

Women at Warp Episode 219: Quarkin' 9 to 5

intro music

Jarrah: Hi, and welcome to Women at Warp, a Star Trek podcast. Join us on our continuing mission to explore intersectional diversity and infinite combinations. My name's Jarrah, and thanks for tuning in. With me today is crew member Grace.

Grace: Hey, everybody.

Jarrah: And we have special guest Nicole.

Nicole: Hi, everyone.

Jarrah: I'll get you to introduce yourself in just a second, Nicole, but before we get into that and our main topic, we have a little bit of housekeeping to do first.

Our first piece of housekeeping is a huge thanks to our patrons on Patreon. If you'd like to become a patron, you can do so for as little as a dollar a month and get awesome rewards like thanks on social media, silly watch along commentaries, and once a year we do a patron month or series of two or three episodes where we poll all of our patrons on the topics they want to see. And so, that's how we picked our topic today, that our patrons chose the episode, the Deep Space 9 episode, *Bar Association* [DS9 Season 4, Episode 16], for us to do an episode on. So, thank you for that. We are looking forward to chatting about it. And, uh, for more information, you can visit <https://www.patreon.com/womenatwarp> .

And another way you can support our show is by checking out our podcast merch that's available on our TeePublic store, it's at <https://www.teepublic.com/stores/womenatwarp> . We have tons of designs, we're adding new ones all the time. You can get them on t shirts. We have some new t-shirts, like one with Guinan that says Big Hat Energy. And, uh, there are also available notebooks, stickers, and much more. So, check it out at teepublic.com. That's <https://www.teepublic.com/stores/womenatwarp> . All right. So before we get into Bar Association, I wanted to turn it over to Nicole for a bit to tell us about yourself and your history with Star Trek.

Nicole: Great! Well, thank you so much for having me on. Really excited to be here. My name is Nicole Seguin. I live in BC, British Columbia, Canada, for all you international listeners out there. And my relationship with Star Trek is really tied into actually my relationship with my partner and husband, Jacob, where we started to watch it together in university, and it really tied in with our, you know, all of those classic conversations that you have in university about the nature of the universe, you know, what, what's our plan for our lives and everything like that. So, I have very fond memories of getting involved into Star Trek and at this point I've seen every episode of every season except for the original animated season. However, I have basically no memory for the finer details of any plot points or anything, so I would still be the absolute worst trivia person to have on your team.

Grace: Someone's got to be worst.

Nicole: Okay. Sure. Yeah. Well, I'm in the running in that competition. So, here for maximum enthusiasm, very minimal in terms, like I had to rewatch the episode to remind myself of all the fantastic things going on with it.

Jarrah: Oh, so did I.

Nicole: Okay. So that's about me!

Jarrah: Nice. Did Star Trek help you figure out what to do with your life? Because I'm, I'm still trying to figure that out with the help of Star Trek. And, uh, unfortunately there just aren't a lot of great options for luxury gay space communism in our world today.

Grace: Unfortunately, yeah. We're getting there.

Nicole: Yet, but it is giving us the template. Exactly, exactly. One day.

Jarrah: Yes. Awesome. Well, I asked Nicole on the show because she and I know each other from our work in the labor movement, and today's episode, as mentioned, is about the Deep Space Nine episode, *Bar Association*, where Rom decides to unionize Quark's bar. Grace, do you have, uh, do you want to try to give a quick overview of this episode?

Grace: Yeah, let me see what I can do here. So, Rom gets an ear infection and needs to take sick leave, but he can't because he will not get any paid time off. And as such, he starts talking about his dissatisfaction with working for his brother. And he and the other members of the Quark's team go on strike, and it

sends ripples throughout the station, and reminds us all that striking and unionizing are very important.

Jarrah: Yes. Deep Space 9 writer Robert Hewitt Wolfe said, “I’m proud to say I co wrote one of the most pro labor episodes in television history”. So, yeah, that it is making some statements. Grace, do you remember your first impressions of this episode?

Grace: If I’m remembering right, I remember being like, Oh, sick! They’re getting socialist on DS9, which is an understatement, really, but...

Jarrah: Yeah, Ron literally quotes Karl Marx.

Grace: Yeah. I mostly was just like, you know what, good on O’Brien. O’Brien is, you know, inspiring them to be like, no, take, take your rights as a worker and all that. And just genuinely has a lot of things I enjoy seeing people, you know, enforcing their civil liberties and such and also a reminder that all of the Dabo girls are characters and people and not just, you know, cardboard cutouts boobs.

Nicole: Always nice.

Jarrah: Absolutely. Yeah. Nicole, what about you? Did you have a general memory of how you felt about this episode or what was your first impression on rewatching it?

Nicole: My overall memory when you asked about my interest in this episode was really excitement because. Deep Space 9 is my favorite series. I think that it has held up the best over time. In terms of this specific episode, nothing really stuck out to me, which I think just speaks to the high quality of all of the different topics covered in the season. I just really appreciate the nuance and kind of interesting exploration into different social constructs or, or different social organizations that the show took over time. So this fit right in and yeah, excited to get into it.

Jarrah: Yeah, I don’t really remember the first time I saw this episode, but I do remember when I re-watched it when I was first starting my Trekkie Feminist project, that my biggest thought was like, I cannot believe Worf crossed the picket line.

Grace: Yeah, that still blows my mind, just that Worf,

Jarrah: How is that honorable?

Nicole: It isn't. It's not. Wrong move for Worf.

Jarrah: Yeah, should we talk, start a bit talking about Worf because he's kind of the center of the B plot and then we can get more into the main Union plot? Grace, I know you have some Worf thoughts.

Grace: Mostly about him crossing the picket line, to be honest.

Jarrah: Yeah, seriously? WTF.

Nicole: Come on.

Grace: That's dishonorable, man.

Jarrah: Okay, so like this whole episode, it's an early episode where He and Dax are kind of starting to flirt and they're apparently like sparring with bat'leths on the holodeck. They catch a person who's been stealing from Worf's quarters and Worf generally just keeps like finding fault with being on the station and like he's complaining to Odo that it's completely disorderly and I kind of like that scene. I like Odo's reaction to him about like, uh, let me tell you all the times that that shit went down on the Enterprise. And now imagine trying to keep the piece in a place like this that isn't a galaxy class starship.

Grace: My dude, we are dealing with our own stuff here.

Nicole: Yeah. I'm so glad you said that, Jarrah, because that was definitely a little sweet treat, re watching the episode. It was fantastic.

Jarrah: Mm hmm. Yeah, and um, and then he's like complaining to O'Brien that the engineering stuff doesn't work as well, and there's all these problems, and O'Brien's like, yeah, I was so bored on the Enterprise. And at the end, he just decides to move to the Defiant. But in the middle, he crosses a picket line. Why? It is never explained.

Grace: No, just that he doesn't feel like finding somewhere else to eat lunch, I guess? Or he doesn't know what a strike is, which strikes me as unlikely.

Nicole: Nicely done. Love that.

Grace: Thank you. Thank you.

Jarrah: It occurs to me that we may need to just, like, step back for folks that don't have a union background or haven't really encountered strikes before or have been on strike about, like, why crossing a picket line isn't good.

Nicole: Well, yeah, good point, Jarrah. We tend to, once we're immersed in the labor movement, assume that all of these terms are widely understood, but that's just not the case. And so, a picket line is something that union members set up when they are on strike. Which is when they are refusing to work in order to exert pressure or use it as leverage against their employer in order to make their case stronger to achieve the demands that they have.

So, the picket line is the physical or digital presence outside of the workplace that the union members set up. Where they talk to the public to explain what they're doing, ask for the public support, and also highlight to the employer that they are there and able to fulfill their job when the employer, insert editorial bit here, comes to their senses and responds to their demands, and a deal can be found at the bargaining table. Which, although that sounds like a technical term, is usually just a table where bargaining happens.

Grace: Oh man, I was really hoping it was going to be some kind of big dual disc arena where it's the union against whatever sort of high powered evil creature represents corporate interests. I wanted to believe it was a metaphorical table. Just because I wanted something more visually engaging.

Jarrah: It's like a mimic, like, in D&D.

Grace: Oh, okay, okay.

Jarrah: You think it's a table, but then it opens up and it's got teeth and a big tongue.

Grace: Okay, okay. Yeah, yeah. Okay, you have my interest.

Jarrah: Really, like, being at the bargaining table is a good thing. It means there's conversation and negotiation happening and it's when talks break down because the difference between the two parties is too great that we see a strike situation. So, in the case of *Bar Association*, technically there wasn't really a union to begin with. Like what is more common in today's world is that you would organize a union and then the union would basically through whatever legal framework in that state or province or wherever the union is, is happening,

there's like a legal requirement for what you need to do to certify your union. And then the union would have the right to bargain on behalf of the workers. And then if those talks break down, then there would be a strike. They are skipping those steps because it is only an hour long show.

Grace: No, no, no. We need to watch them, like, fill out the union paperwork. We need that full experience to get the whole, you know, feel for it.

Nicole: Oh, yeah. The action would be just unparalleled. But thank you so much for covering that, Jarrah. As I was watching it, I was thinking to myself, Oh, they didn't cover all of those, all of those steps. They're missing some key pieces. And then, again, the voice of reality came down to me, and I was like, yeah, that probably wouldn't add that much to the episode but valuable background for all the listeners out there.

Jarrah: Yeah. Yeah, exactly. Like, you know, just take, for example, like the Starbucks organizing, given this is like a hospitality sector campaign, um, in, at Quarks, I'm just like taking, for example, organizing a Starbucks, depending on the location, you have to meet whatever the requirements are to legally certify your union. Usually that means that a certain percent of the workers have to vote to join the union or sign a card to join the union and if they didn't do that, and they all just walked out and stood in front of the Starbucks and refused to work, Starbucks 100% could just fire them without any penalties, because they didn't show up to work.

But when you have a union, you're protected. Your right to bargain collectively is protected.

Nicole: Exactly. Well said.

Jarrah: And in terms of like, picket lines, there's kind of two things that we watch for in union movements, and so, you know, one thing is when you bring in workers to cross the picket lines, which we see in this episode, Quark, Quark makes holoscabs for replacement workers, if you want the more neutral term. But I thought that was super interesting because he makes these like crappy holographic workers, and it actually speaks to even more like a common issue, like, when we look at the Writers Guild of America strike that's on, as we record, one of the big issues is protection against being replaced by AI.

Grace: Surprisingly relevant, this episode.

Nicole: Absolutely. Yeah. And yet, you see in the episode, the, the dangers, or the, the downfall, where the holo-Quarks are not able to do the job to the same level that the actual workers are. And so, that's, uh, that's something that, as I was watching it, I was like, yeah. Everyone, all the employers on the other side of the WGA strike or bargaining should really be watching this episode and be like, oh yeah, maybe it would not be such a great idea for to just hand over to AI the script to write an entire show. Maybe we need some people involved here to make sure that it actually makes sense and is funny and aren't dropping glasses all over the place.

Grace: Oh yeah, maybe previous entertainment products that have been run by committee by people who aren't actual writers and are just looking purely at content that will generate money with no actual creative experience. Maybe those always suck. Yep. I don't want to address the Quibi in the room, but let's do it.

Jarrah: Mm hmm. Yeah, and in terms of, like, customers crossing the picket line, like, Worf.

Grace: Freakin Worf. You cannot tell me Quarks is Worf's first choice to eat lunch. That makes no sense to me.

Jarrah: Yeah, exactly. I mean, even O'Brien and Bashir say, like, he never even goes in there.

Grace: No, I love the fact that O'Brien and Bashir, O'Brien being, like, a big inspirational point for, uh, for Rom on this whole thing, O'Brien and Bashir are watching the picket line, like, seeing who crosses. I just appreciate that as their thing they're doing. They're like, oh, who's gonna cross? He's not crossing. No. No! And then they start a freaking fight with Worf for crossing a picket line! And I love that so much. Because you know what? If you see someone crossing a picket line, you're allowed to give them shit. And you should.

Nicole: That's it. If you see something, say something.

Grace: And if you can't say something, spray something.

Jarrah: So, there's different types of what's called job action that can be taken when talks break down, or even when talks are ongoing, but the union is in a strike action, like a legal position to take strike action.

Grace: Strike action, not as action packed as you would imagine, also.

Jarrah: Yeah, there are some, there are some actions that are extremely not action packed. So, like, one thing that's pretty common is called work to rule, which is when the union members abide by the letter of their contract and, like, refuse to work any unpaid overtime, refuse to work, you know, uh, like, make sure they are taking all of their breaks, basically just kind of, you know, exerting all of their rights to the fullest and not having flexibility when the employer wants it.

There's also, you can do like an information picket where you're not actually asking people to necessarily not cross the picket line. So like, if you ever come across a picket line and you're in doubt, like, you can ask the people on the picket line like, are you just sharing information? Are you asking us to not cross? In the case of Quark's Bar, they are definitely saying don't patronize Quarks.

Grace: Are they like literally thanking people? Thank you for not going to Quark's?

Jarrah: Yeah, exactly. And the reason for that is to, you know, basically say to the employer that, you know, there is a cost by not supporting fair workers rights that customers don't all support this approach to how you're treating your workers, especially when like Quark, you're actually making a profit and you're just using this like downturn as an excuse.

Nicole: Exactly. You're asking your customers or the people that frequent the business or buy the product to exercise their purchasing power by not purchasing right then. at that moment in support of your action.

Jarrah: I will say one thing that I didn't remember when I was re-watching this was the conversation that Odo has with Quark after the holo-waiter where Odo's like, I agree that all of the strikers should be locked up, but reluctantly I have to preserve their rights. Harumph.

Grace: Good lord. Odo's Making the ACAB strong today.

Jarrah: Yeah, it was, um, it was very, that I was also thinking it's very, like, hmm, I guess, like, lawful neutral or lawful evil? Like, just, we know that this is Odo, we know he is, he has compromised morals on other issues as long as he is upholding the law.

Grace: We know he's a narc, but we don't like to see it.

Jarrah: Exactly.

Nicole: Yes.

Grace: Narc in a bucket.

Jarrah: Nice. In terms of the, I just want to go back quickly and see, do either of you have any other thoughts on the Worf/Dax stuff that happens in this episode or, or general Worf stuff? Um, and if not, we can move on to some of the other items.

Grace: Just that I think they make an interesting couple and she's very brassy and that makes for a very good contrast to him. Seeing that kind of come into action is fun.

Jarrah: So brassy.

Grace: So brassy. Brassier than a horn section.

Nicole: She really is. Definitely, yeah. Love Jadzia Dax, and Worf. They were such a cute couple. Yeah, no one's perfect, but I just enjoyed the chemistry that they had and the various plot twists and turns that their relationship provided. And, uh, and yeah, so very, it was fun seeing that starting to blossom in, in this episode.

Grace: It is funny how just no one takes issue with Worf saying, I'm going to live on this ship. No one takes that personally at all. Like, it's not like this is a place you've been all working to establish as a home, and a community for like, what, five years now? And just this guy's like, nah, I'm gonna live in my trailer. I don't trust any of you guys.

Jarrah: Well, and he has that line where he's like, or maybe the rest of you will have to adapt to me. And at first I'm like, ooh, that sounds good. I think I like that. But then I thought, I was like, what does that even mean?

Grace: Worf, are you just spouting catchphrases until one of them turns out to be right? Because that seems like a thing that Worf would do.

Jarrah: I don't have to change, you all have to change.

Grace: Maybe there's nothing wrong with me and there's something wrong with the world. Worf! Worf! When Beverly said it, it made sense. Saying it now does not. Go back to your ship, Worf. Back to your room on your ship. Especially because you know with that ship he's like living in a closet, and he's like, Yeah, this is the best. I love it here.

Nicole: Oh, well, I think the, one of the final scenes when he's moving in, he's actually taking the mattress Off one of the beds. And I was like, really? You're just gonna sleep on a sheet of metal. Okay. I mean, I'm also in favor of realigning our posture, but that seems a bit much. But yeah, I thought that it was, it did kind of work for Worf to have himself kind of apart. It did seem like he needed that space away from everyone else to enjoy his Klingon operas. So, you know, I accept it. I'm an introvert, so...

Grace: Worf needs to live at maximum cranky, dude, so... Okay, no, no neighbours around to get on your lawn, so...

Jarrah: As someone who also very likes my space, I, I'm okay with that. I also like the detail about him taking off his mattress, but I, um... Then I was like, the whole thing about other people having to adapt to you, I do, I do not get. But, yeah, it works for his character.

Grace: Wait, wait, wait, Worf is saying people should accommodate me wanting to sleep on the ship, but I shouldn't have to accommodate workers striking for their rights.

Jarrah: Yep. Mm hmm.

Nicole: What do you have to say about that, Worf?

Grace: Worf!

Nicole: Can't be having these double standards.

Jarrah: This episode is also the first episode where the writers started to identify what they felt was chemistry between Leeta and Rom, and, uh, she kisses him on the head. And later, they get together after this episode. At this point, she's still in a relationship with Bashir. Opinions, how do you feel about the Rom and Leeta, the start of their relationship?

Grace: Well, this definitely goes farther to give Leeta more of a character than just love interest, which is cool. I mean, we kind of saw, we've seen her come

back at least for, uh, Dax to inhabit her body, which the fun thing about that episode is I had forgotten who Leeta was, because she'd been just a one off girl who Bashir was flirting with before then. And so then I'm like, who, who is, who's this random lady doing gymnastics? With Dax in her head, and then it took me a couple rewatches to be like, oh, that was the same person! Okay, okay. So her getting to actually, you know, have opinions and act on them and be a full, developed person was really cool to see.

Nicole: Absolutely. For, for me, yeah, couldn't agree more. Love to see her, you know, talking, having thoughts and opinions.

Grace: You love to see it. You love to see the lady characters getting to be full characters.

Nicole: Absolutely. I think that the show could have gone further and I've seen other commentary that has also spoken about this. Shout out to Labor Notes that has not only a blog post on this topic, but also sites Women at Warp.

Grace: Hey, that's us! We know them!

Nicole: It is! It's a nice little full circle moment. And they're so good. So just all the good people doing all the good things. So, so yeah. So I'm not the first person to say it. I won't be the last person to say it. It would have been nice for it to have been more of an equal partnership between Rom and Leeta in terms of forming the relationship or in terms of Rom perhaps doing more to show that he's moved a little bit past his more Ferengi culture towards a more treating Leeta in a more accepting and equal way. Because at the beginning of the show he asks her to perform Oomox for him.

Grace: Yes.

Nicole: Yeah, exactly. Just kind of out of the blue. And it's like...

Grace: You got some growing to do still, buddy.

Nicole: That's it. So yeah, it would have been nice to see that more. But again, it's a one hour episode. And they do over time, go in that direction. But yeah, in terms of the unionizing effort, I mean, women are one of the groups that benefits the most or really just anyone who isn't in the most privileged seat of power in a union drive, they tend to gain the most through a unionizing effort, so it would have been nice to have seen more space spent on, on that perspective. The issues that are just, uh, related to the Dabo girls and any sort of

like special recognition or, you know, end to harassment that they might have liked as part of the, the contract at the end.

Grace: Especially if you think about the context of seeing Dabo girls as hostesses, we've talked about before how you could, in some context, see them as sex workers, which is a group that is very much in need of protective actions, and we've actually seen recently, um, you know, various strippers organizations down in Los Angeles attempting to unionize and it being a very real worker struggle for them to make sure that they are able to do this job in as safe as possible an environment. And a lot of people responding with, well, if you don't do that job, you don't deserve a safe environment. It's like, why, why, why would that be? Why would anyone deserve to not have the safest possible work environment? Why does being a sex worker mean that you deserve to be unsafe?

Jarrah: Yeah. So there's a lot to dig into with that definitely.

Nicole: Absolutely. And that's actually one of my favorite things about the Leeta character is how sex positive she is. Yeah. I think that she is a really, I mean, she's a beam of light in a show that can be a little bit dark at times and she's just so joyful and sweet. So yeah, love to see her getting her her raise and more rights.

Grace: And also we get to see one of the most positive amicable breakups in all of Star Trek. I think we get to see her in Bashir, you know, going out and being like, you know what? I don't think this is the best relationship for both of us. Let's just peacefully go our separate ways and remain friends. And it's no big deal. And it's great. Another thing you love to see breakups, not necessarily having to be a dramatic, well, now we hate each other thing. Now it can honestly end amicably, and you also can both mutually reach a point where you're like, you know what, this has been fun, but I think we can both find relationships that we're more happy in. And that's great.

Jarrah: In the Leeta/Rom scenes, I really like when, you know, she makes the comment about how, like, you're basically even braver than Dr. Bashir. I mean, literally, he is risking death. At least according to the threats from Brunt, but for sure, like, never being able to go back to Ferengi again, like, his family losing their property, all this kind of stuff.

Grace: Brunt is kind of the Pinkertons of Ferenginar in this episode, and I and that fits so well. Also, screw the Pinkertons, just for the record, for anyone listening. Screw them.

Jarrah: Do you want to, uh, fill folks in on the Pinkertons in case they aren't familiar with that?

Grace: The Pinkertons are a private investigatory agency that was formed, oh, many hundreds of years ago in American history, mostly as a means to break up strikes. They do a lot of private investigative work, and they also are used to bully people who are trying to unionize, historically speaking anyway. They're still out there and still being scabby.

Nicole: The original Nausicaans.

Grace: Basically, yeah.

Nicole: Wow.

Grace: Maybe that's a piece of merch for us right there. Brunt is a scab.

Nicole: Yeah. Buying that. Adding to cart.

Jarrah: Yeah. I also wanted to, though, mention the scene earlier on where Rom makes the comment about how he's getting too much oomox, and Leeta is like, who's the lucky lady? And he's like, no, no lady, just myself. I'm sorry. It's so awkward. I don't love him then going sorry enough to do something about it, but, uh, you know, he improves from there.

This is an early point in Rom's journey.

Grace: He's got a lot of growth to do.

Jarrah: This is maybe a good segue into, um, I want to look at a couple of the other ways that this relates to, like, real world modern union organizing and struggles for labor rights and look at, like, what Quark does as an employer here, both in, like, the inciting stuff that he does that causes or leads to the strike as well as his response once they form a union.

So, like, first up. Quark basically says, in addition to you mentioned that he doesn't give Rom or anyone any sick days, which still a thing in a lot of places for a lot of people, especially in the hospitality sector. And there was a big push with COVID to guarantee sick days to people because you, no one, like, wants to go to work sick, and you also don't want people you have to encounter in public settings to be sick and get you sick.

Grace: Especially when it's a, you know, intensely infectious disease situation.

Jarrah: Mm hmm. Yeah, but. You know, didn't all go that far in every area, you know, sector and every jurisdiction, uh, so still an issue. He also basically then says, I'm cutting your pay because we're dealing with this, like, basically Bajoran cleansing festival.

Grace: It's like Bajoran Lent, kind of.

Jarrah: I was kind of envisioning it like... The Bajoran master cleanse, but it's called like the Bajoran prophet's cleanse.

Grace: It's where everyone just prays and drinks green smoothies and jilly juice all day long.

Jarrah: Yes. Yeah.

Grace: And then they poop a lot afterwards because it's green smoothies and jilly juice.

Jarrah: Yeah. And there's, there's no scientific evidence for this, but it's an important part of their culture.

Grace: The sacred jilly juice.

Jarrah: Yeah. Well, and then Rom's like, you can't just cut people's pay without notice. And he says, well, it's either pay cuts or layoffs. Another tactic that we see in our world, um, not necessarily always pay cuts, but it's like, oh, we can't increase your, your wages. We can't afford to do this.

Grace: We would love to give you a raise, but...

Nicole: Exactly. Every time that there's talk about raising the minimum wage, this is absolutely what you hear from the quote unquote business community, which is, I mean... I wish that that phrase would be retired because it's not a community. It's just a bunch of people.

Grace: It's a conglomerate.

Nicole: Yeah, exactly. So the business conglomerates of whatever size, say, if we raise wages, then business will suffer and we'll have to lay people off or fire

people. It's absolutely not true. Every city where you've seen this, it's actually done the opposite because go figure, when you raise the wages of people who have the least disposable income, they're actually able to buy more with that extra money, which actually invigorates the local economy. It's good for business. So it's good for workers. It's good for the businesses. It's one of those things where I'm hoping that we can eventually learn these lessons and stop having these really tired conversations where the other side trots out these sentiments that are just shown to be absolutely untrue and we can all just move on, turn the page and get focused on bigger and better things.

Grace: Yeah, if we can bring it back to the WGA strike, um, one of the reasons that it's come to fruition specifically is because we're seeing people at the top of the ladder in the entertainment industry making record profits just insane amounts of money. During COVID streaming was was even bigger than usual, and yet we are seeing the creative people, the people working on the ground level of this industry making, oh, my gosh, pennies compared to what they're doing. It's very much a boss makes a dollar. I make a dime, except it isn't so much a dime as it is a percentage of a penny because residual checks are that they're a joke just the amount of exploitation that is going on versus the amount of money being made. You can't you can't read about it and not get angry about it.

Nicole: Exactly. Well, and we're just at a point where this is absolutely this sort of pressure that builds up and needs this sort of action from the workers to be able to force a change. The economics of television have changed so much over the past decades, it's time to look at how the writers are compensated, but as with every sector, the bosses, the employers are never going to do that on their own. They always have to be pushed.

Grace: Yeah. That's the nature of a lot of forms of leadership. You'll be exploited unless you push back in some way and make your needs and your rights known.

Nicole: Yeah, absolutely.

Grace: And another part of the WGA is that we're seeing a lot of what could have once upon a time been, you know, stable income turned into basically gig economy. So, it's not a reliable source of income for the people who are trying to do it full time anymore. Which is very similar to a problem that you see happen a lot with people in hospitality. Ugh, just... The injustice of it all

Nicole: Absolutely.

Jarrah: I mean, I think you could probably compare it to the shift in, like, the restaurant industry with, um, like, meal delivery services. In this case, it's also squeezing the businesses, the restaurants and stuff, but that you are seeing less ability to support, like, long term jobs and more on demand jobs where a worker is paying into a company, essentially, uh, or, you know, dealing with the whims of the fees that the company's gonna decide to pay them to do food delivery instead of working directly for the restaurant who also has to pay the bigger company.

Nicole: Yep. And we see all the same problems. Play out whether it's in this episode, or it's in these sectors where people don't have the protections that come with long term established employment. Things like sick pay, health benefits, rights in terms of any potential economic downturns, if it's a seasonal industry, and so absolutely all of the same conditions that motivate Rom and Leeta and all of the workers at Quarks to unionize.

That's what we see in all these other sectors too. So, you have a little bit removed from the delivery driving in the restaurant sector, but you have workers through Uber organizing. And the other thing I'd say is that when they organize, they win. Like, we have a situation in BC where Unite Here workers were locked out of the hotel in Burnaby for over a year, but they won, and they won their seniority rights, and that didn't happen by them, you know, sitting back passively and waiting for the boss to come to their senses. That was them exerting pressure every day for each of those, you know, over 365 days in order to, to make their voices heard.

Jarrah: And just vocab for listeners who are new to this topic, a lockout is when the employer says to the workers, sorry, you are out. You literally cannot come to work. It's sort of the opposite of a strike. It is their way to try to put pressure on the union to settle when they are not happy with how things are going at the bargaining table. But, in that case, it's not that the union decided to walk off the job, it's the employer literally is preventing people from going in.

Nicole: Awesome. Thanks, Jerrah.

Jarrah: No worries.

Grace: Can we also talk about this in the context of both Rom and Leeta? This isn't the job they want to have. This isn't like their dream job that they're willing to lay down and die for, but it's the job they have and it's the job they need right now. So, it's the one that they need to be able to hold on to and, and Quark knows he can exploit that. He can exploit that with both of them because they

need the money, and that's the case with a lot of these things. It's very much people who know that you need money, need it to live, you need it to eat, you need it to take care of yourself, people will exploit you based on knowing how bad that need is.

Sorry, I'm going, like, full on fire and brimstone, your boss will exploit you this episode, but I can't stress enough how much. It's just so strange to explain to people who've never been in the situation of financial desperation to be like, I'm having trouble with this job and I know I can't get that fixed because then I risk losing that job and like, well, you can have a better job, right? It's like I could, in theory, I can also poop rainbows and unicorns, but that's not immediately in my future. I just want my 14 an hour, please.

Nicole: Exactly.

Grace: This is my stupid personal story. I had a job that was a very physical labor intensive job. And I had to do a lot of running and squatting to keep my position so that I could perform above and beyond what was needed. And, because of that, I've got two toes that are semi-numb all the time. And I would complain about it when I got home, like, yeah, my, my feet hurt so bad, and they'd be like, well, why don't you complain? I'm like, because this is a gig job. And if I complain, I won't be back there next month. As much as I hate to say it, that was the job that was able to get me not living in my mom's basement anymore. It was a Not my favorite job at all, but it was a job I needed and a job that was able to get me to a much better place in my life, but sometimes I wonder how my toes would feel. I'm looking at them right now and wondering, what are you thinking? I don't know. It becomes so separated.

Jarrah: Yeah, and I mean, there are situations where, you know, for example, in Canada we have foreign workers programs for like migrant farm workers, and if you talk to unions, or if you complain about the way you're treated or, you know, anything, look at the employer sideways, they can basically have you blacklisted so your application won't come back or won't be approved ever again to come back next season. So that's like not dissimilar from what Quark's workers are facing where the, you know, this is not just, like, going against their culture, but there's very real sanctions that the Ferengi government can place on them.

Grace: Oh yeah, the Ferengi government is very much set up to empower people in charge and not the people on the bottom level. And that's, that's like their whole deal. That's kind of their hallmark.

Nicole: Yeah, I mean, I don't think this is going out of line to say that the Ferengi government is a fascist state. Like, the complete, like, intermingling of government and corporate, what would you call it, corporate ideology.

Grace: Definitely at this point. We see by the end of this series that some changes are being made.

Jarrah: Well, Rom is in charge.

Grace: I guess. I mean, having a union organizer in charge has got to be a step in the right direction, right?

Jarrah: Yeah, like, I mean, okay, so on the face of it, you would think, oh, Ferengi, they're a capitalist society, so they're for freedom and, like, free markets, but actually

Grace: Trickle down economics.

Jarrah: Yeah, women are property, and the state will intervene if you try to exercise labor rights. Like, if this was truly free economy, then individual employers would be free to negotiate the conditions that make sense for them and their employees, uh, or employees. For example, you might need to offer a better salary in a particular region of space because that's what the going rate is in that area. Or you might want to offer better conditions for, to like retain your workers. But the fact that they can't, that there's literally like one standard agreement, you know, that shows that this is not really a free society.

Nicole: Exactly. And I think that when Rom turns around one of the comments from one of workers, oh you're being a bad Ferengi, you're disavowing all this culture, he says basically exactly what you're saying, Jarrah, where he's, he says that, no, I'm seizing this opportunity, like the opportunity to unionize and, and increase my power. Yeah.

Grace: Who here has ever been told they're not being a team player for exercising their rights as an employee?

Nicole: Hands up all around.

Jarrah: Yeah. I mean, I, I've definitely been in offices where that was the implicit threat. Wasn't necessarily, I don't know that anyone actually said that to my face, but definitely that I was always working to avoid that perception.

Grace: There is a famous American store chain that very, very famously, we'll say to employees attempting to unionize, we just don't want you to betray our trust like that because families trust each other.

Jarrah: Yeah, that's exactly the type of stuff and like, yeah, these types of manipulation and the like, you know, threatening to close the location that like we couldn't possibly afford to stay open and you'll all just lose your jobs. All of that's super common.

Grace: And it's all your fault for demanding an extra 35 cents an hour.

Jarrah: Mm hmm. I'll um, I'll say that the, the piece about all Ferengi businesses having the same contract reminds me a bit of how corporations in similar sectors essentially have kind of informal cartels to prevent.

Grace: It's not wrong. No.

Jarrah: I mean, so I'll highlight grocery store workers as, as an example where, you know, during COVID everyone was like, Oh, essential workers, super important. And, uh, some, most of the, uh, grocery stores, at least in Canada, you know, implemented premiums for essential workers, partly because it was hard, harder to get workers and it continues to be, but also, you know, recognizing these people are putting themselves at risk every day by interacting with the public during a pandemic. And then, as soon as things end, they're all talking to each other. We all have to make these benefits go away because if we don't all take away this premium, then one of you is basically going to make the rest of us look bad. And those, like, corporate alliances are pretty powerful, and we see it across sectors.

Nicole: So, if you were not part of those conversations, then we need to be having them amongst ourselves. Because we can't have that sort of unequal, not even power, even forming a union doesn't change the nature of an employer employee relationship. There's still a power imbalance. It just raises up the worker side a little bit, sometimes a lot, but it's never more powerful than the employer. So I feel like that's one of the misconceptions out there is that somehow forming a union means that you'll never have to have conflict with your employer again, or your, you know, the, the job is done. Sadly, no, there's still a lot that will need to happen.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm, what it does do is it provides legal protections and the ability to keep negotiating to improve things. Whereas, if you were doing that all as individuals, there's nothing to stop the employer from saying, you, you

and you are not team players and we are not employing you anymore. And it also helps to establish like fair frameworks to prevent things like favoritism, like promotions based on nepotism or other ways that, that preferential treatment might be shown, um, by, you know, establishing like...

Grace: Preferential treatment, quid pro quo behavior...

Jarrah: Unequal pay by, you know, having pay transparency is, is one of the big, big reasons why women and people from other equity deserving groups do better or, you know, have a bigger increase when they become part of a union because it brings that stuff out into the light and, uh, makes it very obvious where there's inequities and establishes, like, fair evaluation systems for people's jobs.

Nicole: I'm so glad you brought that up because I think that that is something that we should all know about and talk about in economies around the world. Is that this is that forming unions is a demonstrated way to be able to have that sort of widespread impact across any number of equity deserving demographics. So, all for, you know, more targeted programs to address specific discriminations, but overall joining a union or supporting union businesses is something where you're supporting a huge segment of the population.

Jarrah: So, I want to talk briefly about the ending of this episode and the resolution to this dispute. Then maybe just very quickly touch on where Star Trek values align with labor values, um, and so, in terms of the ending of this episode, first of all, how come you can just beat up Quark without there being any legal repercussions on Deep Space 9?

Grace: Because Odo's in charge. Given half a chance, Odo would be kicking Quark's ass every two minutes.

Jarrah: It just, yeah, anyway, this is an ongoing, an ongoing, uh, issue I have with, uh, with, like, where is the jurisdiction for different things around here? Like, you would also think that they could impose Bajoran or Federation labor standards, but in this case, it's very clearly like Starfleet, your lease is with Starfleet, but whatever you do with it is your business.

Nicole: Well, props to Sisko for exerting that influence and power. That was a nice, nice touch.

Jarrah: Then, I mean, he, he, you know, basically hit Quark right where he lives in, in the profit. whatever the profit pouch.

Nicole: Sure did. From one profit to another.

Jarrah: Yeah, if you don't, uh, treat your workers better, then I'm gonna charge you all of these back charges.

So at the end of the episode, basically after Brunt has the Nausicaans beat up Quark, Quark and Rom make a deal that Quark will give them everything, all of, he'll meet all of their demands as long as they pretend publicly like Quark won and dissolve the union because the Ferengi Commerce Authority will like never let this stand and it will, and all of their lives will be irrevocably changed going forward. Thoughts on that?

Nicole: I'd say that it's fine for fiction, but in real life absolutely not. Never, my advice to anyone in a similar situation would be, no, do not do this, this is not a template, this is a way to neatly wrap up a storyline at the, you know, the 51 minute mark. You gotta, yeah, close the episode.

Grace: This is a work of fiction taking the story back to the status quo while leaving you feeling okay about it.

Nicole: Exactly. Exactly. In real life, you absolutely need to go to the distance, form the union, get the, the collective agreement or your contract, and then go from there and believe what the boss says when you have it in writing and reflected in your paycheck.

Jarrah: Yes, especially because Quark has already said in this episode that he's not really intending to reverse the pay cuts after the festival, like, he indicates that to Rom early on in the episode, so why would you trust just cause he says, like, I'm gonna give you everything you want, but we just have to get the FCA off our back?

Grace: That sounds very shady.

Jarrah: Like, it's sort of like if you get hit by a car and the person's just like, how about I just pay you out of pocket and we don't need to go to our insurance, um, except for if that is happening repeatedly to you every day of your life and it controls everything you're doing, like, it might be an okay gamble that once.

Grace: But this person has might have hit multiple people. You want to make sure they're held accountable.

Jarrah: Yeah, exactly. You don't, you don't have that protection or that guarantee without the contract. Yeah, but I agree. I'm not sure how that would have worked going forward, but it could have been fun to try to explore it.

Grace: It makes me wonder if like the chain Quark's are unionized like the ones in lower decks.

Jarrah: I think in Star Trek, there's a couple other points where we see like union members or kind of workers groups and it's like usually like Picard has to mediate on a miner strike and the miners are all super like gruff, dirty guys with alcohol issues who are just causing problems for the company. So, um, I preferred this representation of union members.

Grace: Hi, listeners. This is a special message from Women at Warp. Pay attention to how media tries to portray workers rights organizations and unions, how they're usually shown as being blue collar, lazy, shiftless, alcoholic. That is a very, very deliberate move on a lot of larger companies' parts there. Just saying.

Nicole: saying. Thank you for saying that. Yeah, absolutely.

Jarrah: Um, and thank you to the writers from Deep Space 9 for not doing that!

Grace: Yes, thank you very much.

Nicole: Yeah, as I was doing some research for, you know, this auspicious conversation, I found that the writers of this episode had actually participated in the, uh, Writers Guild Strike, I believe it was in 1988. Right? And so, dare to dream, but I am hopeful that actually this experience, which I hope does result in a better situation for the writers and they achieve their demands. But I'm hopeful that this experience could actually launch some super interesting and new different conversations, storylines, plots, episodes in future TV shows, whether it's Star Trek or any other show, right, about workers issues, because these are so many of these issues are so widely felt about in our society, in our economy, I mean the, the wealth disparity is just growing more and more every day.

Grace: It's getting more and more ridiculous.

Nicole: Absolutely. And so, you know, at the, the risk of being too Pollyanna about it, if there is something good that could come of it, in terms of, you know, wealth disparity and, and, talking or the, the inequality that exists, there is

something good that could come of it. It could be some super inspiring television that could educate and inform and activate a whole group of people that previously maybe have only seen kind of the, the corporate media talking points around the downsides of, of unions or whatever the employers are saying about them.

Jarrah: Yeah, I, I failed to mention that the original story idea for this episode was pitched by two sisters, Barbara J. Lee and Jennifer A. Lee. I could not find any other credits for them, really, or a lot of background, but they did originally pitch this, and, and originally it was going to be a B story for another episode, but, uh, Robert Hewitt Wolfe and Ira Steven Behr, uh, wrote the teleplay and felt that, uh, it deserved its own episode. And it's directed by LeVar Burton, so.

Nicole: Go them. I mean, is there anything LeVar Burton does that we should not just universally celebrate?

Jarrah: So, to wrap up, I just wondered if either of you have any thoughts on just generally, like, union or labor movement values and how they relate to Star Trek values. Like, if you wanted to take, uh, have a takeaway for listeners about, like, okay, so you watch Star Trek, here's why you should care about unions if you don't already.

Grace: Well, I think having your entire multiple series long franchise set in a setting where you don't have payment, where you don't have, you know, these people needing to live paycheck to paycheck, that's very convenient for not needing to address those more often. And it is definitely something worth considering how these characters' lives would be different if they were in a position where they needed to be working for a living and did not have a universal income, health care, or basically luxury gay space communism.

Nicole: Which I mean that's always the end goal. So be clear about that. And I'd say that, you know, Star Trek, the thing that I love about the overall universe that they create is that it is showing us this vision of the end game, this world where, or worlds plural, where we do have all of these basic needs met, and we are in a place where everyone can just pursue their idea of self actualization. Do what you want to do. You're free from all of the concerns around making rent and being able to afford enough food and you can actually just really hone in on what makes you feel the most alive. Is it exploring space? Awesome. Is it having an amazing restaurant in New Orleans? Awesome. Any of the above, right?

Grace: Are you playing a weird pipe organ with five hands? Yes, love that for you.

Nicole: Absolutely. So while I'll say that that is something that I draw so much inspiration from and is really something that I look to to refuel myself, like after I've worked on a campaign or just if I've gone through like a really tough time, I'll do what I call kind of the gauntlet, which is watching every episode of every season of a series just to kind of really fill myself back up.

Grace: Yeah, give you some you time.

Nicole: Yeah, exactly. Oh, yeah. It's abundant me time. I mean, these shows are not short.

Grace: Take some time to live in another world.

Nicole: Exactly. Absolutely. But to bring it back to this episode, I'd say that the tools to get there, we already have. So, in this episode specifically, forming a union, it is a really powerful way to counter really intense private interests.

So, no matter how much capital there is on the other side, forming a union is a way to really be able to advance, not just your rights, but the rights of those around you. And I was just at the CLC, the Canadian Labour Congress convention last week, and Chris Smalls from the Amazon Labour Union, is the president of the Amazon Labour Union, came out to speak to us. And, I mean, if you haven't heard him speak, he's spoken on a million podcasts, he's a really powerful speaker. But the thing that I thought was important or relevant is, I mean, Jeff Bezos has Star Trek-esque amounts of money, billions and billions, and yet what the workers of Amazon have been able to do is come together through, as Chris says, love and solidarity, and they're actually able to push back, get health benefits, get raises, get better shifts, all of these things using something that's, you know, 18th century technology in terms of all of our ability to form a union and how that process goes.

So, shout out to Chris Smalls for giving us a little bit of inspiration here on Earth about how these tried and true tactics can really equal the playing field regardless of how powerful the other side is. And I'll just pass on something that he asked the Congress to do, which was every time we order from Amazon to also donate to the Amazon Labor Union, which is amazonlaborunion.org. Obviously, I'm in no way affiliated with this. I just felt super fired up after hearing him speak. And I thought that that was something relevant to our

conversation today, given the astronomical amount of funds and powers at the hands of Bezos and Amazon.

Jarrah: Well said. But Jeff Bezos and Gene Roddenberry both put William Shatner into space. So good, good, kind of, uh, good connection there. And yeah, I mean, to close out, I'll maybe just highlight a few other things that you can do if you're looking to support labor movements and, and unions, in addition to looking at, you know, whether you want to organize your own workplace.

If the Writers Guild of America Strike is still on when this episode drops, please take a look. Just google WGA Strike Hub and you can find a lot of information about what they're fighting for. You can find social media posts and graphics and stuff that you can share, and other ways to express your support for their work. And obviously we're highlighting that because it's going on and it implicates writers of TV, including many writers who have been or are involved with Star Trek.

But other things you can do, if, if you see a picket line in your neighborhood,

Grace: Don't cross it!

Jarrah: But what you can do is, even if you weren't intending to cross it, if you have some extra time, you can go hang out with those people and just say, you know, I'm just here to support, check in with their picket captain. A lot of times they're grateful for the extra bodies and or you can buy them some coffee and muffins if you have a couple of extra bucks.

Grace: Or honestly just show them that you support them. That means that little bit goes a long way.

Jarrah: Honk when you're driving by.

Nicole: With a friendly wave.

Jarrah: Exactly. So I think that means a lot because a lot of times, you know, people are facing hostility when they're on picket lines from people that are frustrated that they can't access their usual thing that they would go do.

Grace: You have minorly inconvenienced me and that's worse than any employee abuse.

Jarrah: Yes. And another thing you can do is talk to your elected officials about improving labor rights. Cause for folks that are non unionized, they're often subject to minimum labor standards, like minimum wage, but also things like paid sick days. Governments can do things that improve the basic requirements for. All employers to follow for workers and then what a union negotiates in their collective agreement is like over and above that. And it forces those employers to even go higher. So, raise the tide for all votes, uh, make sure that you're talking about these issues when, you know, during the next election campaign that you're voting for, for candidates that support workers rights.

Grace: And remember, a pizza party is not a raise.

Jarrah: Well, uh, Nicole, thank you so thank you so much for joining us today. It was great having you on.

Nicole: The pleasure was completely all mine. Thank you both so much. It was so fun hanging out and talking about two of my favorite things, Star Trek and Unions.

Grace: Yeah. Thank you so much for bringing your expertise.

Jarrah: Right. And Grace, where can people find you on the internet?

Grace: You can find me across social media at BoneCrusherJenk, and you can also find me [sings to the tune of Dolly Parton's 9 to 5] Quarking Nine to Five. What a way to make a living. Swear that gooey cop is out to get me!

Jarrah: And I'm Jarrah. And you can find me at <https://trekkiefeminist.com/> and @JarrahPenquin on the social medias. To learn more about our show or to contact us, visit <https://www.womenatwarp.com/>, email us at crew@womenatwarp.com or find us on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, Women at Warp. Thanks so much for listening.

****outro music****