

Women at Warp Episode 250: Marvelous Michael Burnham

[Women at Warp theme]

Kennedy: Greetings and welcome to Women at Warp: A Star Trek Podcast. Join us on our 10-year mission to explore intersectional diversity in infinite combinations. My name is Kennedy. And thank you so much for joining us today.

With me, I have some special guests and beyond special guests, I have the pinnacle of guests, and I hope you're excited for it because I am. I have the one and only drag cosplay extraordinaire, Anna Rozay.

Anna Rozay: Hello. You spoil me.

Kennedy: Oh, it's the truth though. It's the truth. [chuckles] And I have the incomparable, Dr. Michele Foss, the one and only TV Doctor.

Dr. Michele Foss: Hello, hello.

Kennedy: Hello, hello. I'm super, super, super excited for this show today. I hope you all are as well, because we will be talking about the legendary, Michael Burnham. But before we get into that, I have a couple housekeeping topics I'm sure you heard. And if not, I hate to be the one to break it to you. But our podcast mission will be coming to an end after 10 glorious years, March 31st, 2025. Episodes will be released as regular until then, and Patreon hangouts, watchalongs and other rewards will be fulfilled.

After our final episode, content will continue to be available for as long as we are able to make it so. If you're interested in becoming a patron to help us close up shop, you can do so for as little as \$1 per month and get awesome rewards, from thanks on social media up to silly watch along commentaries. You can visit us at patreon.com/womenatwarp.

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Well, folks, here we are. It's over. It's over now it's over. But we're still going to talk about the one and only, Michael Burnham.

Dr. Michele Foss: It's never over.

Kennedy: It's never over in our hearts. We may only have five seasons, but you know.

Anna Rozay: I cherish those five seasons, okay?

Kennedy: Not everything needs to be dragged out to seven seasons. You know what I mean? Some stuff can just be told in a reasonable amount of time, you know?

Dr. Michele Foss: That's true.

Anna Rozay: I would have taken it though.

Kennedy: For sure.

Dr. Michele Foss: Absolutely.

Kennedy: I would have taken three more seasons and a movie.

Dr. Michele Foss: Correct.

Anna Rozay: Especially after the blueprint of the story of what they were trying to do in Season 6, I'm upset.

Kennedy: Mm-hmm. Oh, so there's loads of things we want to get into in terms of the arc of *Discovery* itself. But I collected a handful of episodes for us to review, so that we could refresh our memory about exactly what Michael has been through. Because *Discovery*, as we all know, is a heavy show. I mean, definitively heavy. And for me, it can be a little difficult to go back and revisit some themes, revisit some episodes, because some tough stuff does go on.

For example, rewatching episodes of Season 1 was tough, because I know what happens to Hugh. It's just bracing myself for that on top of everything else that's going on in the world around us. It could be a bit tough, so I tried to make sure that we have a clear idea. Just filter out the fabulous crew of *Disco* and focus on her eventual captain, because that's the coup de grâce, as they say.

Michael Burnham has experienced immeasurable loss and trauma from losing her parents to Klingons when she was an infant to-- not an infant, but she was a baby. To growing up on Vulcan with the mean kids. Why are Vulcan kids so mean?

Anna Rozay: They're bullies.

Dr. Michele Foss: I didn't know that was part of the Vulcan story until *Discovery*-

Kennedy: Why are they so mean?

Dr. Michele Foss: -that they're bullies.

Anna Rozay: Straight up. Straight up bullies.

Dr. Michele Foss: Yeah.

Kennedy: They were mean to her. They were mean to Spock in the Kelvin universe. He got teased the same way. They were mean-- Solok's punk self being mean to Sisko, bringing all that rah up to *Deep Space Nine*, "We at war. You want to play baseball?" Okay. Okay. I don't know what's the problem with Vulcans. I feel like they all need to sit down and go to therapy maybe. I don't know. I don't know, but it's a problem.

Dr. Michele Foss: "Stay in their lane" as Georgiou said. [chuckles] They need to just stay in their lane. [laughs]

Kennedy: Seriously.

Dr. Michele Foss: Maybe that's why they're so standoffish, because they're always on guard.

Kennedy: Maybe. Whatever. Don't be making excuses for them. We mad at them now.

[laughter]

Kennedy: We mad at them. But during her time on Vulcan and in the Sarek Amanda household, because Vulcans don't have last names, we were able to see how she was nurtured the best Amanda could in the Vulcan house and how there was an attempt to heal a lot of the damage that she had went through to her graduating with honors and getting into Starfleet without going to the Academy. [chuckles] Academy. Oh, I did that already. [laughs] I got my accreditations from a little thing you might heard of. The Vulcan Science Academy? Yeah, that's where I went.

Dr. Michele Foss: She did a LeBron. She went from high school to the league.

Anna Rozay: My dad wrote me a note, okay?

Dr. Michele Foss: [laughs] You know who my dad is.

Kennedy: Just show me where my quarters are, [Michele laughs] because I don't want to breathe in the old air on this old ship. Red robe, Michael the shade, here for it. [Michele laughs] Through that, through her whole arc, we see undeniable bravery, courage, intellect, resilience, strength. We see a couple weaknesses here and there. She does shed a tear. We see love, we see loss, really just running the spectrum of the black American experience in space. In space, because we still have to deal with that in the distant future and in space as well. Sure, that's healthy.

Dr. Michele Foss: Encouraging.

Kennedy: But Michael isn't without her faults. She always thinks she's the smartest in the room. Always. But then, she always has something to learn about the situation as well. So, I guess the best part about her is she's not arrogant. She's not above learning lessons. Chill out, is what I'm saying, which is we get it. You took AP courses. Thanks. But what I also love is how Michael's hair journey corresponds with her character growth as well.

Anna Rozay: Yes.

Kennedy: When she's a child, her hair is natural and full and just bouncy and voluminous. And then, when she comes out of the Vulcan Science Academy before going into Starfleet, she has a very Vulcan cut. It's very pressed. It's laid. It's quaffed. It shows where she had been growing up this whole time to when she was mutinied and her hair was back to natural again. We're not going to talk about the Season 2 wig. We're not going to talk about it.

Dr. Michele Foss: We're not. [laughs] Can we?

Kennedy: We can talk about it. Ooh. The first season wig, I was like, "Okay, I guess the second one though." It's the one that's super slick back and you can see where the wig ends and where her-- [crosstalk]

Dr. Michele Foss: Yeah. And the glue. I got a better TV between the time when I watched it for the first time and the second time. And now, I swear I can see the glue.

Kennedy: Lace there. But also, she was going through some stuff at that moment. She was dealing with the reconciliation with her brother and her Vulcan-ness. Everybody was healing from the Lorca escapades and dealing with the Terrans and whatnot. So, she was a little stressed. Her ends might have been a little crunchy. Who knows? It happens to the best of us, to when she gets flung into the future and spends that year apart from *Discovery*, and embraces the protective style and the power of the braid.

Anna Rozay: Yes.

Kennedy: And just grows into it and just really turns into a crown that looks as though it hurt like-- Some people look like they've grown with their hair. When her braids were in, I don't care if there was extensions or not. You could tell there was time, there was wisdom, there was energy and all that put into her hair, and it corresponded so perfectly with the arc of the show.

Anna Rozay: She has settled into herself, I think, at that point.

Kennedy: Mm-hmm. I agree. So, starting from the beginning, Season 1 of *Discovery*, "Is Michael a mutineer?"

Anna Rozay: That's a real tough question.

Kennedy: Is she a mutineer or did she just use the best tools she had for the problem at hand? And how do you two feel about that?

Anna Rozay: So, I feel like I have flip-flopped on this particular question ever since the show came out. I feel right now, I'm in this place of two things could be true. Was she right in her way of thinking that the Klingons were going to attack them and blow them out of the sky? Yes. Was the way she went about it probably the best way? Probably not. [laughs] I don't know if Vulcan neck pinching your commanding officer, and then trying to take over the bridge and preemptively start the fight is the best solution for what she was trying to get across.

Also, I feel like just coming back from being irradiated probably didn't help her case, because they probably thought she was not working with a full deck. Maybe she wasn't. Maybe she was a little emotionally charged and physically charged from the radiation, from being in that asteroid field. So, part of me feels that she went about it the wrong way as far as attacking Georgiou and all of that, and trying to take over the crew. Now, ultimately, what she proved right, yes. So, she was on the right track. I just feel like she could have handled it better, but clearly, nobody was willing to listen until it was too late.

Dr. Michele Foss: For me, it's when she took that extra step. So, we've seen through five seasons that it is part of her character when she sees something that needs to happen, when she's worked through all the machinations or whatever in her mind and she's figured out, "Okay, X to Y to Z and then flip it over and that's what needs to happen." Once she's done that, she's not afraid of speaking up and saying, "Listen, even if I'm speaking out of turn, or I'm not supposed to speak to you this way or whatever it is, I'm going to use my voice in this moment. That is what I'm going to do." So, we know that that is within her character.

But to take the extra step of neck pinching Georgiou, who in a lot of ways is a mother figure to her, is wild to me. So, what that shows me is that you are- And this is Episode 1, right? [chuckles] So, they begin her story with letting us know that this is a character who everything you think you know about her, we're going to poke at that and pinch that for her entire life. Then, it's also letting us know that this is a character who again from the pilot, you're not going to feel where the ground is with her. You're never going to know how you're supposed to feel about her. So, we'll talk about this later, I'm sure. But she is the lead. This is her show.

And so, to give me a character that I'm not sure, do I love her, do I not trust her. What's that about, is a bold thing for *Star Trek* to do with us. Bold and risky. I don't know if the risk paid off for everyone. It paid off for me.

Kennedy: Yeah, I agree with both of you. My biggest complaint, is that how long did you grow up with Vulcans and you don't know how to do a correct print? Why did you fail at this? You can do xenanthropology, but you can't pinch somebody to write. What did you learn? Nothing? Was your time bullying? That's my issue. Like, if you're going to do it, do it. Because I agree, it is bold to open with the character that's willing to do whatever it takes to preserve safety, right?

Dr. Michele Foss: Yeah. That didn't feel Vulcan to me. That move felt like it flew in the face of what a Vulcan would do in that scenario. So, it's like, all that Vulcan training got you 98% of the way. And then, in the last 2%, you were like, "Actually, I'm just going to go completely rogue and attack my captain."

Kennedy: Mm-hmm. I think because the human in her didn't want to actually hurt Georgiou. She just wanted to get her out of the way to achieve the goal. So, I feel like there might have been a lack of convention in the pinch, and that's why it didn't work the way it was supposed to. I would argue that the methodology of her thinking like, "Oh, this is the most logical course of action and this person is in the way, so I logically need to get them out of the way so we can continue." But I feel like in the last minute, her heart was like, "No. No, that's auntie. What you doing?" [laughs] You know what happened happened.

Personally, I think Michael did the right thing. I think because she ended up being right-- Also, because we were shown what the Klingons were up to before seeing the Starfleet side of things. Was it the Starfleet thing to do? Absolutely not. Absolutely not. Was it an emotionless, strictly pragmatic thing to do something that Vulcan could logic themselves into justification? Yes, absolutely. So, I'm Team Free Michael Burnham all day.

[laughter]

Kennedy: I would have put money on her books. You know what I mean? I would have sent her things. I would have been like, "Dear Michael, things are weird out here. [laughs] But don't think for a second that you ain't got riders out here, girl, because I got you."

Anna Rozay: If we really think about it, if we take cases from past Starfleet, like, let's say Captain Kirk and crew, when they want to steal the Enterprise, they're doing all types of stuff that flies in the face of regulation. They assault that guy, Uhura pulls the phaser on, that one officer locks him in the closet. Sulu assaults those other officers, so they can get to the transporter.

So, I think we also have to remember that Starfleet officers do this kind of stuff all the time against their own. But I think it's a little bit different when it comes to *Discovery*, because one, let's be honest, the way we reflect on black characters is different than how we reflect on non-black characters.

Kennedy: Period.

Dr. Michele Foss: Correct.

Anna Rozay: And the actions that they take. And also, I think it's a lot more serious just in tone, because it's *Discovery*. So, it feels a lot more real and intense than it would in whatever movie that was where they steal the Enterprise. I think *The Search for Spock*. So, that was played for kind of like, "Oh, we're going on a little adventurous rap and we got to do a little sprinkle of bad things along the way." But this is serious.

Kennedy: I'm so glad you brought up that instance in particular, because after they stole the *Enterprise* to go get Spock, they stole a Klingon vessel, went to Vulcan, got it fixed, put Spock through his fast track rehab system. Then they go back in time, they violate both the Standard Prime Directive and the Temporal Prime Directive on multiple counts, and they get judged by a jury of their peers. What happens to Kirk? He gets demoted, but keeps the ship and gets to do whatever he wants.

Anna Rozay: That's it.

Kennedy: So, I don't want to hear it. I understand that chronologically *Discovery* takes place before Kirk and someone had to be made an example of. But if Michael Burnham is the example, then how did he keep his ship? How was he not cleaning out Jeffrey's tombs by the time they was done with him? So, you were saying, Anna, definitely, it smells like racism is what it smells like. Just saying.

Anna Rozay: Yeah.

Dr. Michele Foss: Well, yeah, *Discovery* happens chronologically before original series. But you know what? It doesn't happen chronologically before? Now. [chuckles]

Anna Rozay: Right.

Dr. Michele Foss: And so, know that what we see now informs the future as it was written. So, I think that part makes sense. I also think that this whole show is about really tackling what we think of as Starfleet. What does Starfleet mean? So, when we say, that's not very Starfleet, well, what do we mean by that? According to all the previous shows, she's exactly where she needs to be. She's [audio cut] what Starfleet really means. Maybe not what it says it means, but what it really means. She's in the pocket.

Kennedy: That's true. Because what else she was in what *Discovery* chronologically was not before, *Enterprise*. Then NX Kids was doing all types of Wild West stuff to make sure that everybody survived. So, I don't want to hear it.

Anna Rozay: Oh, my God. Oh, my God. That season post 9/11 in *Enterprise* was wild.

Kennedy: Wolf is right.

Anna Rozay: That was propaganda down, honey. They're like, "We're going to do whatever it takes. We're going to steal people's warp core, leave them stranded. We got to complete our mission, honey." [Kennedy laughs] But there was something that happened in that first episode of *Discovery* that ties back to specifically what we're talking about when it comes to how we judge people based on race and how our own present-day biases influence our reflections on these characters.

The Admiral, when they're having that conversation with Georgiou, he turns to her and says, "I'm surprised with your background that you would be willing to judge these people based on race." And she's like, "Let's not confuse race and culture." They have a warrior like culture. I'm not talking about their race. I'm talking about their culture, baby. And that's the big distinction.

Kennedy: When he turned and said that to her, I said, what year is it? What year is it? Is it 22 something? Why are we still dealing with microaggressions from cis head white men? Well, I don't know if he was heterosexual. Cis white men in positions of authority. What you mean? First of all, what are you talking to me like that, if I would have gotten demoted that day.

Anna Rozay: Okay. Oh, literally, literally, because that was condescending as hell.

Kennedy: They would have took all my pips that day, because they would have put me in the brig for that. It wouldn't have been a chance for a mutiny.

Anna Rozay: Yes. That's why his ship got sliced like an onion.

Kennedy: Exactly. Because the Klingons didn't appreciate him talking down to them neither. I don't know how he got that far.

Dr. Michele Foss: [unclear audio] He is always that guy though. [laughs] He is always that guy.

Anna Rozay: Is he really?

Kennedy: [crosstalk] the actor?

Dr. Michele Foss: Oh, my God. Yeah, the actor. He [laughs] always plays that guy.

Kennedy: You get work where you get work, I guess. [Anna laughs] So, yeah, that was Episode 1. Michael's like, "I don't care. Screw you, pay me." [laughs] and faces the consequences and repercussions for it. Beyond that, Season 1 is really us learning about what was going on in Starfleet and the *Federation* during that time frame. But there were some pivotal moments for Michael throughout that season, aside from that first couple episodes of the Klingon War. My personal favorite [chuckles] being magic to make the sanest man go mad aka the love time loop.

Anna Rozay: Mm.

Dr. Michele Foss: Love it. So, I was having a conversation with folks about the time loop in general. When I saw this episode for the first time, I was like, "Oh, the classic *Star Trek* time loop episode." And then, I was like, "Wait, what am I talking about?" Because it's not in fact a classic *Star Trek* thing that there's always going to be a time loop, but something about a time loop just feels so purely *Star Trek*. The idea that you did something, and you blew it and you get the chance to go back and try again, that feels very consistent with *Star Trek* ideals to me. The idea that like, "What if you could go back and try again?" especially when you've got love mixed in there. It's like, "Oh, this is what I need. This is what I need. I needed that episode. I loved it."

Kennedy: Yeah. Ne too, Michele.

Dr. Michele Foss: Sorry.

Kennedy: That's where we learn that Stamets has temporal DNA. Shoutout to tardigrades. There's a cute moment in the hallway between the four of them, Culber and Stamets and Tyler and Burnham, you know the *TOS* fans, those old scientists. I'm sure were thrilled to see Mudd. Yeah. So, overall, I think it was a great episode. It does feel a little self-indulgent as far as establishing her with a love interest. But I felt like it was super important, because Michael goes through a lot. Michael goes through a lot. Michael's been through a lot. And any opportunity for her to receive care and tenderness and affection and someone genuinely concerned about her wellbeing, girl, take it because nobody out here respects you. [laughs] And they should.

Anna Rozay: I feel like through him she was able to reconnect with her humanity and soften a lot.

Kennedy: Oh, for sure.

Anna Rozay: But I feel like the relationship that really brought her out much later was Book in comparison to this one. She was still very much rigid all throughout this relationship with Ash Tyler.

Kennedy: Oh, for sure. In fact, I felt her cadence when she was trying to appear human in her conversations with Voq. Excuse me, Ash Tyler. Apologies. When she had her relationship with Ash Tyler, he was like, "Whatever. It's cool. Whatever you need." And she was like, "I'm doing human things, and I want you to know that I'm not a robot." [Michele laughs]

She sounded so much like Zachary Quinto's Spock when he was trying to make the effort to relate to his human crew members that I was like, "When she's in her most pivotal human moments is when she sounds the most Vulcan early on in the series." It's just so interesting to see how that softens over the arc. Like, you were saying, Anna, obviously, I don't think it went away completely, [chuckles] but it's definitely you can tell there was effort made.

Anna Rozay: The walls came down a little bit. But it also brings about that whole discussion of nature versus nurture, because she obviously is human, had human parents for a little bit of her childhood. But for the bulk of her life, was raised on Vulcan by Vulcans and a human. And that Vulcan-ness superseded any humanity Amanda tried to bestow into her, because she had to fit in.

We get into the logic extremists who are after them and after their son. Not even her. They're like, "Oh, she's human, whatever." They care more about spot being half and half. So, it's just really interesting to see that nature versus nurture come out of her and she's basically a figurehead for that discussion.

Kennedy: For sure. Why there's not more academic papers written on the arc of Michael Burnham, and how-

Dr. Michele Foss: They are coming.

Kennedy: -it turns to social—

Dr. Michele Foss: They are coming.

Kennedy: Okay.

[laughter]

Dr. Michele Foss: They're coming. It's just that academic publishing, those wheels grind slowly. A lot of people wanted to wait and see how that story concluded. I have to disagree just a little bit with how we continue to see her Vulcan culture come up for her. I think we lose the Vulcan aspect of her in Season 1. Not that she disavows it or that she is trying not to be Vulcan, I think she embraces it and incorporates it and doesn't fall back into it the way we see in the beginning of the show.

I think by Season 2, we're getting just Michael, who she is, regardless of how her time on Vulcan, that's always going to be part of her. But I think we start seeing her leaning into her

emotions much, much more and trusting her emotion and running with it. And so, I'm encouraged by that. She retains all of the things that were good about her time on Vulcan, and her relationships that were built on Vulcan and the scars that she has from being bullied relentlessly and all of the things that happen to her when she's on Vulcan. But all of those are incorporated into who she is, and she just becomes that much more full of a person to me.

Anna Rozay: Mm-hmm. She's very three dimensional. She has a lot of aspects that tie her to so many different places and things. But that's just a part of the sum.

Dr. Michele Foss: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Anna Rozay: Is Michael Burnham the most well-rounded character?

Kennedy: Ever? Probably. [laughs]

Anna Rozay: Probably.

Kennedy: Probably. I'm--

Dr. Michele Foss: Hear me. Tell it.

Kennedy: I would be hard pressed to find anybody as well rounded, if not more--

Anna Rozay: With so much depth.

Kennedy: Yeah,

Dr. Michele Foss: So much depth. Yes.

Kennedy: So, vaulting ambition, where Michael actually, specifically, first steps into the Terran universe. Sis really thought she was a baddie. [laughs]

Anna Rozay: She really did.

Kennedy: [laughs] And then, she met them, Terrans, and was like, "Oh, I am a delicate, fragile, feminine flower." [laughs]

Anna Rozay: Which means I got to kill you now in this elevator. Oh, okay. [Michele laughs] I think it was the same officer from the Vulcan. Hello, Gant. What's his name? And she basically has to fight him in the turbolift if I'm not mistaken.

Kennedy: Yeah, Cameron.

Dr. Michele Foss: He was the one in the pilot that was like, "Oh, I thought Starfleet was going to be about-- [crosstalk]

Kennedy: No, no.

Dr. Michele Foss: I thought we were going to explore. [laughs] And now, he's attacking in an elevator.

Anna Rozay: He can't catch a break [unintelligible [00:28:33]

Kennedy: Yeah, that is wild that both Prime and Terran [laughs] had an untimely demise. There's lots of cool stuff that happens in that episode. We learn about Terran Stamets in the mycelial network, which of course opens things up to eventually get Culber back, which is super cute and necessary, because what the hell were y'all thinking.

Tyler reverting back to Voq, and essentially murdering Culber was difficult. It was so difficult. It's difficult not only in that very specific instance, but it's also difficult-- Why we got to keep watching black men get killed on TV? What is that? I don't care if they're Afro-Latino. Like, that's still part of the diaspora. So, why I got to keep looking at this? Why do I have to see us brutalized in this way in the future? Like, what are we doing? What are we doing? And just really starts to layer things on about why Tyler needed to go. "Why do I keep calling that?" Because I like both of them. That's why-- [laughs]

Anna Rozay: That was highly triggering for me, especially as someone who is gay, queer, whatever you want to call it. *Discovery* was like that beacon when it first premiered for me that like, "Oh my God, we're finally in the franchise proper as like characters human, not like an allegory or anything." When they did that, it was so viscerally triggering and it hurt. I remember I couldn't watch it. The first time it happened, I was like, "Okay, I think I might be done with this show." So, I'm glad that they reversed the barrier gaze trope and course corrected that, because that was a bit much. That was a bit much.

Dr. Michele Foss: They didn't reverse it though. They did that.

Anna Rozay: Oh, they?

Dr. Michele Foss: You know what I mean? But we still had to suffer through that that impact was real. So, it wasn't like they took it back and they were like, "Oh, no. Let's not [audio cut]"

Anna Rozay: Right.

Dr. Michele Foss: You know what I mean?

Anna Rozay: Yeah, yeah, yeah. It wasn't like an immediate like, "Never mind. Fake." Yeah, because we had to sit through half another season just to see Culber again.

Kennedy: Yeah. But on the other hand, I'm really glad they didn't just do the classic Trek soap opera "JK, I'm alive. Everything's great," and move past it without really sitting in the despair and the anguish that everybody was feeling, both in the story and in the audience, and really give those characters their time to feel through that, because Culber is healing through that perpetually through Season 5.

Anna Rozay: Yes.

Kennedy: I'm real super glad that they didn't just push through it, because they realized they made a mistake.

Anna Rozay: Mm-hmm

Dr. Michele Foss: Yeah. I still don't understand what purpose, narratively, that served.

Kennedy: For what? For what?

Dr. Michele Foss: That's what I'm saying. Like, for what? Why couldn't that have been Detmer? No shade to [crosstalk]

Anna Rozay: Anybody else.

Dr. Michele Foss: -when she had her own thing. But that was an unnecessary thing. Stamets didn't need that. Culber didn't need that. He was already everything that he grew to be after he came back. So, I was frustrated by that. That plot line where he died and then he came back, that didn't need to happen on that character.

Anna Rozay: I think it was done purely for shock. That's how I feel.

Dr. Michele Foss: But they knew we would all be obsessed.

Kennedy: Yeah. That's why Andy stopped watching it from our crew. She was like, "Nope, I'm done." And I'm like, "That's understandable, but it's still so good." She's like, "No, I'm done." And that's valid, I feel.

Dr. Michele Foss: Yeah.

Anna Rozay: I think that was the show, in a way, trying to let you know that this is a different kind of *Star Trek*. This is a serious *Star Trek* with stakes, and your favs are not safe. I think that was the show trying to put his big boy pants on, in a way, and trying to relate itself to its contemporaries like *Game of Thrones* and things of that nature that are very intense, very violent, very dark. That's how I took it.

Kennedy: Yeah. I can see that as well. I feel like the only redeeming quality of that happening was the fight between Tyler and Culber, and that's all that was.

Dr. Michele Foss: Yeah. Well--

Anna Rozay: Get him. [Michele laughs] Get him.

Dr. Michele Foss: That was satisfying.

Anna Rozay: It was very satisfying. And it also-- [crosstalk]

Kennedy: On multiple levels.

Anna Rozay: Also, awoke something in me I didn't know I had.

[laughter]

Anna Rozay: I was like, "Now, what is this?" When Culber stroked his chin, his neck or whatever, I was like, "Mm. Oh. Hmm. Oh."

Kennedy: A mean Wilson Cruz? I think I like this.

Dr. Michele Foss: I'm into this--

Anna Rozay: I was like, "Hmm,- [crosstalk]

Kennedy: Okay.

Anna Rozay: -this is--" I was like, "Let me go. Let me go ask my boyfriend to put this uniform on." [Michele laughs]

Kennedy: Okay. Yeah. I really loved seeing Tyler restrain himself and not choke slam Culber through a table. [chuckles] That I really loved that.

Anna Rozay: Because if he would have did it again, I would have turned it out.

Kennedy: Okay. I'd have been like, "All right, now, you can't do this again." [laughs]

Anna Rozay: Stop it.

Kennedy: "You can't do this." Okay, so moving on. I don't want to dwell too much on Season 2, because that is the Red Angel arc where Michael becomes the savior of the universe both during and at the end of it, literally. Before we move on to Season 3 though, again with the black trauma in the future, "Oh, here's your mom, Jk, she gone now." "Girl, what?"

Anna Rozay: Jk, she hates you also or is indifferent. I should say, she's indifferent. She didn't hate her. She was just plainly indifferent to Michael. She was like, "I've seen you die a thousand times. Anyway--"

Kennedy: That broke my heart.

Dr. Michele Foss: We're not leaving Season 2 all the way yet, are we?

Kennedy: No.

Dr. Michele Foss: Are we moving on?

Kennedy: What you got? What you got?

Dr. Michele Foss: Well, so, here's the thing about-- So, I'm going to say this about every season, but Season 2 was my favorite.

Kennedy: Interesting.

Dr. Michele Foss: And again, I'm going to say that about every season, except for the last one.

Kennedy: Oh, okay. We're going to put a pin in that and circle back to it, because I have questions.

Dr. Michele Foss: Yeah, we can talk about that. But I loved Season 2 in a lot of ways because of how it started. We're talking about the. *The Girl who Made the Stars*, right? So, she's [audio cut] story, and she says something to the effect of there's a secret in the stars. It's a message visible only to those with hearts open enough to receive it.

Holding *Discovery* as a whole and really thinking about the importance of Michael Burnham, that story and her telling it was screaming at me, we understand how important this character is. And not just in television-- This is reversed. But she's an important character in television, but she's important to *Star Trek*. And that opening of Season 2 and her becoming the savior of the galaxy, we can get back to black women always expected to save the world.

Kennedy: Because it happens. It keeps happening.

Dr. Michele Foss: There's plenty more examples, [laughs] because there's plenty more for us to talk about. But in that moment, it felt to me like *Star Trek's* real promise being kept. What *Star Trek* claimed it was about through all of those different series in this moment,

when they're like, "This is a message that can only be heard by the people who are open enough to receive it." It felt to me like, finally, *Star Trek* is living up to what *Star Trek* is supposed to be, and we are trying to make that happen. It just felt more special than Janeway. I'm not trying to compete or compare. It's not like the women have to compete against each other. That's not what this is.

So, Janeway was special. She gets my props for that. But Michael is more special. Burnham is a more special character, because she is allowed to be all of the things that Trekkies have wanted, even if they didn't know that they wanted it.

Anna Rozay: I want you to go even deeper with that. Do you mean in the way that, she can be complex, flawed, but also save the world at the same time? Because she's so many of those things. She is constantly coming to terms with herself, but also trying to make sure everybody else is okay.

Dr. Michele Foss: So, to me, this is a two-parter. There is two aspects here. Number one, I'm sure you all remember the pain of us experiencing Season 1-- And even in Season 1, but then continuing in Season 2 feeling like, "Yes, this, I give, give more. I've been waiting my whole life for this." And then, finding out that there's all of these people out here who are like, "Oh, she's so unlikable. Oh, she's this and that," and dragging the entire show, but especially dragging Michael Burnham.

Kennedy: Yeah. Let's talk about that. Not to interrupt you here, but I wanted to address that once we talk about the whole arc, because you're absolutely right. [chuckles] I don't even know what you had to say, but I already know you're absolutely right. I just want us to have the time to really sink our teeth into that, because you're absolutely right.

Anna Rozay: As a whole discussion.

Kennedy: I didn't even want to think about them. I was trying to focus on the good stuff for now. But you're right.

Dr. Michele Foss: I know. I know, I know. So, we can answer the first part of my two-part question very easily. Why did so many people not like her? Why did people find her unlikable? The answer, racism. Easy. Or, misogyny. Yes. Easy. That's an easy question to answer. But the second part I think is more complex, which is, why isn't that just fine? Why isn't it okay for her to be unlikable? Why does she have to be-- It's giving. Like, you would be so much prettier if you smiled.

Kennedy: Oh, for sure. That's why it's misogyny. It's the racism, because how dare you be black and succeed, right?

Dr. Michele Foss: Right.

Kennedy: But it's the misogyny, because you should smile more. Why isn't your hair long enough? Why do you always look so evil? Why do you always have to suck the life out of the room? which because I'm smart, that's why. [laughs]

Dr. Michele Foss: That's right. Exactly. I'm pissed off. And I get to be pissed off, because have you seen my resume?

Kennedy: Right.

Dr. Michele Foss: Have you seen what I've been through?

Kennedy: Did you go to school with Vulcans? Because I did. [chuckles]

Dr. Michele Foss: Did your parents get bombed out by the Klingons, and then did you get bombed out at school? But also, she should put on lipstick and smile.

Kennedy: Like, "Stop. I don't like her short hair. Cut to the season with braids. Eww, why she has braids." Okay. So, just say you hate black women in positions of power and go.

Dr. Michele Foss: Right. And also, I'm not supposed to cry ever and listen. [laughs]

Anna Rozay: The fact that she's functioning and doing anything, let alone saving the galaxy, people should be so grateful.

Dr. Michele Foss: I have stuff to cry about. So, as much as I'm like, "I want people to love her the way that I love her, and I want her to be read as likable," because I think she is likable. The hill I'm willing to die upon, is that she gets to be unlikable. It's important for her to be unlikable, and that to be okay.

Kennedy: Yeah. Since when is likable a required trait to graduate the Academy and get into Starfleet? Was Worf likable? No. Was C. T. Takuma likable? No. Was Pulaski likable? No.

Anna Rozay: It is if you're a woman on a TV show.

Dr. Michele Foss: Yeah, that's it. Since black and woman.

Kennedy: Maybe we don't need to get back to it, because I feel like we pretty much covered it. But maybe we will. Who knows? So, do you have any more remarks about Season 2?

Anna Rozay: I just have one remark, and it's to piggyback off of what we were just saying about the misogyny and the response the audience had to Michael from Season 1 into Season 2. The show will do a lot of metacommentary, either about the world and how black women are treated in the world or how the show is being perceived by the angry vocal minority. They will sometimes do insert characters.

You have to be deaf, dumb and blind to not see it. That character that comes onto the ship with Pike and Nhan, that science officer who is just so obnoxious, and him and Michael butthheads immediately. He's the insert character for these people who hate Michael, everything she represents, because he's constantly questioning her. How could she know? Well, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Ra, ra, ra, ra, ra. Because he doesn't want to listen, it leads to his demise.

Kennedy: Yeah. Connelly is every prep school Chad who is mad that his boss is not a white person.

Dr. Michele Foss: Yeah.

Kennedy: That's all it is. Those were microaggressions in the workplace. He was creating a hostile work environment. [Michele laughs] He created a hostile work environment on the field, "Hello? We, in space. What are you doing this for?"

Dr. Michele Foss: Right.

Kennedy: And then, he died. So, maybe don't be a jerk face to people who don't look like you and maybe you'll survive an away mission. I don't know.

Anna Rozay: Exactly. Exactly. Go ahead and be right while you slamming into that asteroid.

Dr. Michele Foss: I love that we didn't even have to hear the end of that sentence.

[laughter]

Dr. Michele Foss: You don't even have to hear the end of that foolishness that you were about to launch into.

Kennedy: Seriously. [Michele chuckles]

Anna Rozay: I would have been Michael in that little pot, "Oh, no. I need that."

Dr. Michele Foss: "Oh, no." They didn't even take not one moment. [laughs] He was like, "Oh, no. All right."

Kennedy: Right. Because he didn't like him. Because he was like, "Oh, well, I guess I got to write his mom. [laughs] I've been waiting for this." No.

Anna Rozay: [laughs]

Dr. Michele Foss: He was too busy being like, "Wait, save me. Save me though."

Anna Rozay: Yeah.

Dr. Michele Foss: "Okay. Well, he didn't listen, but I'm listening."

Kennedy: Yeah, "I'm listening. Sorry I said what I said. You're right. I like your hair."

[laughter]

Kennedy: So, moving on to Season 3. If we were questioning Michael being a mutineer in Season 1 and she's the savior Season 2, Season 3, I would call her the torchbearer, because what Starfleet, what Federation. It's the Wild West out here. What you mean? I got to herd and sell space worms in order to make ends meet. Again, Episode 1, Sis is in space with no ship, no shuttlecraft, just her and a suit plummeting-- [crosstalk]

Dr. Michele Foss: In the future.

Kennedy: Yeah. Plummeting into an atmosphere, landing tits first on the side of a mountain, [Michele laughs] proceeds to then get up and go about and stay on her mission. I just go about the rest of her day. Stayed on mission, I would have clocked out.

Anna Rozay: Permanently. Permanently.

Dr. Michele Foss: Oh, yeah. I'm done.

Kennedy: I'd have been like, "You know what?"

Dr. Michele Foss: Oh, I did it. Okay, I'm out.

Kennedy: "I think I'm done now. This is a whole new start. This is a whole new century, whole new people. Look, they got fire men everywhere. Who's this? [laughs] What's happening?"

Anna Rozay: What's the book, and how do I read it?

Kennedy: Huh. So, we learn how much the galaxy apparently needed the Federation in Season 3. We learned about how Starfleet is a dying ideological presence. That's what I was trying to say. And here we go, let me roll up my sleeves and get dirty and do all the emotional and literal labor for you, so that we can get on the same page. That was a thing. But we have fantastic episodes all throughout the burn of Season 3.

Dr. Michele Foss: I loved Season 3, because it felt like they were doubling down on the thing that I was picking up on for Season 2, when *Star Trek* was like, "Okay. So, a lot of the Gene's vision, people, they hate this. And so, we're just going to go even harder with that and make her more important [laughs] and more necessary and even more of everything that they hate about her." So, I really loved that.

In *That Hope Is You Part 1*, I'm like, "It's the title of the episode, but it's also basically the mission of *Star Trek: Discovery*." There was a line in, I think it was from Season 2 though, when we lost Airiam, and she said to Michael-- The last thing she said was, "It's all about you. [chuckles] It's about you." And so, then it's like, "Yes, again, our hope is tied into you," and the right of this character to exist and to be loved. There's a line where I don't remember his name, but the clerk at the law office.

Kennedy: Oh, Lieutenant Aditya Sahil.

Dr. Michele Foss: Yes, thank you.

Kennedy: [unintelligible [00:46:55] You fine too. Sorry, go ahead.

Dr. Michele Foss: Yes, hear me out. [laughs] But he said, "I don't know how much of the Federation still exists. I just do my part to keep it alive." And I'm like, "Oh, well, that's me." Yeah, that's me. I don't know how much of this world that I thought I was living in. I don't know how much of that exists. But that's what I'm trying to do right now is just keep that alive.

Anna Rozay: If you think about the poster that was made for Season 3, it's Michael surrounded by all of the crew, and she's on the top of that mountain with the Federation flag, and they're all in the black. They're not really Federation down, Starfleet down in the uniforms. They're in ragtag, black leather. Because it's like, we're trying to rebuild this. We're scrappy about it right now. We got to get our stuff together. She literally is holding that flag, the torch, to bring it back.

Dr. Michele Foss: Sorry. I do want to mention that I love psychedelic mushroom Orion [unintelligible [00:48:02].

Anna Rozay: Yes. I'm so glad you brought that back. I'm so glad you brought that up. [Michele laughs]

Dr. Michele Foss: I love her.

Anna Rozay: The way she acted that scene--

Dr. Michele Foss: So good. And the way it was shot with the light with the-- [crosstalk]

Anna Rozay: Yes, the blurry camera.

Dr. Michele Foss: So good.

Kennedy: I think whatever Vulcan in her was left in her was gone in that moment.

Anna Rozay: It left. It left her body. Can we also talk about in relation to hair? I think it's in that episode or maybe the second half, right before she meets up with Disco again. We see that montage of her hair changing when she's alone to herself and looking for them. She goes through different lengths, different textures than the braids or what have you.

Sorry, if I'm getting the order wrong. It's been a while since I've seen that. But it just showed that, as her hair progressed, so did her self-reflection on who she was and how comfortable she was with herself and being out there away from the confines of Starfleet, she was forced to find her own identity without them.

Kennedy: Right. From a black woman's perspective, there is something about putting your hair in braids that is significant. It's sacred to a certain extent, because we install a protective style, because we acknowledge that there's tasks ahead of us, that we cannot waste time on our hair or run the risk of our hair being damaged while those tasks are being accomplished.

It is not a quick style for anybody curious. If you didn't know, that is hours of work. When I mean hours, I mean at least 10 to get it done. At least 10 hours, at least. And that's her braid.

Dr. Michele Foss: Her braid. [laughs]

Anna Rozay: Her braid.

Kennedy: 10 hours, per braid. So, when your black coworker calls out and comes back with Michael, say, "Leave her alone." to sit there and she probably braided herself. So, to do that before undergoing the transformation or even during her transformation is extremely significant in ways that is cultural specifically. So, I'm sure other groups who might not be in the African diaspora, but also have braids in their culture can relate, because it's the same mindful, intentional process to prepare yourself for whatever it is that you're about to do.

I also feel, specifically, as far as the current out of universe significance is important. Because during that time, the crown act was being tossed around as something valid. There was a social reckoning about discriminating someone based on cultural hair, and how those styles are interpreted socially and within the workplace as well. I feel that that choice was made to not only reflect that, but because it stood alone of its-- That's when I knew. That's what I knew that we weren't playing around anymore, okay?

Anna Rozay: It was the show signaling to us, this is a black woman, and she is standing in her blackness in the way that she wants to do it. And it's valid whether her hair is short and cropped and it's valid. I felt like it was the most valid when she put those braids on, because it was a visual signal to whether you liked the show or didn't, this is a black woman.

Kennedy: Right. It also meant a lot to me personally as someone who always wanted to have a uniform and wear it, but wasn't able to do so until Picard Season 1 uniforms came out. Sue and I were at Star Trek To New Jersey Creation Con back a couple weeks ago, and had I worn a uniform with my hair in these twists three, four, five years ago, I would have felt so out of place. I would have felt unprofessional. I would have felt unkempt, which is so weird how we internalize racist nonsense. But when I wore the uniform this time, I felt empowered, because it's like, "Yes, I'm in Starfleet. I got these braids in what's good."

Anna Rozay: Yes. And you look like a bat? You look like a bad A? I don't want to curse, but you look like you could kick some mm-hmm. Like, you was about that business. Like, girl, I

was like, "Okay, she going to keep me safe, honey. The Federation borders are safe with her on the case."

Dr. Michele Foss: [laughs]

Kennedy: Thank you. So, I just really appreciated seeing her in those braids. I know she felt awkward getting back in the uniform. But in *Unification III*, which I think is an overall excellent episode of *Star Trek* in general. If you're a patron and have heard or was with us during our watchalong of that episode, I'm sure you're probably sick of me talking about it. But I'll truncate it by saying, when Sis said what she had to say and her mom tried to say what she had to say. So, Sis came back and said what she had to say and got up and left. And her crew stood up and left with her. I said, "Okay. Y'all, better get up."

Anna Rozay: [laughs]

Kennedy: "I know that's right."

Anna Rozay: All right now.

Kennedy: "You better walk out that door with her." I know the people in the back was like, "What's going on? I don't know what's going on. Michael stood up. All right, we out."

Dr. Michele Foss: Yeah, we out.

Anna Rozay: That's it.

Dr. Michele Foss: Yup.

Anna Rozay: If y'all want to play these games, we can play them too. Goodbye.

Kennedy: Goodbye. Thanks so much for coming.

Dr. Michele Foss: [crosstalk] And goodbye. [laughs]

Kennedy: Thanks. To put a button on Season 3, the episode *Su'ka* where we learn about the magnitude-- Ooh, interesting. I was going to say the magnitude of Kelpien emotions mixed with dilithium, but I'm now more interested to hear what you have to say about it.

Anna Rozay: So, for me, the season was very strong up until that.

Dr. Michele Foss: Yeah, I do agree.

Anna Rozay: I've really tried very hard to rewatch it and get into it, but I felt like this was one of those things-- And *Star Trek* does this sometimes, where the concepts that it tries to put on screen just fall flat and just seem silly without intentionally being silly.

A little boy screaming causes a galactic wide explosion that kills million- The whole season is built up for this mystery. What caused this? What caused this to happen? When I found out that's what it was, it was just very disappointing [Kennedy laughs] to say the least. I was like, "That's it?" I know they tried to give it a very human story, like he was left there alone and blah, blah, blah. But the whole revelation just fell flat for me.

Kennedy: Mm. Michelle, what do you think?

Dr. Michele Foss: Yeah, I didn't love that either. [laughs]

Kennedy: Oh.

Dr. Michele Foss: I know. I loved the season because of Michael. And so--

Anna Rozay: Yeah.

Dr. Michele Foss: Yeah. I struggle with Kelpiens, in general, but yeah, I didn't love that part. Eww. [laughs]

Anna Rozay: I just felt like, everything was set up to be so intensely epic and for something to simultaneously destroy so many ships, and that's what it was. They could have did anything. Honestly, I was looking for something a little more nefarious, and it just came across as like, "Oops." There were no real repercussions for him, because honestly, he was a child. It was an accident. He had no idea what he was doing. But I think it would have been a lot more of an enjoyable revelation, if it was like some entity, or I don't know, somebody who was purposely trying to diminish Starfleet's power in the galaxy as an entity, as an institution. But it just was this kid who got sad and screamed next to some rocks.

Kennedy: Okay. So, for everyone who hates the show and says that we agree with each other too much, suck it, because I love Su'kal.

[laughter]

Kennedy: When that baby was like, [onomatopoeia], my heart freaking broke. It broke into a million pieces. Because I too am on the fence with Kelpiens. I feel like they were force fed to us as an entire cultural group. Oh, I didn't even think-- [crosstalk]

Anna Rozay: That no one's ever seen before?

Kennedy: Yeah. I feel like-- Thank God for Doug Jones. I'll say that, because what are we doing?

Anna Rozay: He saves her. Yes.

Kennedy: So, I agree on that tip. But I was able to look at it from a perspective of we really know nothing about dilithium. We know nothing about 23rd, 24th, 25th, 32nd century propulsion systems and the actual science behind it. We don't know if it's a volatile element. We don't know how it would react to these levels of radiation, to this specific type of radiation at that. We only just recently found out what Kelpians are capable of. Kelpians just found out-- [crosstalk]

Anna Rozay: That's my question. If you can help me understand, was it the radiation on the planet mixed with him being a Kelpien or was it just like a combination of the radiation and the dilithium and then he set it off?

Kennedy: It was a combination. From what I remember, the radiation was unique and severe. They didn't know that dilithium was going to react to it in that way.

Anna Rozay: Okay.

Kennedy: And apparently, Kelpiens get super sad. [chuckles] They get super sad and emote really hard and somehow the nontangible-- [crosstalk]

Anna Rozay: The frequency of his scream.

Kennedy: Yeah. Obviously, they're not human. Human voices wouldn't be able to do that, right? Probably not a Vulcan. Well, who knows if they actually cry out anyhow? But you know what I'm saying? Like, anybody else that we're familiar with probably doesn't have the physiological capability to interfere with a process like that the way that Kelpiens do.

So, I was able to suspend disbelief. It was a stretch, don't get me wrong. It was a reach. A reach. But I feel like if they had assigned a definitive antagonist to the cause of the burn, then whoever that was, if they're not killed in that episode or at least eliminated to whatever degree, then they're going to be a potential threat going forward. And do we want to keep revisiting this? Are they going to be the Romulans of the 32nd century, if it was an intentional act?

Anna Rozay: Please give them to me. Give me some 32nd century Romulans. You know what I feel like we missed out on real quick, the Borg in the future. I wanted so badly to know what they were actually.

Kennedy: I don't. No, thank you. I'm done.

Anna Rozay: [laughs] Well, after *Picard*, this was before *Picard*. *Picard* just ruined that.

Kennedy: No, I don't-- To me, it felt like their interpretation of what the 32nd century was plucked directly from *Star Trek Online*. Just a whole reboot and plan it into the television verse, so that it becomes canon. Because I just can't. [laughs]. I want to keep going time wise. Let's focus on Season four, The Captain season. Long overdue, baby.

Dr. Michele Foss: As per your wish.

Anna Rozay: Oh, when she says let's fly, it still gives me chills, baby.

Kennedy: Yeah.

Dr. Michele Foss: Hey.

Anna Rozay: Nobody else I feel like acting wise could make that line resonate in the way that she did, because it could fall very flat very easily. But the smile she has on her face, she's confident, she's rested into herself. She knows in her mind, regardless of what anybody else says or does, she has earned this.

Kennedy: Yeah. I'm so glad there weren't-- If there were any moments, because I can't think of any off the top of my head. I'm glad there weren't any moments where she doubted herself or where she was like, "Oh, I don't know. Is this a good idea?" da, da, da. She had the regular captain's counsel, but never a moment of self-doubt as to whether or not she deserved that.

Anna Rozay: I can't help but think that there is some intentional commentary on the fact that her, our first black female captain, to lead a series and our first black male lead to lead a series had to wait three seasons until they took the captain's seat. They had to work their way up. They didn't have the luxury of starting off from the top at Episode 1, Season 1. They both start as commanders. They go through a lot of different things. Their tracks are not the same. I'm not saying they're the same. But they both go through struggles to get to that captain's seat. And so, when they get it, it is that much more earned and real and recognized, because just like us in real life, we got to claw, and crawl and fight our way up to the top just to be recognized.

Kennedy: Yeah, for real. Like you said, Sisko and Burnham are two completely different captains, it's two completely different stories. But they assumed that the audience was going to doubt the validity of their captaincy if we didn't watch them struggle first. So, some could argue that the first three seasons of *Deep Space Nine* and *Discovery* are black trauma porn, but-- [crosstalk]

Dr. Michele Foss: And you can argue that and not be wrong.

Kennedy: Okay. Because what is happening. Sisko might not have lost his parents, but he sure as hell lost his wife. Jake lost his mother.

Dr. Michele Foss: Yeah.

Kennedy: So, what are we doing here? And then, to make matters even more complicated, her new boo thang loses his whole planet and starts acting up on her job.

Dr. Michele Foss: Right. At the job site. [laughs]

Kennedy: "I am at work."

Anna Rozay: Right.

Dr. Michele Foss: What are you doing?

Anna Rozay: Yes.

Kennedy: "Listen, I know you're mad. I'm mad for you, but I am at work doing."

[laughter]

Kennedy: Before I forget, because I wanted to mention this when we were talking about Season 3. There was a line that Admiral Vance said about how Starfleet perceived *Discovery* coming back or coming to the future and how they were all resentful of the fact that that whole crew had hope. Yeah, they had hope. They had a clear vision of what needed to be done, what was right, what was wrong and skipped all of the awful part of the burn and everything else. So, they were a little annoyed that they had the audacity to have hope in this really hard time. I feel like that describes 98% of boomers, an older.

Anna Rozay: Mm-hmm.

Dr. Michele Foss: Yeah.

Kennedy: They resent the fact that progress has enabled people to do things without all of the trauma to come along with that. And instead of celebrating that like, "Wow, that's cool. Show me your ways."

Dr. Michele Foss: Oh, but there's been trauma, but they just can't see it.

Kennedy: Yeah, that's true. Yeah, it was just a lot going on my good sister's first day as captain. So, we meet Species 10-C [laughs] again. Here is an extremely influential antagonist that isn't aware of the harm that they've caused and are still causing. So, the moral of the story is not to hate a person or a group of people. The moral of the story is sometimes some people-- I don't know. I guess the overall arc of that was just Michael Burnham as Captain and her being able to compartmentalize her empathy for her partner who was grieving his entire species.

Anna Rozay: While also doing her job.

Kennedy: Yeah. While also not only doing her job as a captain, but meeting the first non-carbon-based life form of its kind, unprecedented, pure, unadulterated, unfiltered *Star Trek*. I just don't understand why people hate this series, in general, but also that arc, because I was like, "It don't get much more Trek than this."

Anna Rozay: This was how you did a finale. Compared to the Burn, this was a step up for me all around.

Dr. Michele Foss: Well, I loved this season. [laughs] I told her I was going to say that every time, because I did. But this season had the distinction of every single episode I'm crying. Like, I'm crying not even in the moments that were designed to make me cry. Just I found myself crying in every episode for one reason or another. You know, the moral of the story especially in this episode in *Species 10-C*, but really this season, if not the whole show is-- This is my bias speaking. But it's about communication, like, if we just figure out how to communicate each other,-

Anna Rozay: How to talk.

Dr. Michele Foss: -it will be good. [laughs] It will be okay. That's it.

Anna Rozay: And speak with the intent to listen.

Dr. Michele Foss: That's it. And try. [laughs]

Anna Rozay: Yes.

Dr. Michele Foss: Just try.

Anna Rozay: Not speak with the intent to hear what you say, so I can rebuttal it. Speak with the intent to listen-

Dr. Michele Foss: Right.

Anna Rozay: -and to try and find common ground. One of the episodes where they go to their planet, and Michael is leading the away team and they're in their amazingly designed Power Ranger suits.

Kennedy: [laughs] Who pulled a page out of the movie *Prometheus*. Over scientists on a strange place? Let's touch something.

Anna Rozay: Let's touch everything. But to their credit, their suits, for some reason, weren't filtering out the dust in the air. So, that wasn't wholly their fault. They were going out-- They were having the hallucinations and stuff like that. But the concepts in this season, like you said, we're just so wholly *Star Trek*.

We have a species that is so far removed from anything that we understand that they speak with chemicals, they speak with hydrocarbons or what have you. We have to use math and all of these different things to just formulate words. It was just so heady and like, "Oh, this is just really what this is supposed to be about." And here she is leading the charge to make sure that we don't jump too far into fighting before we find the common ground, because everybody was pulling her in different directions. We got to fight them. We got to find a weapon, we got to do this, we got to do that. And she's like, "No, give us the time-

Dr. Michele Foss: Yeah.

Anna Rozay: -to try to make peace.”

Dr. Michele Foss: Try. That's it.

Anna Rozay: Yeah.

Kennedy: Mm-hmm.

Dr. Michele Foss: Yeah.

Kennedy: Yeah. Michael really said, I see your Darmok and Jalad at Tanagra and raise you a Species 10-C.

Dr. Michele Foss: Right.

Anna Rozay: And Michelle, did you know how you were saying you were crying? When Species 10-C finally came on the screen and rose up, I lost it. I had never seen anything like that on TV. You know, we always joke about how in *Star Trek* aliens are just people with things applied to their faces, prosthetics. This felt truly realized.

Dr. Michele Foss: Right. They took their time.

Anna Rozay: And truly alien. Yes.

Dr. Michele Foss: Yeah. Yeah.

Kennedy: Yeah, that was--

Dr. Michele Foss: That was a math, because I was like, “I've been waiting my whole life.”

Anna Rozay: Yeah.

Kennedy: That moment got me the moment where Michael wasn't sure if Book had survived the explosion, and-

Dr. Michele Foss: Thank you.

Kennedy: Sonequa was channeling the fact that she lost both of her parents-

Dr. Michele Foss: Thank you.

Kennedy: -within a week or something of each other.

Anna Rozay: Yeah. And then, the aliens were like, “Oh, we found this in--”

Dr. Michele Foss: We found this.

Anna Rozay: “We want to return it to you. Is it important?” [Michele laughs] Oh, my God. You could say, it's like deus ex machina kind of thing. But that feels so right when they returned him, I was like, “Oh.” And then, he came out black Jesus with the light going. [audio cut] Resurrector, honey.

Kennedy: Okay. It was a lot.

Anna Rozay: It was beautiful though.

Kennedy: I was here for all of it. I want to shoutout before we forget her, President uni Rillak, the Cardassian Bajoran human John, that just was such brilliant idea of a character because all of us reacted viscerally to her. All of us were like, "Look at this Airiam spoon headed." We all were like, "Get her out of here." [laughs] And then, she was written to be the literal personification of all of the haters in the comments. "I don't think you're awful. I just doubt your commitment to sparkle motion." It was that type of vibe.

"First of all, I'm old as hell. Lower your voice when you speak to me. Secondly, do you have a rank? Are you in the fleet?" "No, you're not." Okay. "Thirdly, do you know who I am?"

Anna Rozay: When she tried to throw Kobayashi Maru in her face and she was like, "Excuse me?" I'm like, "Baby." She's like, "Well, you did save us all, I guess, but I don't think you're ready for the captain seat on this Voyager ship that I have." And she was like, "Baby, I don't want that. I don't even want that. I got my ship and I'm doing my thing. I don't need you to sign off on my capabilities. I know what I'm capable of. Do you need to look at my resume again?"

Kennedy: I think you do.

Anna Rozay: What have you done?

Kennedy: Because this is Discovery 1031. No bloody A, B, C, D or J.

Anna Rozay: Okay.

Kennedy: Okay. "I don't want your 11th generation ship. It took y'all 11 times to get it together."

Dr. Michele Foss: "No, thank you."

Kennedy: "No, thank you." [Michele laughs] And then, we move on to Season 5, the Admiral season, The Red Directive, and everything that went along with it. Season 5 was such a rollercoaster. It was *Indiana Jones* in space. I was here for it as a final season, because this show has been so heavy and so full of deep emotional moments that having a little bang-bang, pew-pew, I was here for. I also really appreciated Rainer as a character, because if he wasn't Michael in a different body, I don't know what it was. He was like a litmus test. If I'm in the comments and I see that you love Rainer, you're a hypocrite.

Dr. Michele Foss: Right.

Anna Rozay: Literally.

Kennedy: You're a hypocrite. You're a bigot, because it's the same person in a different font. I'm not trying to hear it.

Anna Rozay: The same person who's bucking authority. The same person who wants to do it their way when they want to do it without-- It's Michael in a white man's body.

Kennedy: Right. Definitely went through childhood trauma. Is the best at what he can do or how he can do it. It's not like he wasn't a good officer. He was exceptional just like everybody

else was. But somehow, this is an easier character archetype for to swallow when it looks like him. He found his hell too. When it looks like him instead of – [crosstalk]

Anna Rozay: Michael. Yes.

Kennedy: Cool, cool, cool. Cool, cool, cool. Tight, tight, tight.

Anna Rozay: And to put them to work together in the way that they did, that was totally done on purpose, because it's like you have them stand next to each other. It's like, "Babe, y'all was on this woman's back for four seasons. And now, we got somebody up here who basically is her carbon copy." And everybody is on Twitter, "I love him. I love him. I just wish Michael was this and that." I'm like, "Babe, that is Michael."

Kennedy: I just love their dynamic too. The way he would speak out in meetings, she looked at him like, "If you don't shut the hell--"

Anna Rozay: Okay. Because there was a couple of times where she just gave him a look, and he was like, "You know what? I was wrong."

Kennedy: I definitely like the fact that the character wasn't resistant to constructive criticism, because that could have been another headache for her in the middle of all that. [Michele laughs]

Anna Rozay: I think it also would have sent the wrong message to the audience, especially the ones that needed to hear it. But probably didn't still.

Kennedy: So, shoutout to the progenitors for making this excellent obstacle course. Just overall, seeing how this crew has matured, how Michael's influence on them has matriculated and all of it culminating-- well, not culminating, because *Labyrinth* isn't the last episode, but it's definitely an important one and the cumulative of what Michael's grown into.

Anna Rozay: So, this episode, for me, really just shook me to my own personal core. Because as people of color, this was like seeing everything that we've been told by our parents, by society, just put up on the screen and embodied in her character. It really just made me recognize what this character really was about as a whole and how she has had to prove every step of the way that she deserves where she needs, where she is. She has to prove that she deserves this rank. She has to prove that she deserves this ship, this crew, all the time. And how exhausting that can be. You could see it in how much it broke her to really reflect on those things.

Michael rarely has those kind of reflections and has the time to have those reflections. I was just like, "Oh, my God, life can be so draining sometimes." In this body, existing as a person of color, because just walking into the room, people are doubting you. I just felt so seen watching that episode. I think I watched it when it came out probably five times, and just cried each time. [chuckles] I was like, "Oh, my God, you see me, girl? You see me." I just love that episode.

The fact that that was the test, not walking some labyrinth, not finding out this puzzle. The test was they wanted to know that the person that was going to find this technology truly knew themselves inside and out, good and bad flaws and that they weren't some egomaniacal person who thought that they knew what was right, that they questioned themselves, they doubted themselves. And that's the kind of person you want who is going to really think about, is this the right thing? Not only for me, but for the galaxy. You don't want someone coming in here taking this technology who thinks they're the hero of their story. That's definitely not Michael. Michael is a hero, but she doesn't think she knows everything.

Kennedy: Yeah, we don't. We don't need Donald Trump becoming-- [crosstalk]

Anna Rozay: Right.

Dr. Michele Foss: Period, full stop.

Kennedy: Full stop. You're right. We don't want Donald Trump. Period. The next sentence being, we don't want Donald Trump being the one the progenitors have to deal with. Certainly not.

Anna Rozay: Oh, my God.

Kennedy: Yeah, I agree. This episode was difficult for me to watch in a different way, primarily, because we get press screeners for these shows. I'm seeing episodes a week at least before they release. I can't talk about it or anything. Sometimes it's meticulous, because as you're recapping things, you might have to rewind a certain section a bunch of times until you get it.

Having to be in the tedium of that rewinding stuff for that episode in particular was so difficult for me, because it's like, "Yes, this is my lived experience." Under white supremacist, capitalist America, this is my experience almost on a deeply ancestral level. It was gratifying for it to be talked about. But at seeing it over and over and over again and over again-- I haven't watched that episode since, because it was like, "Argh. It is 31-89. Why am I still-- When does it end? When does it end?"

Dr. Michele Foss: That's the beauty for me of a rewatch, because when it's an episode that speaks to you profoundly, the process can be painful. So, I am right in the middle of a *Discovery* rewatch now. I started over from the beginning, and I'm in the end of Season 1 now. I'm taking it very slowly, because I gorged on it every season. As soon as I could, I was all over every episode, with the exception of Season 5. I'll come back to that. [laughs]

But I'm taking my time with this rewatch. It's just been so striking to me how the first time through-- This is with all television, but especially for me with *Star Trek*. The first time you watch, it's for the purposes of catching the narrative and understanding broad strokes what's this about. But the beauty of a rewatch, is that you definitely pick up on things that you didn't see the first time through or that you didn't notice the first time through. You also have a brand-new set of lenses to watch with.

So, the first time through, it's 2017. The world in 2017 looked in a lot of ways similar, unfortunately, to the world 2024. But so much has changed. It's like eight years later, and so much has happened in between, so that there are episodes-- *Labyrinth* is not one of them, but there are so many episodes that I understand, I still interpreted it the way-- It still means what I thought it meant in 2016. I'm sorry in 2017. But now, it means that, plus it means this whole other thing, because I'm coming to it as my present self. And so, I'm reading what it's about in a different way than I did five or six years ago.

So, I strongly encourage rewatching, because the first time through, it's like, "Oh, okay, I got it what that was about." The second time through or the third or with some of these series, the 20th, 29th time through, it changes what it means to you.

Kennedy: Yeah, that's very true. I had a little bit different experience. I've said this here before. I didn't start watching *Disco* until 2020. Yeah, I didn't start until 2020 because I was that guy in the comments, "What are we going back in time for? How is she Spock's sister? What is this uniform? What is a Kelpien even?" I was one of those and was like, "I'm not

getting into this. This is stupid.” And also, I wasn't about to get CBS All Access for one show. You know what I mean? Like, I was like, “I'm not doing that.”

But the panini rolled around, I had a lot of time on my hands and I was like, “Let me see what's going on here. Let me see it.” And then, I saw Ash Tyler. She was like, “Oh, way. Why didn't anybody tell me this was on *Discovery*? I would have been watching this show. What you mean?” [chuckles] I felt a little let down by my friend group at the time. I said, y'all didn't tell me this. If you had told me this, I would have watched it.

So, yeah, to your point, Michele, the fact that it came out in 2017, even watching it in 2020, I could see there was a level of optimism and hope that hadn't been tainted by despair and loneliness just yet that really resonated with me. I was super excited to get on board, no pun intended, on the heels of that. But yeah, to your point, my partner and I got together two years ago, and one of the required viewings before I was sure about him [laughs] for his discovery.

Anna Rozay: It was your litmus test?

Kennedy: Yes. I need to see how you feel about Michael Burnham. It was watching it from the beginning with him that really gave me a different appreciation for it, because we are so caught up, in my opinion, in the narrative of that story through the whole series that sometimes we are unable to see the world building that is going on during that time. So, the little nuances in Season 2 when Disco meets the Enterprise for the first time, and they're like, “Wow, it's a big old ship.”

Pike and his away team come over, they're like, “Wow, this ship is nice. This is nice.” And they're like, “Y'all, uniform's cute.” So, it was like, “Oh, wow that's something that we don't think about would have happened realistically,” even though we saw it in *Generations*, when half the crew had on the old uniforms and half the crew had on the new ones. Quartermaster just didn't get a time. Get a chance to get to everybody, okay? So, I feel like little things-- Seeing the guts of the turbolift for the first time ever.

Anna Rozay: That was wild. I'm still wrapping my head around that one.

Kennedy: So, overall, I feel that to say that Michael Burnham is the most important character in *Star Trek* history is not an exaggeration, because without *Discovery*, there would be no *Strange New Worlds*, there would be no season of *Picard*, there would be no *Lower Decks*, there would be no *Prodigy*.

Anna Rozay: She saved everybody from control.

Kennedy: Saved everybody from everything. [laughs]

Anna Rozay: All existence, okay?

Kennedy: Everything.

Dr. Michele Foss: By herself.

Kennedy: Yeah.

Anna Rozay: And that's what these fans hate the most, that a black woman saved existence.

Kennedy: It was super gratifying at the end of Season 5 to see the little vignette they did with everybody to make sure everybody came back, and seeing her grow old in love and have a child who has grown old and-- Not old, but you know what I mean, who has aged into adulthood, and hasn't been scarred by the same things his mother and his father had been scarred by.

Anna Rozay: Yeah. Yeah. I think that was so gratifying and so necessary to show that juxtaposition, like you just said, because she needed to be at peace. She deserved to be at peace for so long, that moment, to just have her little ranch on whatever planet that was tend to her garden, play with the little Pokémons in the forest. She deserved that. She did everything she was supposed to do and then some. So, the fact that the series, even though we wanted more, I'm glad that it ended on a happy note, because there is no other character in *Star Trek* history that I think earned her happy ending than Michael Burnham.

Kennedy: I was really worried that Michael was going to stay with the Progenitor and just pull Kirk in *Generations*. I really thought we was going to lose her in some vague space mystery BS, and that the crew is going to have a memorial and all this other stuff. I was so worried that she wouldn't be able to get that piece.

Anna Rozay: Because you know what it is? It's another instance of a black main character sacrificing themselves for everybody else. I feel like we've seen that before. We've seen that with Sisko. But we have the opportunity with Michael to show a different ending, a different story, because why is it always got to be us sacrificing ourselves with everybody else, you know? Why can't we get a happy ending? Why can't we get a happy ending?

Dr. Michele Foss: Literally living her best life. Literally living her best life on her terms. Chef's kiss. [Anna laughs] That's it. We deserve that. Not only did she deserve that, we deserve that.

Kennedy: I would go so far as to be pedantic and say that we deserve that as Trek fans of color, as marginalized Trek fans, and that Michael Burnham earned her piece.

Dr. Michele Foss: Yes. No doubt.

Kennedy: She earned them pips. She earned them bars.

Anna Rozay: And her son is fine.

Kennedy: Can we get into that uniform? Let's not get into that uniform, because [Michele laughs] we've been talking about Michael Burnham for a moment. I want to make sure that this is a listenable episode. [Michele laughs] So, to the cast and crew of *Star Trek: Discovery*, thank you, whoever casted Sonequa Martin-Green, thank you.

Dr. Michele Foss: [crosstalk]

Kennedy: And Sonequa, if you hear this girl--

Dr. Michele Foss: Love you.

Anna Rozay: We love you. We absolutely adore you.

Dr. Michele Foss: Yeah.

Kennedy: I would put money on Michael Burnham's books. I don't care.

[laughter]

Kennedy: What you need, hon, I'll put it right there. That is about all the time we have today. Anna Rozay, where can people find you on the internet?

Anna Rozay: You can find me on Instagram, [@anna_rozay](#). And if you just google, Anna Rozay, A-N-N-A-RO-Z-A-Y, you can find me everywhere else.

Kennedy: Excellent. And Michele, where can folks find you?

Dr. Michele Foss: You can find me on Instagram and threads, T-E-E-V-E-E-P-D-H, so [@teeveephd](#).

Kennedy: Excellent. And don't you have things going on? Don't you have your own show you'd like to--

Dr. Michele Foss: Oh, of course. Yes.

Kennedy: Please.

Dr. Michele Foss: Yeah, please do. Okay. So, yes, my podcast is The TV Doctor, where I am prescribing what television you should be watching in order to heal [chuckles] what's going on with you. We're currently in Season 5 of the show, where I have picked up a copilot. I have a number one now, so I'm still in the captain's chair, but I have enlisted someone fresh out of the academy.

No, she's considering the academy at this point, [laughs] but one of my graduate students and close friends has not ever done *Star Trek* anything. She's hardcore *Marvel*, she's hardcore *Star Wars*, but she has been convinced to spend my fifth season of The TV Doctor with me. And that rewatch that I was saying that I'm currently in the middle of, we're doing that together. So, I together are rewatching *Discovery*. Well, I'm rewatching. She's watching for the first time. And then, we're talking about it on Season 5 of The TV Doctor. And we've been loving it so much that we've decided to spin that off into its own show.

So, when we finish Season 1 of *Discovery*, we are going to likely do Season 2, but who knows. We might be doing something else. And so, you can follow that at Sickbay pod. We've called it Sickbay, because The TV Doctor, so we had to keep something kind of medical. [laughs] And so, we decided on sickbay.

Kennedy: And let's be honest. Anybody who was serving on this crew of *Discovery* was going to end up in sickbay at some point, [chuckles] because somebody needs to talk. Whether you talking to Culber, you talking to Dr. Pollard, somebody will help you out. That's awesome.

I'm Kennedy. You can reach me at kennedy@womenatwarp.com. To learn more about our show or to contact us, visit womenatwarp.com, email us at crew@womenatwarp.com or find us on Facebook or Instagram, [@womenatwarp](#). Thanks so much for listening. Don't forget to fly.

[Women at Warp theme]

Kennedy: [unintelligible [01:30:27] wig. That crunch ass wig.

[Transcript provided by [SpeechDocs Podcast Transcription](#)]