Your friend's friend is in trouble. Can you relax?’ And once again he got over his own prejudices and biases and hangups to do what needed to be done. So just another shout-out to Sisko there.

**Grace:** And then he got to introduce Cajun food—New Orleans cooking—to all the people on Deep Space Nine, and it was great.

**Kennedy:** It was great. It was great. And that example that I just brought up is to indicate that it's not a one-time thing. Just because you set out to be a better-understanding person and to learn and enrich your life and everything doesn't mean it's gonna be one lesson and then you get it from here on out, and

every other lesson that comes up, you're gonna ace—because that's not how it works. You have to consciously intend to do better, whether it's through an exchange program or a job swap or whatever. Or just everyday conversation with people. And just trying to do better is the point. You have to try. You have to *wanna* try. You can't just try 'cause you're supposed to. You gotta try 'cause you want to.

**Grace:** You gotta keep trying. And that's why this theme keeps coming up in Star Trek. Because it keeps being important.

**Andi:** Definitely. I think one reason why I was so excited to talk about this is this is one of the biggest reasons why I love Star Trek.

**Kennedy:** Yeah, sames.

**Grace:** Wait, you guys love Star Trek too?

**Kennedy:** Oh my gosh.

**Andi:** Oh my gosh, really?

**Grace:** Whaaatt?!

**Andi:** Did we just become best friends?

**Kennedy:** Oh my gosh.

**Grace:** Yep. Oh...my gosh.

**Andi:** Well, this has been a really fun conversation. I know we missed stuff, guys, so if you wanna add more to the conversation you can absolutely get on our Facebook, get on our Twitter, heck, get on our Instagram—anywhere you want—and let us know about what cultural exchange moment/episode/character you wanna talk about that we didn't get a chance to talk about today.

So that's about all the time we have. Grace, where can people find you on the internet?

**Grace:** You can find me on Twitter and Instagram @BonecrusherJenk. And let me tell you a piece of advice for free: nothing will open your eyes more to how

broken America is than seeing foreigners react to how bad our transit systems are. \*Andi laughs\*

**Andi:** And Kennedy, where can people find you?

**Kennedy:** People can find me both on Twitter and Instagram @thatmikeychick. “That M-I-K-E-Y-C-H-I-C-K.” But don’t act up in my comments ‘cause I will drag you publicly before blocking you. I don’t care. \*whispers\* Idc, idc.

**Andi:** And that’s a Kennedy guarantee.

**Grace:** She’ll drag you into the town square. It’ll be a whole thing. You’ll wish you had stayed up in your clock tower.

**Kennedy:** Yep. You’ll just wish you would’ve stayed in your drafts.

**Andi:** And I’m Andi. You can find me on Twitter @FirstTimeTrek. To learn more about our show or to contact us, visit [womenatwarp.com](http://womenatwarp.com), email us at [crew@womenatwarp.com](mailto:crew@womenatwarp.com), or find us on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram @WomenAtWarp. Thanks so much for listening!