

Women at Warp Episode 92: Women of Trek and TNG Interviews

[Women at Warp theme]

Sue: Hi and welcome to Women at Warp: A Roddenberry *Star Trek* Podcast. Join us as our crew of four-women *Star Trek* fans boldly go on our biweekly mission to explore our favorite franchise. My name is Sue and thanks for tuning in. Today, we're continuing our coverage of Star Trek Las Vegas 2018. As a reminder, we're giving away an Eaglemoss 10-inch XL Voyager replica. This is one of the ships that was on our table at Star Trek Las Vegas as our presence there was sponsored by Eaglemoss. So, to enter this giveaway, just send us an email to crew@womenatwarp.com with the subject "Voyager" and tell us what Captain Janeway was famously looking for in that nebula. Entries will remain open through September 4th.

Now on to the con. I was fortunate enough to get a few moments each with Marina Sirtis, Gates McFadden and Denise Crosby on Saturday in the vendor's room. So, you'll be hearing those chats first and then we'll go right into the Women in Trek panel from Thursday afternoon, which included myself, Amy Imhoff, Sarah Gulde, Aliza Pearl, Mary Chieffo and Marina Sirtis.

Sue: Hi, how are you doing?

Marina: Good.

Sue: Thank you for doing this.

Marina: No worries.

Sue: So, very early on, I know that you and Denise were auditioning for different roles on *Next Gen*.

Marina: Each other's roles.

Sue: Yes.

Marina: Yeah.

Sue: How do you think you would have approached the role of Tasha Yar?

Marina: Well, probably quite differently to Denise because we're different people and you always bring an element of yourself to a role. But I think I would have maybe been a little-- I don't know, a little bit more emotional than she was. I'm not sure because that's just who I am as a person. But at this point, I actually am glad it turned out the way it did.

Sue: Yeah.

Marina: Yeah.

Sue: And still very early on, I know you've spoken before about the relationship you had with Majel and how she coached you through the early years of *Next Gen*.

Marina: Yeah.

Sue: Could you talk a little bit about.

Marina: Well, she kind of adopted me because I was literally fresh off the boat when I got *Star Trek*. And so, as well as mentoring me on a certain level, the Roddenberrys kind of took me into their family and I still call Rod bro, and he calls me sis. She really helped me. I mean there was a time in that first season where she went out of her way to make sure that I knew what to expect, that I started doing conventions to build up my fan base, how I should go about it. Also, she really guided me through the whole kind of complexities of the fandom.

Sue: How do you think over the last 30 years of doing conventions, have they changed? Have the fans changed?

Marina: No, the fans have always been great. I mean, what's changed is that they're more kind of Comic Con-ish now. So, I mean, we used to come in, do a Q&A, sign for a couple of hours and then be on our way. And now, we're here all day. That's pretty much the only difference. But the fans have always been amazing. These are the best fans in the history of show business. So, you can never fault the fans.

Sue: You said on the panel yesterday that Picard would often ask Troi's advice and then ignore it. But it made me think of *The Child*, which I know you said is one of your favorites because you finally got to do things. But that meeting that Troi's coworkers are having about her sudden pregnancy, as if they should have an opinion at all.

Marina: Well, isn't that the world we're living in now, with a bunch of old white guys deciding what women can and can't do with their bodies?

Sue: It's true. But what's really powerful about that scene is as soon as you had the line of, I'm keeping this baby, the conversation stops.

Marina: Right.

Sue: Was that there from the beginning? Do you remember how it came about?

Marina: I do remember that. And this is obviously something that I feel very strongly about, a woman's right to decide what she does with her body. I'm very prochoice. But prochoice means you can choose to keep your baby. Doesn't mean you always choose to abort. So, I felt very strongly about that. I felt very strongly that once she made that decision, she shouldn't have to justify it. But I thought that was a great episode for those reasons that everyone else had an opinion over what she should and shouldn't do, especially Worf.

Sue: [laughs] That's very true. While we're in your autograph line, I don't want to take up all your time. So, I have one final question, which is Worf or Riker?

Marina: Riker, always.

Sue: Of course.

Marina: 99.999% of the time. The 0.01% or 0.001% is the fact that Dorn is my best friend and I've got to leave just like a smidgen of hope for him.

Sue: [laughs] Thank you so much.

Marina: Thank you darling.

Sue: Hi, Gates.

Gates: Well, hello there.

Sue: How's it going?

Gates: It's going great.

Sue: So, I have some questions about early *Star Trek*. I know it's a while ago, but I've been talking. I talked to Marina a little earlier about her casting and I know you've talked in the past about how you thought Crusher was going to be the comedic role.

Gates: Right. Yeah. Boy, was I wrong.

Sue: Did you try to bring that to-- It seems that it wasn't-- [crosstalk]

Gates: I did, but to be honest I think that some of the writers might have been like, "Well, we don't really want a mother to be a certain way." And it's just like, even when you go in Hollywood, I could do pratfalls in high heels and people would freak out. Whereas if a guy would do a pratfall, they would think it's hilarious. And so, I think there's certain things that people had just in their heads that someone who's a mother is not going to do that or whatever. And so, yeah, it was very tough, but I got in some stuff for *The Big Goodbye*. They let me add some comedy and *Data's Day*, those were the two times where I was allowed to add comedy. And *The Naked Now* was the one I auditioned for.

Sue: Yes.

Gates: So, they loved the comedy I did there. Although I got into trouble for unzipping my jumpsuit because zippers weren't supposed to be in existence. But, I mean, yeah, I think that's partly what it was. But one of the things I've done all my life, I've taught comedic work at a lot of theater conservatories. I love it and I wish I could have used it more. Yeah, it would have been fun. But whatever, it was a great role and I had a great ride.

Sue: And you mentioned Wesley, but it seems like every time there's parenting being done, it's being done by Riker or Picard.

Gates: Well, that was one of the reasons I think I got fired, as I complained about that, but whatever. What are you going to say? I'm so lucky I got the job. Yes, you can't always get what you want. And I had no idea how to do politics. I probably still don't. But yeah, I think it was kind of silly that I didn't have scenes with other female characters unless we were in dancing outfits or with Tasha Yar. We didn't even really have a scene one-on-one, so. But now it's different. It's better. And look at Sonequa's doing an amazing job. And I just, I love the women on that show and I love the men on that show. And they seem so chill and it seems like a really gender-equal show.

Sue: It does.

Gates: Doesn't it? It's cool, isn't it?

Sue: Yeah. Thank you so much.

Gates: Yeah, thank you, honey.

Sue: So, Denise, thank you so much for talking to me today.

Denise: It is my pleasure.

Sue: So, I chatted with Marina earlier about how you two were auditioning for each other's roles. So, I was wondering how you think you might have approached the role of Troi.

Denise: Wow, that's really an interesting question. I haven't really given it much thought. The original design of Troi was a very ethereal sort of Scandinavian ice queen that was, very, very psychic and really operating from a kind of little more spiritual vibration. I don't know where that would have manifested itself and where that-- who knows? But that was the original concept of the character.

Sue: Wow. So, I know also in the first season, *TNG* had some relatively famous turmoil behind the scenes. How did that affect you guys in the cast?

Denise: Well, we bonded with each other and it's sort of as a united front and we had so little control over what was going on behind the scenes. There was a lot of upheaval in terms of finding writing staff and writers who were kind of cycling in and out. And my concern in that first season, which ultimately led me to make the decision to leave, was just that where is the writing headed? What are you doing with this big ensemble cast? And when Gene Roddenberry himself finally told me that it wouldn't be multiple storylines, that he was really going to adhere to, like, the template that he had set with the first *Star Trek*, the original *Star Trek*, television was changing at that point in the late 80s and you were having shows like *Hill Street Blues* and that were having multiple storylines going on and that's how I thought it was going to unfold.

Sue: Right. And so, is it right that you were able to pitch Sela?

Denise: Yes, I did pitch Sela.

Sue: The pitch to come back? Yeah.

Denise: Yes, yes. The idea behind Sela formed out of *Yesterday's Enterprise* episode where I was back and it was established that Tasha had a love interest in Lt. Castillo. And my original idea was that Sela was the offspring of Lt. Castillo and Tasha Yar and that she was saved and raised Romulan. I really was riffing off of *Dances with Wolves* at that point and I pitched this idea and the producers went, "That's interesting. Let me think about it." And then a couple months later came back and said, "You know, we're going to go with this idea," but it's going to be half Romulan, not Lt. Castillo's child.

Sue: So, is it strange--? I guess how do you feel about the implication in that this child, the Sela character, is the product of perhaps a nonconsensual relationship on Tasha's part? To put it kindly [laughs].

Denise: Yes. There's not an implication, it's a fact. That's why I was so happy and I was looking forward to this huge character and story arc that would involve Sela. And I'm sorry that they didn't develop that further because I think the potential for storytelling was really great, that this woman was in such denial of her human side. And I'm sure part of that was self-protection. But she began to learn by her contact with the crew and she began to soften and explore this part of herself and I think eventually, I always saw Sela as a potential bridge to peace with the Romulans.

Sue: Okay, that's interesting. I like that a lot. Thank you so much for chatting.

Denise: Of course.

[music]

Amy: Hi, everybody. This is the Women in Star Trek panel. Welcome. It's awesome to be back in Vegas with everyone. I want to welcome our panelists. First, we have Sue Kisenwether of Women at Warp on the Roddenberry Podcast Network.

Sue: Hi, everybody.

Amy: Then we have Sarah Gulde. She's from the Portland area. She's a creator of Nerd Camp, which is an inclusive nerd activity that she created. Welcome, Sarah. Next up, we have Aliza Pearl. Aliza is a writer and actress and she hosts for Nerdist and Geek & Sundry. All right, now we have Mary Chieffo Laurel on *Discovery*, the badass Klingon warrior. Give it up. And finally, a fabulous counselor, coolest lady on the bridge of the Enterprise, Marina Sirtis.

Hi, I'm Amy Imhoff and I'm going to be hosting today. Thank you, band.

Marina: They all stayed.

Amy: Hi. I'm sitting at the big desk. This is exciting. All right, we're going to get right into it. We're going to talk today a little bit about another facet of women in *Star Trek*. We've had so many awesome panels here over the years, and I'm so glad everyone has turned out to watch us one more time. And we're going to start talking about what it's like to be an alien woman on the bridge or an alien woman in the room with a whole bunch of Klingons. So, let's start right out. We're going to kick it off. I'm going to ask Marina. So, women who are aliens are often depicted as the other, right?

Marina: Yeah.

Amy: Yes. So, frequently their bodies are what are kind of used to amplify this otherness, your emotional state, coming in and talking about how your view of Troi has evolved as being an alien woman and one of the only women on the bridge.

Marina: I have to be honest, I didn't really regard myself as alien because I was half-human and only my eyes were alien. So, I used to forget that I was alien. I think basically, the only alien thing that I had that was different was that I had a power. I had a superpower that the others didn't have. But yeah, I didn't really-- Yeah, I'm probably not the right person to put this question to.

Amy: We're going to go to Mary in a second who's all in.

Marina: Yeah, yeah. I was going to say Mary's probably because I wasn't treated any different. I didn't feel like it was a thing for my character because I didn't have to wear prosthetics. When I did have to wear prosthetics, I did turn into the psycho bitch from hell because I don't know how you do it.

Amy: Well, that's a good example of using your body to depict otherness and depict the way an antagonist on the show, like the bad guy of the week, would interact with Troi.

Marina: Yeah, well, they were interacting-- Yeah. It was like, once I lost weight, I was always the body that was inhabited.

[laughter]

Amy: Yeah, you got inhabited by the--

Marina: Yeah. When I was chunky in the first season.

Amy: You were never chunky.

Marina: I was a bit chunky in the first season. Well, that's what they told me.

Amy: Body positivity.

Marina: Yeah. I was told constantly that I looked fat in the first season. So, yeah, times have changed. You can't say that to actresses anymore. But yeah, I didn't feel other. And also, on my crew, we were just so bonded that I never felt apart really, at all.

Amy: That's great to hear.

Sue: Well, you mentioned Troi's difference, her otherness being her superpower, but so often in *Next Generation*, we see her not so much using that superpower, but having it be hijacked.

Marina: Yeah. Mind raped. Yeah, many couple of times. Yeah, that's what I said once I'd gotten skinny.

Sue: Well, instead of a superpower, it's almost like it ended up being an extra Achilles heel.

Marina: Yeah. I actually made the decision that I had a switch that I could turn it on and off because I thought if you are constantly bombarded with emotions, being the psychologist, I would have ended up on the shrink's couch. So, I made that decision very early on that I had to go to that place for it to almost, like a medium, going into a trance, but not obvious like that. But I did think, "Okay, unless it's a really strong emotion coming at me, I can decide when I want to do it or not." And it also worked with the storylines because sometimes she could sense people a million miles away and couldn't sense the person standing next to her. So, it worked for the stories as well.

Amy: And Mary, so L'Rell is the only *Discovery* lady who is fully alien that we see regularly. So, how do you think she wields that power, both an emotional power over Ash/Voq and a political power?

Mary: Well, I really love that we're making this discussion so much about being an alien woman, because that was a huge theme that really drove me through the entire first season, was the empathy I was able to have for L'Rell was she grew up in Klingon culture. She's known nothing else except what has been taught to her, specifically by T'Kuvma, about who the Federation is and who humans are. I have found that particularly her relationship with her sensuality is something that obviously was very present throughout the first season. And I found, as a Puritan American, my relationship with that side of myself was very, very repressed. And what I had to find in portraying those scenes between Voq and L'Rell and then ultimately, L'Rell and Tyler was that she was expressing genuine love, but in a Klingon way. And I think that it's a very extreme take on that.

But that's what sci-fi is about. It's mythology. And certainly, with the Klingons, they are so epic, they are so Shakespearean, they're so Greek, that I was very thrilled to be able to expend all of my energy trying to embody that side of her. But that's something she struggles with and then ultimately, when it comes to her alienness, I think part of her difference or unique quality as a character within the Klingon world is that there is a softness and a vulnerability to her that is seeking to come out. And that was ripped from the fabric of my own life as someone who is 6 feet tall. And oftentimes, if people see me from a distance, think I'm going to crush them, or-- [crosstalk]

Amy: Tall lady.

Mary: Yeah, yeah.

Amy: Do you think she feels alone in her quest?

Mary: Absolutely. Well, I think it's very, very evident when Burnham gives her the detonator and her response is, "But I am no one." I think that expresses a lot about her journey. And what's so interesting is from the human perspective, from Tyler's perspective, from pretty much anyone on Discovery, she's like this antagonistic force, this malicious force. And in the Klingon world, you see her relationship with Kol, she hid behind a by T'Kuvma. She tried to execute this whole plan behind Voq because within the Klingon society, she's been told that she is inferior, and that's why she behaves the way she does. That's why she is so mysterious. She's descended from spies, House Mo'Kai, and I wonder why House Mo'Kai, which has a very strong matriarchal component, is known for that. Like, where did they build that reputation? Who's spreading those rumors about who the Mo'Kai are?

Amy: You are definitely going to talk about the matriarchal situation. [Mary laughs] Aliza, did you want to weigh in on this female otherness and viewing these two different alien women?

Aliza: Yeah, I think Troi and L'Rell are really amazing benchmarks too for us to see how far we've come in terms of portraying otherness because *Star Trek* has always been ahead of the curve. I think this franchise has been ahead of its time in showing otherness and showing people who are bicultural and who are kind of stuck between cultural influences and feeling like they have to navigate those things. As someone who grew up that way, I really definitely appreciate seeing those representations in *Star Trek*.

And so, it's interesting to see Troi who, as we said, her power was often turned against her a lot. Like, it's cool to see that. It's cool to see it sometimes, but it felt like it was used a lot for the character and also seeing her as a strong, graceful, empathetic person among people who really need that anchor. That's a beautiful thing to see. And then to see L'Rell, who is very different in so many ways, but still embodies a lot of amazing qualities that I think a lot of people can look up to. I don't want to say in spite of, but maybe because of these very specific complications with her character. But yeah, I'm excited to see more of L'Rell and see where the character goes. If she can own her, who she is and not think that she's no one anymore.

Mary: Exactly, and I am really thrilled that I can vaguely say that they're diving in, and I'm really excited for what's to come.

Amy: Sarah, how about you?

Sarah: I just want to say I really enjoyed seeing L'Rell meet Admiral Cornwell.

Mary: Yeah.

Sarah: That's the first human she met. And I felt like she really let down her walls, and you got to see these two very different women connect.

Mary: Yeah, I found that-- Well, I say that scene we have in episode 14 is essentially the reason I am open enough to Burnham's generosity in the finale, is that we actually hear each other. I respect her enough, I say, "T'Kuvma taught us that humans are without honor. About this, he was wrong. I admit that I'm wrong. I'm a Klingon, and I admit that I'm wrong because I respect this woman, because she screamed back at me."

Amy: And I think that, yeah, Admiral Cornwell, I think L'Rell really views her as an equal, which is great to be able to bring that Starfleet Klingon and channel it through two very cool women. We don't usually see that.

Sarah: I think that's a great theme in the whole show from the very first scene. It's women empowering other women, from the very first scene all the way through to L'Rell at the end. That's something I love so much about the show.

[audience cheers and claps]

Amy: Yeah. Did you want to add anything?

Sue: Sure. I'd like to speak to *TNG* a little bit. That is the *Star Trek* that I grew up with. That is the *Star Trek* that is part of my soul. But as a woman in science and math, I feel we always talk about the gender disparity on the Enterprise D. We have our counselor and we have our doctor, and those are the only women that we see all the time. But in the fields I was in, I went to a school, a college that was 60% women. And in my classes, I was one of two in my fields. So, it was really interesting to see it shift in such a way when you get into science and math, and that reflects in *The Next Generation*.

And I feel like in fan culture, we have also fan culture and culture in general, we have moved to a world where, as women, we're encouraging other women rather than competing with them. And I think that is also reflected in *Discovery*. And it's a wonderful thing to see.

[applause]

Amy: I also think that the way Troi is grounded in science, in psychology, and also, if you read the books, she had a background in botany which is-- it's very cool to see that woman be on the bridge.

Marina: I did?

Amy: Yes.

Sue: Surprise. [laughs]

Marina: I was a botanist as well as a psychologist?

Amy: In one of the books, it talks about how Troi's background-- [crosstalk]

Marina: It's ironic because I can kill a plant--

[laughter]

Amy: I can also kill a plant. So, I sympathize with that. [laughs] But I wanted to know what the challenges you felt were of portraying for Mary, the very emotional scenes with Ash and then for Troi, the very emotional scenes of dealing with some of these monsters of the week, basically. These guys that would come in, it was always a man inflicting the violence.

Marina: Well, I'm of Greek heritage, and so between the Greek part of me and the English part of me, there is not a molecule of Puritanism. [laughter] And those who know me know that. I am the opposite of that. I'm telling every 21-year-old, you're in Vegas. Go have too much fun. [audience laughter] Make me proud. [audience laughter] Right?

But for me, because of the Greek part of me, I just do this and the emotions are there. Really, the problem with me is trying to keep emotions back because I'm just one big emotion generally. And I find as an actor, sometimes it's better to try and hold the tears back and try and hold it back, as one would in real life. You don't go around blubbing, try and hold it back. And then that empowers the audience to cry. If you're doing all the crying for them, then they miss that connection. So, for me, it was the opposite of Mary. It was like, "Okay, I have to--" Troi isn't me. As I've said before, the only thing we have in common is we're the same height. So, it was more of, like, being true to Troi, who was a little more--[crosstalk]

Amy: Starfleet.

Marina: Yeah, a little more Starfleet. A little less football hooligan. And, so it was being true to the character. Whereas if I was playing me, it would have been even more emotion, really.

Amy: How about you, Mary?

Mary: I would like to say, I love hearing that because I agree. And I feel like that is so present in your performance. You see all of this amazing energy contained within this thing. And I think that's what's always so intriguing to an audience.

Marina: She's my new favorite person.

[laughter]

Mary: [laughs] But it's interesting because my relationship with that is partly because of the prosthetics, I can't hold back anything. Like in episode 12, when Saru beams Tyler in and he falls in my arms, and we were trying to create this Klingon Pieta, and I was sobbing. But you can't see it that well because of all the prosthetics. So, I really had to just trust that I had to go to those extremes because only so much was going to come out of the prosthetic. And also crying in a prosthetic I don't recommend it. Literally, James MacKinnon, who's our prosthetic head, had to come in between takes and just put a tissue on my face, because you can't really blow your nose. You can't really, it's just kind of like [onomatopoeia]

Amy: Plus, it's very physical. You have to show it more with movement rather than facial.

Mary: Well, something particularly early on when the armor got progressively more malleable. And then I was in the jail suit, which Mary Wiseman always teased me as, like, that's your comfy outfit. [laughs] But near the beginning, most of my articulation had to come from my head. And I've talked about the fact that because I had that huge ridge, I found that when I was thinking, turning it back and forth was a way of articulating that. And it felt there's such a reptilian feline quality to the Klingons, certainly with this design. And then, I spoke to Neville Page, our creature designer, and he was like, "Yeah, your sensors are stronger back there." And I was like, "Oh, well, great." So, then you'll notice around episode eight, suddenly I'm like [onomatopoeia] all over the place. Like, "Oh, yes, yes." Like in the scene with Cornwall at the end, when I'm like, "What other option do you have? Think."

[laughter]

Amy: Aliza, you're an actress too, and I would like to get your thoughts on articulating that emotion.

Aliza: That's amazing. I've done a little bit of prosthetic work, but it's not to that level by any means. I think I definitely resonate with what Marina's saying about. The way that I've studied, we call it like keeping a lid on a boiling pot. And it's just kind of you have the emotion

churning inside you, and for whatever reasons, whether it's trying to save face or you have pride or shame or trying to not hurt someone else with your emotions, you're keeping it inside. And I think that's what really has worked for me in terms of connecting with a character.

Amy: And, Sarah and Sue, I wanted to get your thoughts on how it was like growing up and watching these emotional scenes. I started watching *Next Generation* when I was seven years old, and whenever Troi or Crusher were very upset or there was a scene where they were attacked in some way, it made me feel very emotional as a child to watch that and like-- Even watching, on *Voyager*, when Captain Janeway died, not really, and she was at her own funeral, I was so upset. And to watch the actresses portraying that emotion and then you feeling it, like you said, you want the audience to cry, it was very effective, I think, in terms of shaping the way I viewed these women. You two could weigh in on what you thought when you would watch it.

Sarah: Thinking back on it, I think I related a lot more to Major Kira, because if you got in her face, she was going to get right back in yours. I think that's something I can relate to.

Amy: That's good. No, it's interesting to see who we identify with more and I identified more with Troi than with Crusher, because I also was an emotional child. I think that was a big part of it. How about you, Sue?

Sue: Well, I think that this is another area where *Next Gen* was really groundbreaking, because we can joke about it now, how they put a therapist on the ship, but that's so important. Emotional intelligence is so incredibly important. And I feel like Troi taught an entire generation about empathy.

Marina: Well, it's interesting that you say that, because when I spoke to Gene about it when I was cast, he said that by the 24th century, emotional health would be as important as physical health. But then when they were realizing halfway through the first season that they had too many women on the show, who were they going to fire? The therapist, right? It's like at that point, she was expendable because she was just a therapist. Denise left the show, but they weren't going to get rid of the security chief, and they weren't going to get rid of the doctor. So, so much for health in the 24th century.

Amy: So, we still get it and I think-- [crosstalk]

Marina: And I have to remind you all that it was a 24th century show written by 99.9% of 20th century men. You have to bear that in mind when you're watching *TNG*. We know it's supposed to be in the 24th century, but most of it was written by 20th century men. Yeah.

Sue: The women of *Next Gen*, I think, are now often dismissed by some people saying, "Well, they're in the nurturing roles," as if that is something that's not important. Your doctor is important. Your doctor treating you with care is important. Any plus-sized person who's ever been to the doctor can tell you horror stories about your pain not being taken seriously. Any woman can tell you horror stories about your pain not being taken seriously.

Amy: My mom had endometriosis and she had a giant tumor and they didn't find it because the doctor just said, "Oh, it's just your time of the month." And she was like, "No, I think something's wrong."

Sue: Maybe you should just lose five pounds and everything will be fine. Yeah.

Amy: It's so important too, because we see *TNG* dealing with PTSD far in advance. And now, almost every show will have some characters that has like an emotional way of

struggling with PTSD as character growth. That was new at the time though for *TNG*. And then, Kira with PTSD on *DS9*, those were groundbreaking in terms of talking about mental health.

Sue: But, I mean, the women of *Next Gen* took care of your physical body and your emotional health, and nothing is more important than that. So, if you want to dismiss that as a nurturing role, maybe you need to be nurtured a little bit more, I guess. [laughs]

[audience claps]

Marina: Yes.

Amy: Well, this is a good jumping off point because now we're going to talk about how the women take on the patriarchy and what it means to be the only woman in the room, which is often the case for a lot of us in our professional lives, in our personal lives. And I want everyone to weigh in on, Troi comes from a matriarchal home, L'Rell is from a matriarchal house. We want to talk about the power that women can wield and the ways in which sometimes that power is squashed sometimes by the patriarchy. So, go to town, ladies.

Marina: Well, they've tried to squash. But I generally find that men are terrified of me.

[audience laughs]

Amy: And I love that about you.

Marina: You know that, right?

Amy: Yes. They're terrified of me too.

Marina: Yeah. Men are terrified of me.

Amy: [crosstalk]

Marina: But most people are terrified of me actually, because I just tell it like it is. So, I've never really had that issue, I have to be honest. we're not going to MeToo. We're talking just patriarchy now, right.

Amy: Well, I mean, Troi was often the only woman on the bridge after Denise left.

Marina: Yes. He always. Old Baldy, sorry, Sir Old Baldy [audience laughter] would ask my opinion about things and then he'd ignore me and then I was always right at the end of the episode. So, that's just life.

Mary: Very true life. Yeah. [laughs]

Marina: Okay. Who's married? That's just life, right? Girls? Right. Yeah. So, I never felt that I was in that position. And it was said to me, I didn't make this up, but LeVar said it to me actually and he said, "You're the glue that holds it all together on the bridge and off in life." Yeah.

Amy: So, very often that though, I have a lot of guy friends and it's often that, myself and the other girls in our group, we keep everyone together, we make sure we see each other, we make sure we have phone calls and texts.

Marina: Right.

Amy: That's just how women are just-- They do that.

Marina: Yeah, women do that. And the other thing is I don't fear anyone. I have no fear in me apart from my sister-in-law, but that's a whole other story. [laughter] But she's the only person I'm scared of on the planet. So, being as I don't have fear of men and I don't have fear of other people, I don't know that I've ever experienced what you're talking about.

Amy: Who else wants to weigh in?

Mary: I'll say, well, yeah, my experience growing up, I felt very grateful that every environment I entered, whether it was my parents or the different array of schools I went to within my youth--

Marina: [unintelligible 00:37:59] or you were in the military?

Mary: [laughs] Because I wasn't satisfied with the-- Well, I always say with so many aspects of my life, but with each schooling, it was what was presented at the time.

Marina: Did you ever go to an all-girls school?

Mary: No.

Marina: See, I went to an all-girls school.

Amy: I did too. I went to an all-girls high school.

Marina: Me three.

Mary: From 11 to 18. I was just with girls. And that, I always recommend to parents to send their kids to single-sex schools.

Amy: I did too. I thought it was very beneficial.

Marina: Really beneficial. Made relationships with women that I still have 50 years later. And you learn how to be without worrying about what the boys are going to say and what the boys are going to think of you. [audience claps] It's so destructive to young girls. I don't approve of co-ed education at all because boys are a pain in the ass until they're grown up.

[laughter]

Amy: In high school, I think it is important.

Marina: They really are. Really, their brains haven't developed until they're like 25. So, you shouldn't put them with girls because we develop much sooner than that. And that's my opinion.

Mary: Well, I will say that yeah, even though I didn't-- I was always in co-ed education, that was something that somehow, I just am grateful that there was enough in me and I think because my parents really, really-- I'm an only child too. So, that's a whole panel. [laughs] But certainly when I went home, it was like there were no boundaries to what I was capable of. And they were always encouraging if I was excited about one thing or the other and very creative environment. And then luckily, I always said my friends were few and far between, but the ones that I had really stuck. Of course, I did witness stuff in middle school and high

school, but there were enough good people that I'm so grateful that the universe conspired to have in my life.

But even with that, I will also say that for college, I was at Juilliard and the teachers did not say, "Hey, you're 6 feet tall, you're all this stuff. The only way you're going to become a successful actress is by diminishing yourself." In fact, the first year I was there, I would apologize either physically or verbally. I would say like-- Well, I don't know. I'd say something really articulate. And then, I'd be like, "Well, I mean--" And my voice and speech teachers every day were like, "No, you're not allowed to apologize," and they cast me in male Shakespeare roles. They gave me the older women parts, the queens. I was like, "Let me play Alma in *Summer and Smoke*." They're like, "No, you have to be grounded in yourself." And that was an incredible, incredible gift.

But then, of course, entering the real world, as much as I really do believe we've made so much progress, it's still confronting the things that initially I was getting called in for, that they were very specific, nothing romantic because I couldn't be taller than the guy. God forbid.

Marina: God forbid.

Mary: Hollywood actors tend to be on the short side.

Amy: Yeah, [laughs]

Mary: But that was part of the beauty of L'Rell, was that romance that we found in the episode, in four. That wasn't necessarily planned. I was just really grateful that side of myself, which I feel is what I generally lead with in life, got to be articulated within such a fearsome character. That took your question and went all different directions, but. [laughs]

Amy: Well, in terms of our fan experts up here, I kind of wanted you guys to talk more about your experience as being women, but also very active in fandom, which is typically a male-dominated space, but we're changing that. And also, as professional women, if you've experienced that as well.

Sue: Well, first of all, *Star Trek* fandom has never been a male-dominated space.

[cheers and applause]

Marina: Not like videogames, right?

Sue: But sorry, I'm jumping the panel a little bit, but I just wanted to-- [crosstalk]

Marina: Go, Sue, go.

Sue: -bring this into the realm of fandom. I started getting really active in fandom right when it started moving online. So I was on Usenet, I was in alt.startrek.creative, and I found a community of women in the fanfiction community. And there were almost relationships that developed of mentorship. And because the fanfiction was so women dominated, that judginess that you fear, the gatekeeping, the pass this quiz was not there. And there were women that took me under their wing in fandom 20, 25 years ago who remained mentors in other parts of my life. If I had a hard time-- [crosstalk]

Amy: I'm jealous of you. I did not experience that.

Sue: It's so sad that it doesn't seem to exist the same way anymore.

Aliza: Is there a way we can recreate that?

Sue: I would love to.

Aliza: That sounds amazing.

Sue: Yeah. If I had a hard time with a college course, I would call my mom, sure. But I would also call a friend of mine, a *Star Trek* friend who had been through it and was a professional working in a field for a long time. These were women who worked at JPL. These are women who were attorneys. These are women who had any profession that there was. And it was just this amazing community of growth. And when you go into other spaces, there is this, "Well, are you really a fan? Prove yourself. Answer these trivia questions." And just really quickly and then I'm going to stop. I have a rather large *Star Wars* tattoo right here.

Amy: It's Princess Leia.

Sue: It's Princess Leia. It's Carrie Fisher. And every year when the weather warms up, it gets noticed. I live in New York. People see me on the subway, and undoubtedly people ask me if I'm even a *Star Wars* fan. Do you even like *Star Wars*?

Amy: No, I put her on my leg for life because I'm not a fan.

Sue: This took five hours and a lot of money and a lot of pain just so I could impress you, random stranger.

Aliza: It's so maddening.

Amy: Look at Marina. She is like, "Oh, my God."

Sue: *Star Trek's* on the other side.

Aliza: The hoops that people go through in their minds to figure out, like, you can't be a fan. I think I got into a lift going to Comic Con this year, and I'm pretty sure I had a Black Panther t-shirt and things that clearly were like nerd. And I get in the lift, and the driver's like, "Oh, yeah, you're not going to Comic Con, right?" I was like, "That's exactly where I'm going." And I don't like that tone. What is that about?

Amy: I get a lot of, "Oh, you're here with your husband?" I go, "No, no, he's here with me."

[laughter]

Marina: Actually, it was kind of like that with *Gargoyles*. When we did *Gargoyles*, when Johnny and I did *Gargoyles*. [applause] Thank you. And I know he didn't mean it, but Johnny, because he's an old white person, we're all old apart from Johnny and LeVar, we're all old white people now. But he would go around saying, "Well, Demona is Xanatos' sidekick." And I'm like, "Excuse me. The show is called *Gargoyles*. Demona's a Gargoyle. You're a stupid human. So, who is whose sidekick here, buster?" Yeah.

Amy: How about you, Sarah?

Sarah: Well, first, talking about the business side, I work in finance, and I found that, yes, corporate business is very patriarchal. So, I left, and I work for myself now, and I'm much happier, and I make more money.

Amy: Good job. [cheers and applause]

Sarah: Fandom side, I'm involved with a lot of local cons, and I got really frustrated with them because you'd go in, you'd have a diversity panel that was all white or a STEM panel that was all old white men. And so, I got really frustrated, and that's why I started doing my own events so I could go in and say, "Hey, if you're going to have a panel at my event, you're going to have at least two women. You're going to have at least two people of color. Please have more if you can. And we're going to talk all about issues like representation or running for public office or using geek art as protest, things that we can use for marginalized people to make a difference in their lives."

Marina: Because, let's be honest, girls. We're talking about all this great stuff up here, but legally, women are still not equal in America because the Equal Opportunity Act has never been passed. So, we're still not officially equal. I mean, people who work regular jobs-- Well, actually, even actors know that because not talking out of school here, girls didn't get paid as much as the boys on our show. And women earn 80 cents on the dollar, usually. So, we're still not equal. Still have a ways to go. Hopefully by November, that will change. But anyway, let's see what happens.

Amy: We have about five minutes left, apparently.

Aliza: I wanted to talk about the diversity and inclusion.

Amy: Yes, go right ahead. I wanted to see if anyone had anything they wanted to add in our last five minutes, and maybe we can get a question or two.

Aliza: Yeah. So, I work in the nerd space, and working for Nerdist and being part of the Geek & Sundry family, I found two groups. Well, one shared family that has two different faces to it that is very much excited about diversity and making actual steps towards becoming more inclusive and diverse and the things I see outside of that. And even before I got to Nerdist made me, it was hard for me to accept and be open about my fandom for a long time because of those comments like the Lyft driver and a lot of comments that were much worse than I don't even feel like sharing and bringing you all down today.

But I'm not sure how to say this besides that representation, it's not just about having-- I think we were talking about before, like, it's not just about having your couple of people on the panels and stuff. It's that and it's also once you open up the doors or once someone gets through who is diverse and different from you, actually listening to them, actually including them, celebrating them, hearing their ideas and implementing them.

I can't tell you how many spaces I've been in before where I'm just there to be a token. And I think this past year-- I've always been very passionate about inclusion and diversity. But this year was the year that I finally was like, "I am not doing anything if it is not also hand-in-hand with inclusion." Diversity without inclusion is tokenism. So, no more of that.

Amy: Thank you. That was awesome. I agree completely. It's been a struggle in bringing these panels to geek spaces. We've thankfully been here doing this panel for over 10 years. But at other places and other conventions, if you're in the audience and you think, I could go up there and talk on stage, I could go do a panel on women, please do it. We want to be able to see more women hosting more women, just helping facilitate fandom and facilitating the love that we have here for each other.

Sue: *Star Trek* conventions started in the 70s. They were organized by women. They were led by women. And women in other cities heard about them and said, "I want to do that." So, they did. These women shared the information on how to do it, and that led to *Star Trek* conventions being everywhere for years. You can do it. If you want to do it, do it. Talk to

women, get information, talk to organizers, and get up on stage and speak out. Because if there's anything *Star Trek* teaches us, is that everyone's voice is worth listening to.

Amy: And I reached out to Mary on Twitter and I said, "I'd really love for you to be part of this." And you were very excited. And you said, "I think not only myself, but the other ladies on *Discovery*, very excited." Marina, you've been doing these panels for a while, and the fact that everybody says yes to this, and saying yes to other women and saying yes to each other, and if you're a man saying yes to having a woman at your convention or a woman-- a panel there, then that's important. So, I think that's speaking to what Aliza was saying about creating those spaces for each other. It's not just the six of us. It's like everybody out here. You all have the opportunity to do that.

So, I think maybe we have time for two questions, maybe three if they let us. Do we have questions? I can't see very well. We'll start one there, one there.

Female Speaker: This is for Marina. I've been waiting my whole life to say thank you. [laughs] Before my parents divorced, the one thing that we would do together as a family is watch *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. And I remember watching Deanna Troi handle very tense conflict and handling it so beautifully. And I remember thinking, as a child, that is what I will aspire to be. And I have become a healer.

Marina: Oh, my God.

Female Speaker: And I could not have done that without Troi.

Marina: I have to give her a hug. Okay. When you cry, I have to give you a hug. Come over here. Come over here.

Amy: I'm glad we got to you. Over here. Go quickly. Oh, my God. See? Changing lives. All right, over here. One more.

Marina: That was it. No more of that because then I'll be crying. Okay, so.

Female Speaker: Hi, Marina. This is also for you as well.

Marina: Oh, shit. Don't cry.

Female Speaker: I'm not going to make you cry. You don't have to run over here. You're fine. I want to preface this by letting you know that in 1958, my parents, my brothers, my sister emigrated from a small town in Northern Greece called Marina. [laughs]

Marina: [speaks in Greek] Do you speak Greek? You've got rubbish parents. That's all I've got to say.

Female Speaker: And thank you for saying it's their fault and not mine, because it is.

[laughter]

Marina: Yeah, it's their fault.

Female Speaker: Absolutely. And bless you for that. My question is, when I was growing up, I was born in Canada. I was born in Toronto four years after they immigrated. Yay, Canada. I hear you out there. And I grew up feeling the conflict of being trapped between two cultures, between the Canadian culture that was more open and more progressive, and the very strict, patriarchal Greek culture.

Marina: Actually, you say that but it's actually a matriarchal society, Greece. It wasn't my dad who said, "You can't go out with boys." It was my mum who said-- I had a Victorian upbringing. And actually, you probably had the very strict-- Yeah, they're going to have to wait until we're done, all right, till I've answered this question. Just shut up until I am done.

Amy: Thank you.

[laughter]

Marina: Don't you break in on me. I'll come over there. You don't want that. [audience laughter] But that's how I grew up. Basically, once I was home from school, the door was locked. I was not allowed out the house.

Female speaker: That was my life too.

Marina: Okay.

Female Speaker: And what I was going to ask you is that conflict because you're living now in North America, that conflict between cultures.

Marina: Well, I said no to it. I said no to it. I was the Greek girl with no Greek friends, because the mothers of the other girls wouldn't let them be my friend because I was the bad Greek girl.

Amy: Troublemaker.

Marina: I'm the grade two dropout of Greek school.

Female Speaker: So, I hear ya. I was going to ask you if that conflict was ever used in exploring that relationship for Troi, being half-human and half-Betazoid, did you use that?

Marina: I did, actually, I did use that because we both had crazy mothers. [audience laughter] Yeah. In fact, my relationship with Lwaxana was the same as my relationship with my mother. I loved her the most when she was in a different galaxy, [audience laughter] and I loved my mother the most when I was in America and she was in Europe. But no, it did and it does actually-- I honestly believe that part of my strength came from that background, because I did say no.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Marina: And I said, "I'm sorry, this is my life." And my mother had an arranged marriage. I mean, that's how old school they were.

Female Speaker: I said no to that one.

Marina: They did it to me when I was 19. They said, "We found a lovely boy for you." I went, "Really?" And they said, "Yeah. He ticked all the boxes." Because basically, I was at drama school and it was like the worst thing that could happen, that I would be an actress. Because when I said, "I want to be an actress," my mum heard, "I want to be a prostitute." Right?

Female Speaker: Yeah.

Marina: So, I said to this woman, the matchmaking lady, "Excuse me, do you think I'm ugly?" And she said, "No, you're lovely." And I said, "If I'm so lovely, don't you think I can find

my own effing husband?" [audience laughter] And my mother, "[shushes] Get in the house. Get in the house." But she never did it again because I had humiliated her in front of her friend. So, that was where my strength, I think my mother saying no to me my whole life and trying to control me made me who I am today. So, mum, we fought like cat and dog our whole lives. But thank you at the end of the day, right?

Amy: We unfortunately have to wrap up, but if you see us around the convention this weekend, please continue the conversation and just if anybody wants to wrap it up by saying quickly.

Marina: Wait a second, wait second. Julia, where are you? Julia? She's giving crochet lessons today, this weekend. I said I'd give her a shoutout. Julia is giving crochet lessons.

Amy: And if we want to talk where we're going to be next and where the audience can find us, and then we're just going to wrap up. And thank you so much. So go right ahead. Mary, are we going to be able to see you soon?

Mary: Yes. You will see me tomorrow with you.

Amy: With me at the Shakespeare panel tomorrow.

Mary: Yeah, Shakespeare and *Star Trek*.

Amy: And we're going to see L'Rell season 2.

Mary: Oh, yes. Oh, yeah. Yes.

Amy: That kind of when are we going to see you.

Mary: I'm going to fight that patriarchy.

Amy: How about you, Aliza?

Aliza: I'm on the Internet @alizapearl, my Geek & Sundry *Star Trek* RPG game just finished up. We finished it, but we're starting a new one. You can watch it all though online. And I am just cooking up some fun, independent sci-fi stuff that hopefully will see the light of day soon.

Amy: Awesome. Sarah, how about you?

Sarah: I'm @sarahmiyoko on Twitter. M is in Mary, I-Y-O-K-O and yeah, find me at the con. Say hi, let's talk.

Amy: And, Sue, we know where to find you, but give us the pitch.

Sue: I will be at the Roddenberry booth pretty much all weekend and we have a Roddenberry Network panel on Saturday talking about the history of fandom. And if anybody's going to be in Atlanta over Labor Day weekend, I've got 16 panels at DragonCon, actually two of which focus on the herstory of fandom.

Amy: And I'm Amy Imhoff. You can find me @lightstar1013 on Twitter and Instagram and Shoes and Starships, which I've been neglecting and Legion of Leia also and *startrek.com* very soon.

Marina: Oh, and by the way, I keep forgetting to tell my fans I have an app and it's free. Yeah, I'm an app. I know. I'm beside myself. So, yeah, go to Marina Sirtis app wherever you get your apps and download it. It's all free. Okay.

Amy: Awesome. Thank you. Thank you, guys so much. This was awesome. Thank you for coming.

Sue: If you'd like to contact Women at Warp, you can email us at crew@womenatwarp.com or find us on Twitter, Instagram or Facebook [@womenatwarp](https://www.facebook.com/womenatwarp). For more from the Roddenberry Podcast Network, visit podcasts.rodtenberry.com. If you'd like to support the show, you can do so on Patreon at patreon.com/womenatwarp or by leaving a rating or review on Apple Podcasts, Facebook or wherever you get your podcast. Thanks so much for joining us.

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