

The Geeky Gimp Presents - Star Trek and Disability Live

Panel recording

(intro)

ERIN: Hi, everyone. I'm Erin, and I am The Geeky Gimp, and today I'm having a live panel with some of my friends, and today, we're gonna talk about disability in Star Trek. So let's start by introducing ourselves. My name is Erin, and I am 31 years old, and I have been a fan of Star Trek for 5 years now, and I've seen every series except the last 5 seasons of Voyager. So, um, now, um... Alice, you can introduce yourself.

ALICE: Hey everyone, my name is Alice Wong, and I am also a big-time Star Trek fan. I will be up front and say Next Generation and Deep Space 9 are more of my particular favorites, and I'm happy to be here!

ERIN: Nice. Okay, Andrew, you can say hello.

ANDREW: Yeah, I'm Andrew Pulrang, and I've been a Star Trek fan... since I can remember. But I really got into it in college, and I've seen... basically all of the series except, I'm incom-, I'm also incomplete on Voyager.

ERIN: Yeah.

ANDREW: I have probab-... maybe half the episodes I've seen, um, and not entirely in order. But yet everything else, I've pretty much seen all of it. And my favorite series is actually the original series.

ERIN: Uh huh. Nice. Okay, And, Dave, you can introduce yourself. Ross is trying to figure, figure it out. We can, Zach... you can introduce yourself.

ZACK: Sure. I'm Zack Kline, I'm 26, and I've been a Star Trek fan for, uh, well over I'd say, fourteen, fifteen years, at least. I have read more scripts for the shows than I have actually

seen, but, um, my favorites would probably have to be Next Generation, and then, Original Series, and Deep Space 9, probably in that order.

ERIN: Nice. Actually, I forgot to say, my favorite series is the original series, and Deep Space 9, are my favorites... Okay... Day Mohammed is a popular culture fan, science fiction, um, fan... and I just lost the chat, is a science fiction fan author, and most recently a documentary filmmaker, oh, that's awesome! Okay. So let's start the conversation. We can either start by talking about episodes or characters, but let's start with the original series. So what are your favorite original series episodes, and what are some of the interesting disability, um, themes, in the original series? Anyone can just jump in.

ALICE: Well, I'm gonna have to bow out of this part, cause my knowledge of the original series is pretty, uh, sparse, so I'm gonna, you guys jump in.

ERIN: Okay...

ANDREW: Well, I feel like, it, the biggest, the biggest story in... on our topic is, um.

DAVE: The Menagerie, maybe?

ANDREW: The Menagerie... partly.

ERIN: Mmm-huh.

ANDREW: And The Cage, if you count the original pilot that is on Netflix that, for years and years, was never seen, but with a slightly different cast and everything, which later got made into this two-parter involving Captain Pike, the prior captain before Kirk. And Captain Pike, well, obviously spoilers, right?

ERIN: Sure.

ANDREW: Captain Pike is found, the crew is called to the space station where he is, and discovers that he is, um, been horribly injured in a terrible accident, and, on the show itself, basically have a clay bust of a guy's head that is... doesn't move, and sits on the top of a big, sort of, dome of a wheelchair.that barely moves, and has a light up on the front with a beeper, that beeps "one for yes, two for no," or something like that. And that's the extent of his

expression, that's the extent of the technology in the far future, for people who are essentially quadriplegic. I mean, that's the idea: he's so badly injured that there's nothing left of him but his head, where it's sticking out of this wheelchair thing.

ZACK: That's, uh, not even getting into, in my view, the most problematic aspect of it all, which is that, he is essentially given the opportunity to experience his ideal... ideal, quote-unquote "life" by this alien society.

ANDREW: Yeah.

ERIN: Right.

ZACK: ...You know, totally independent of his disability.

ANDREW: Yeah, and the deal is that, when he was younger and active as a captain, he visited this planet where these, these big-brained telepathic aliens were, were trying to nab creatures for their zoo, basically, and they wanted humans to set up a little human colony, that would fix things for them and be slaves. And they would give the humans the illusion of whatever they wanted. So it was like, the ultimate "whatever you desire, you will experience." But on the original show, the original crew that found this, they said, "This is unacceptable, this is fraudulent, and it's the ultimate human rights violation, and we would all rather die than submit to this, because it's fake and captivity." To the point where, after they left, Starfleet made the planet off-limits to humans to even visit, and it's the only thing you can have the death penalty for, just by, just to go there, because it was so evil what these aliens were gonna do, to make you a slave. Which...

ERIN: Right.

ANDREW: ...you know, I'd say sort of, "Right on!" to that. But, when Captain Pike is horribly injured, now it's completely flipped around. Now it's awesome that we can take him to this place and he can, he can experience happiness... that he can't have, because of his horrible disability. It's terrible. It's disgusting. And it's okay, even though it's the death penalty to go there, "Oh, that's okay, we're cool with that, because after all, this poor fellow..."

ZACK: ...Pity on him...

ANDREW: Or you know, whatever...

ERIN: Mmm-hmm.

ANDREW: It's troubling.

ZACK: Yeah, I mean, I've never personally... I don't know, I think that from a, a modern disabled perspective, it's very obviously troubling. Um, I think it's also obvious that they had no... I mean, disability was being used as obviously fate, you know, fate worse than death kind of...

ERIN: Right.

ZACK: ...kind of euphemism.

ANDREW: Right.

ZACK: And that's really hard to, to... hard to swallow. I mean, I like it, in a sense I kind of like the episode. But I like it in spite of that, or like aspects of it.

[10:10] EVERYONE ELSE: (agreeing murmur)

ZACK: I like aspects of it.

ALICE: Yeah, and Dane just, uh, tweet... texted on The Menagerie, she said, uh... she typed, on The Menagerie: the idea of disability and what life is like with a disability, a single beep, just someone didn't think about it. How people live in the 20th century. So those are her...

ANDREW: Wait, that's another aspect, that everything is all very futuristic, and, and... Stephen Hawking has better equipment than this guy, today. You know, and lots of people who, with those disabilities.

ERIN: ...People...

ANDREW: But that happens a lot with the old Trek actually, that...

ZACK: Yeah, and I think, think it's...

ERIN: Right.

ZACK: ...Not, I won't say that's excusable, but I will say, it's not the first time that disability has been left out of the conversation for future re-vision... visions of the future, if you will.

ERIN: Right.

ZACK: I think it's not unusual. I don't like it, but...

ANDREW: Right, it wouldn't be surprising. The only thing, I think, that is sort of extra, puts that extra layer, is the fact that, the show makes, the show makes the point very clearly that this life of illusion that the aliens offer is THE WORST THING EVER, to the point where even going there, uh, is the death penalty for you. Except when you're disabled, and then it's fine!

ZACK: Now...

ANDREW: ... Really what the show says.

ZACK: I think it's, is it worth pointing out that the, uh, I think that when the disability angle... is not in the, uh, Cage episode, it's in the frame story of The Menagerie, is that, I think that's correct?

ANDREW: Yes, it... yeah, right. They, they took clips from the original pilot that involved the young Captain Pike visiting the planet, and pasted it in, to build this other... yes, correct. Yeah, correct.

ZACK: I think it's worth...

ERIN: Yeah, and I think, um, that episode also shows, that at that time, and even today, disability is seen as something that should be "not in the public." It should be hidden away, as something not worth... being, or not worth seeing. And, to be disabled is worse than death, in that episode. So what do you guys think about that aspect of it?

ZACK: I disagree.

ANDREW: (laughs.)

ZACK: No, I mean I don't disagree with your...

ANDREW: Damn it, Zachary!

ERIN: Right.

ZACK: ...He's basically shut up in this starbase, they don't indicate that he does anything at all, you know?

ERIN: Right.

ZACK: His chair moves really, really painfully slowly, and that's it.

ERIN: Right.

ZACK: And that's really sad.

ERIN: Right. I mean, um, I just remember that scene where, I think, Captain Kirk and Spock go in to see him for the first time, after his, um, after his accident, they go in to see him, and I just remember, their reaction is very much a reaction that I have encountered in my own life. Which I thought was interesting, but also very sad, because it shows you what they think of disability.

ALICE: I can't...

ZACK: They being society, or they being the crew of the, uh, Enterprise in this case, or they being the people who wrote the show?

ERIN: Right, yeah, it's hard to differentiate sometimes, I think. And, Alice, you were gonna say something?

ALICE: [unintelligible] [14:55] I don't mean to speak for Day, but she texted, "What's interesting is that, in a world set in the future, the idea of disability is still alien..."

ANDREW: Mmm-hmm.

ALICE: "...and in fact, is more alien than actual aliens." So, you know, the alien within the humanity, is really, I think, a kind of doubly-interesting metaphor, right?

ERIN: Yeah.

ALICE: It's the feared and segregated, out-of-sight, out of-mind. And, you know, when thinking about the original series, which was made in the 19, what, 60's, 70's, I mean...

ERIN: Exactly, yup.

ALICE: ... that's not, like, too surprising, right? They're longing for a lot of progressive depictions of race and gender, but obviously, like space, disability is the last frontier. So, they're still pretty behind when it comes to the original series and being progressive, in my opinion.

ANDREW: Oh, I'm sure. And I don't think they, I doubt that they, that it even occurred to them to think of it, in a way, as race. That wasn't what it was about. I think in later shows they do, or they try to, and there's some awareness that THIS is like THAT. But I don't think they thought that at all.

ALICE: Okay. Also...

ZACK: It's just not a thing that was in the public consciousness, at all.

ALICE: Exactly!

ZACK: Until the disability, the...

ALICE: And I, uh...

ZACK: ...You know, Congress started passing legislation and so forth.

ALICE: And then, Day had one other comment. "They turned Pike into something quote-unquote, 'Other.' He isn't treated or filmed as a human. If you look at the camera angles and the way he's talked about, he doesn't have any real agency in his own fate. So an interesting question is, 'Why?' Race is thought of, visually, equality before that, but not disability . So I guess the question is, so..."

ANDREW and ERIN: [unintelligible] [17:26]

ERIN: Go ahead.

ANDREW: I was gonna say, and what Day just said, about his lack of agency, is made very explicit too, that part of the story is, that Spock, who used to be Captain Pike's, uh, science officer and has this deep loyalty to him (which is actually very touching in a way). But Spock has broken every rule to make all this happen, to bring him back to this planet, because of knowing of his terrible injuries. And so, Spock is putting his career and life on the line to do this... but repeatedly, Spock tells him, "I have to do this!" ...and Pike, by blinking, "No," that's all he can do,

is telling him, "No, you can't do this." And, you know you can extrapolate from this and say, he's a Starfleet captain, he's saying, "Straighten up, mister, you're not allowed to do this. This is not right. You're, you know... no, no, no! You can't do this for me," whatever.

ZACK: If you want to read, uh...

ANDREW: Spock doesn't care, he doesn't have... he's not a captain anymore. He's this guy, and Spock has this thing he's got to do, and he doesn't care what the man himself has to say about it.

ERIN: Right. Um, so what do we all think about Spock, specifically in this episode? Does he... what do you think about his relationship to Captain Pike?

ZACK: Very paternalistic...

ERIN: Yeah.

ZACK: ...is the word that comes to mind.

ANDREW: Which is even worse since...

ZACK: We know, I know, what...

ANDREW: ...Spock is, is... below human rank. I mean...

ZACK: That's true!

ERIN: Mmm-hmm.

ANDREW: ... Pike's his mentor, of all things, you know! But suddenly we have disability, oh, now it's all reversed! Now I'm the one who knows best for you.

ERIN: Mmm-hmm.

ZACK: I could even call it somewhat out of character perhaps, but that's another story... Uh, I don't know.

ERIN: Well, um, there's another, another episode that we should talk about, and that is the one, "Is There, In Truth, No Beauty?", which is the episode where that lady has the dress that lets her see, even though she is blind. So what do you all think about that episode, and the way disability is represented?

ZACK: Actually better, from my perspective as a blind... person. I mean, it's not quite as egregious as Captain Pike, as the Captain Pike story maybe, but, this... not exactly, not exactly positive?

ERIN: Nuh-hmm. I thought, it was weird to me to look at this episode that seems to be pro-disability, and then compare that to The Menagerie, where disability is just [unintelligible][21:14] terrible. So, Andrew, did you, what did you think of that episode?

ANDREW: I agree, I think it's a bit of an improvement. I always think of it as a very confusing episode. That figuring out what exactly they're trying to say is actually very hard, including about disability. I mean, one minute she's really, you know, admirable, she's got her act together, she's very adapted and functional, all that good stuff, but at the same time, she's also, are we supposed to think, rational...

ZACK: She's kind of petty!

ANDREW: ...petty, yes! I didn't... don't even understand what that's all about... I don't know, but yeah.

ZACK: It's an incoherent kind of... yeah.

ANDREW: I think there's a lot of gender stuff going on, too, is the bottom line...

ERIN: Yeah.

ANDREW: ...and that gets all mixed in, and... The disability stuff alone seems okay to me.

ERIN: Mmm-hmm.

ANDREW: There is one, there is a moment when... something about... somebody says something like, "Well, you could do many things, but you couldn't fly this ship!" or something. Like, oh, you have to know that there are limits, when at that point, they had not shown that there are any limits. We just take it for granted or something...

DAY: Okay, can you guys hear me now?

ALL: (general cheering and clapping.)

DAY: Okay, yeah, that would be the down side of headphones! From the camera as well, and... yeah. I wanted...

ALICE: Oh!

DAY: We don't have to keep typing!

ERIN: Okay, awesome. Okay, so Day, do you have anything you wanted to add in, about this episode?

DAY: Still on The Menagerie?

ERIN: No, we're talking about...

ANDREW: No, we've gone to "Is There In Truth"... (coughs)

DAY: I'm sorry, you cut out.

ANDREW: "Is There In Truth, No Beauty?"

DAY: Which one? Which one is that one?

ERIN: It's the one where she has a dress that lets her see, 'cause she's blind.

DAY: Man, I can't believe I don't remember that one... I do not remember that one.

ZACK: Remember, that you can't look at because they drive you crazy.

DAY: The vests were used in the, in one of the books, as something that we use with children and the [unintelligible][24:23] -ology [unintelligible][24:18]-issive and other things. So... theories, I don't remember that episode, but I do know it was used much more extensively, um, in one of the books.

ALICE: Wow.

ANDREW: Well. I didn't know that. [unintelligible][24:33] things like that. It's the one where, where, there's the creature called the Medusa, that live in a box, and if you look at it, you go insane, and that's why she can deal with it.

DAY: Awesome!

ANDREW: ...If she doesn't see, she connects psychically, or whatever.

DAY: The classic disability: because it's needed for that episode.

ANDREW: Yeah... Yep.

DAY: And, we never see or hear of it again.

ANDREW: We see the actress!

ZACK: Oh, but this is not unusual in the realm of sci-fi!

ANDREW: ...we do see that! Yeah, no, in the old series, nothing ever, ever lasts. Literally.

DAY: And I'll admit, I am, I am definitely a TNG kid. So that's....

ZACK: Okay.

ANDREW: Heck, yeah!

ZACK: At least we know where you stand!

ERIN: Alright, um, we can talk about, um, since Day brought up The Next Generation... How do you think disability is presented in that series, compared to The Original Series, Alice?

ALICE: Uh, yeah, I mean, I think it's obviously it's a lot more, in a more positive aspect, where people with disabilities are members of the crew. They are tolerated, they're not really seen as all that different. It's part of the natural diversity among the workforce, I mean, among the members of the... uh, Star Trek. So it's like, kind of like there's also cross-species diversity, also within the human species, I mean, the most obvious example is Geordi LaForge...

ERIN: Yeah.

ALICE: ... I was just thinking the other day, in preparation for this talk, that Reginald Barclay is a really interesting character with a disability, because...

ERIN: Umm-hmm.

ALICE:... He has phobias, he has anxiety, and he has an addiction to holo-suites. And, throughout the series, we've seen several episodes, where not only does he deal with his fear, and it really manifests with him at certain plot points, but also we see him in counseling sessions with Troi, he's actually, you know, wanting to, work on techniques and ways to really help himself become better. And that's visible in the various blog posts about disability in Star Trek, that also focus on physical and social disability, but, you know, thinking about mental illness,

and invisible disabilities? Reginald Barclay is actually a really cool example of somebody who's open about his dis-... mental illness, and how his colleagues can really, you know, really accommodate it and try to work with him.. So, to me, I think, I don't think it was intentional on the writers or the creators of that show, but I thought it was another wonderful facet of disability representation that wasn't, like, hitting you over the head with it. It was just like a natural part of, another aspect, to the show. I think they actually provide a lot of, like, comedic relief to the show. There was that one episode, where in that holo-suite he had all of his, uh, versions of the...

ANDREW: The crew or something.

ALICE: ...the officers, I mean. The fantasy. I mean, there were some really funny moments, but also serious things about his phobias and his anxiety. I thought it was really good at that. It was sneaky in that way, that there's a lot of representations of disability, some that are more overt, and some that are less. So that's another reason why I like the Next Generation.

ANDREW: And I like the way they, they introduce him initially, as basically a pain in the ass, that just about everyone has had it with..and he's like, a step away from being discharged or being off the ship, because he's so difficult. But with a little effort, they figure out he's worth sticking with, and, and he, he figures out it's worth trying to stick with the ship. So, yeah... He ends up being a really important... Like, I think even in Voyager he's got some sort of, occasional role, where he's leading a team to get the Voyager back.

ALICE: That's [unintelligible][30:06] I found, of Geordi LaForge as the right supervisor, was really, you know, working hard to work with him, he was an example of a pretty good supervisor, who is concerned about his performance and his well-being, but he didn't, like, shunt him off or, you know, stigmatize him in any way. So in the terms of workplace accommodation involved, I think it's really nice that, in the sense that LaForge is really thoughtful in his way of, kind of, uh, make sure this person who is working for me, does his best and is gonna be healthy. So that was nice!

DAY: I always [unintelligible][31:05] LaForge is set up as the specialist. If you think about it, we have the captain, we have his second, you have security. But if you think about it, the engineer is the specialist. A small part of it is, if you had to build a character with a disability and put them in, it's probably one of the best places, because they're going to have a skill that's needed by others. It's not a bad thing! It's just a, "Where does that tend to fall?" is- if you're the specialist, you're accepted. You also see that, and that's reflected, in our world, as well, a la....

ZACK: As a blind person, I've got some... feelings. I don't know, I'm kind of conflicted about Geordi LaForge. I like him as a character, and so forth. But, I feel like, um... how do I put this without sounding weird? They seem to show him, in a lot of cases, as being pretty much equal and his disability is mitigated by his fancy headgear...

ERIN: Mmm-hmm.

ZACK: ... as far as I understand it. But, to an extent I feel it's not a very nuanced representation, because at the moment anyway, I'm nowhere near being able to actually do that. And I'm not sure, you know, even if I could be in that position, I would want to be. I feel like we lose a little bit of diversity, when we basically give everyone the magic gadget that lets us operate...

ERIN: Right.

ZACK ...Am I making any... am I making sense?

ALICE: Yeah. I'm just gonna make what they said...

DAY: Totally with you!

ANDREW: In other words, they bypassed any real problems by just making the technology super good.

ZACK: It's magic, it's magic, boom.

ANDREW: It hardly even matters at all.

DAY: And he's not a blind guy any more!

ZACK: No, he's not...

DAY: Really!

ANDREW: Except that the visor is there... all the time.

ZACK: And it does occasionally malfunction, I believe, but it... I think...

ALICE: And wasn't there one scene where an alien visitor was on, you know, the Enterprise, and they look at Geordi, and then they make some comment like, "You know, on my planet, people like you would never have existed." And Geordi says something like, "Well, you know, in our culture, we embrace, you know, you know, the difference." I thought that was, at least, some admission that, you know, that he is seen as disabled by other species, but it technically negates a lot of his blind identity within human, within the human sphere.

ANDREW: There's even... one of the earlier shows, I think, involves the Q who offers him his sight... or some, nah... I think so... I'm not sure. I think so... But he... no, I think that does happen. The Q's trying to bribe everybody, right? "Give you your heart's desire," or whatever. So for like a moment, he has a moment where he has full, you know, regular sight, not visor.

DAY: YES!

ANDREW: And he kind of digs it for a little bit, and then says, yeah, that's enough of that, screw you, you know?

DAY: It, really [unintelligible][35:00] a moment [unintelligible][35:05] Yar, and then he looks back to Q, "I've seen all I need to see. I'm good."

ANDREW: Yeah, something like that.

DAY: Just a great moment.

ANDREW: That was neat, but you know, that's enough.

ZACK: I don't mean to sound like I'm ragging on Geordi unnecessarily, I think he's a great character and a great step up. But sometimes I feel like I've gotten some comparisons to him.

DAY: Oh, that's annoying!

ANDREW: I'm sure.

ZACK: ... and it's...

ANDREW: No, I mean... I... for our conversation, going through lists of stuff in it, you know, like, I basically agree with you, that as a blind character, Geordi's kind of half, half doing anything, in regards to blindness. it is...that visor is an awfully big out, for whatever... for what it's worth, you know.

ALICE: And there's another indication, I mean we can quibble about this or not. You know, we do see the introduction of devices and assistive technology that really impact people with disabilities, and...

DAY: Absolutely.

ALICE: ...I can't help thinking about the Borg. I mean, the Borg are, in a lot of ways, you know, people that, people who are made into these better beings...

ZACK: And that's portrayed as a negative.

ALICE: ...I feel like, a lot of people, that's great...

DAY: Actually, actually... it's Doctor Who, and Attack of the Cybermen!

ANDREW: Uh oh!

DAY: Think about it, they look like, it seems like a direct correlation....

ZACK: I forget, I forget their shtick.

DAY: I know I'm...

ZACK: I've only scratched the surface of Who in any form, so...

ANDREW: Same here.

ERIN: I'd like to, um, when we were talking about, um, Geordi, and I was thinking, does disability exist at all, considering the... if we look at disability as a social oppression. If there's no... you know, if this is a utopian future, does disability even exist, if there's no oppression, there...

ZACK: No.

ERIN: ... is just... No?

ZACK: No, I don't think it is. I think it's maybe debatable at best. But from my perspective, if you get enough something to let you function as well as they function, I mean, it really doesn't seem to matter as much, or sort of...

ALICE: Yeah, and again, it builds this nerd hierarchy, right? I mean, I mean to me, I don't want to bring it back to the Borg, but I do think it's really interesting that they are out there creating this new hierarchy of what is, you know, uh, I guess, real functional. What does it mean to be fully capable. And you know, they look down on humans and all sorts of different species, and they're building a better, a better creature. And, you know, this really reminds me of recent articles about, by the transhumanists, people who are really believing that, with technology, prosthetics, and changes in genetics, that, one day in real life, we can eliminate disability. And this brings back to Erin's question about, well, without oppression, would there still be disability? I think it's an... interesting... parallels.

ANDREW: Yeah, I think it's an interesting question. But the Star Trek that I see includes, it still includes social aspects, even if they're different. You know, they haven't depicted yet, that I can think of, uh. When they tackle disability or have disabled characters, they don't depict perfect, you know, seamless integration. It may be close, but they still kind of deal with it, in it's... you know, like it's a topic. And I'm thinking of guest characters, in short-term stories, um, in The Next Generation.

ZACK: I don't think we've seen any, really, I mean...

ANDREW: Well, there's the two that I am thinking of, one involves a guy, who is a diplomat who is deaf, and has three...

ZACK: Oh yeah, that's right, that's right, I think I know what you're talking about...

ANDREW: ... people as his interpreters. And the other one is a show I rewatched this morning, and it's... it may be the worst thing I've ever seen? You might... does anyone remember the Packletts?

ALICE: No...

ANDREW: It's, uh, it's a humanoid species in the Next Generation universe, and they are an, very heavy-handed... uh, analogy to Down's Syndrome. They are an entire species who look like a terrible caricature...

ALICE: Nooooooooo!

ANDREW: ...and talk like a caricature of people with Down's Syndrome...

ALICE: Yeeeeeee!

ANDREW: ...and they are depicted as "simple" quote-unquote, and not very bright, yet they cannibalize technology...

ZACK: Oh, yeah...

ANDREW: ...unscrupulously. It was the worst! Oh, my God. I nearly vomited!

ALICE: Sinister.... sinister simple people!

ANDREW: I remembered, I had remembered everything about it, except the sinister part. When I watched it this morning, I said, "Oh, my God, it's even worse than I remembered!" Because they are...

ALICE: They bring...

ANDREW: It's not only, "People with cognitive impairments are kind of cute, and kind of funny, and kind of weird," but, watch out, because they'll steal things from you, and kidnap you, and it's all because they don't even know what they're doing. So it's even worse! Oh, my God!

ALICE: Yeah.

ANDREW: And I'm sure...

ZACK: That's a pretty terrible...

ANDREW: ...I am sure the people who wrote it thought they were dealing sensitively with cognitive impairment, on purpose. I'll bet they thought that their message was "Oh, don't underestimate people." That was sort of the surface message, that everybody thought they were stupid and therefore let their guard down, and they turned out to be a lot more wily than they thought, which is sort of a message that's there. But... the other stuff was so horrible.

ALICE: So, are we going to also bring up another horrible episode that's been blogged about and talked about a lot? Of course, that's the one with Worf becoming paralyzed...

ERIN: Oh, yeah.

ALICE: ... and it's been rehashed by people with disabilities a lot. But this is another one of those more overt example of "I'd rather be dead than disabled."

ERIN: I am... sorry.... I actually wrote about that episode in my blog, and I actually have to disagree a little bit. I thought they handled it really well. I think the episode itself was about how, um, Worf's opinion of himself, and him wanting to commit suicide was seen as a negative. But it wasn't assumed, you know, that he should... The main point of the episode wasn't that "Disability is worse than death," to me the point of the episode was, "You can be disabled and still want to live." That, you know, and I think that Riker, in that episode, even... Worf asked Riker to kill him, and Riker is just like, you know, doesn't believe it, doesn't think that's the right decision, and he tries to convince him not to do that. And even, um, Captain Picard, he, for me, his view in this episode was that, "Oh, you just don't understand Worf, you don't understand why he should... for him being disabled is... IS worse than death, and Riker says, "That's not right," you know, so, that's what I thought.

ZACK: I think, I think, there is a need for a nuanced discussion of this kind of thing. Um, I think I can see Erin's point... My comparison would be the experiences of people disabled later in life, whether as a result of IEDs, or auto accidents, or whatever...

ERIN: Right.

ZACK: ...I think that Worf's... perspective is, needs to be acknowledged as valid, inasmuch as it makes sense that from a psychological perspective. "I've just been through hell and I don't know what I'm going to do."

ALICE: Yeah, it's also a function of, a function that, it's also cultural aspects, and masculinity, too. I mean, you don't see many, you know, disabled Klingons, who are, you know, like, uh...

ZACK: That's true!

ANDREW: Well, that's Picard's point...

ALICE: ...swinging their, their bat'luth 'round, you know, you know? Songs are not sung about disabled Klingons... You know, death is much preferred and much, you know, culturally far more important than living with a disability. So, I think there's a lot to say about how cultural meanings and values really play into a person's point of view. And I think again, what does it mean to be a man? Especially in a society where physical ability is so prized and interlinked with being a man... or, a male... male Klingon. And, yeah, I think there's a lot of different layers that could be, you know, uh, looked into.

ANDREW: That's Picard's point to Riker. I think he says something like... he even says, and it's a very affirmative statement, against that kind of suicide. He says, "You and I...", you know, Riker, "...we could learn, would learn, to live with a disability like this, but for Worf, but, it's too much for Worf," and he means, because he's a Klingon. Which, which is, kind of a, interesting, you know, I don't know what to make of that. I mean, I sort of accept that as, you know. And they make, he makes a case of that, the cultural, uh, relativism. Where you can't really criticize somebody for the culture that they have, and that's, that's Picard's point of view. You know, he is what-who he is. He's a Klingon. So it's not for us to tell him that it's wrong.

ALICE: Yeah, and I just want to say what Day just texted in our group chat, about about one of the writers of one of the episodes of Deep Space 9, in regards to Worf, the character, and she said, quote, this is from the writer of a Star Trek episode in Deep Space 9, about Worf, she said, "Even though Worf is an alien, and it's just a tv show, everyone knows we're making statements with Star Trek. Messages and values are being broadcast loud and clear. Are we sending a message in 'Ethics,' that episode, that Worf is worthless now that he's disabled, and therefore, must kill himself? I'm sorry that the portrayal [unintelligible][49:42] exist at all." And this is from a writer of an episode, who is actually a wheelchair user....

ANDREW: Right.

ALICE: ...herself. So, that's another interesting point of view, that there are writers who are pretty cognizant of the statements, or these messages, by these episodes. And, um, not to change subjects, but do you remember that episode where Sarek has a progressive disease, and he's losing control of his logic? And I thought that was another, you know, interesting, you know, slice of disability, in terms of progressive conditions later on in life. You know, that he was really this this... trying to pass, so hard, you know? And really just, in fear of his changing body and his changing mind. I think that was another, you know, way of depicting disability, as this kind of progressive nature of certain disabilities and illnesses and...

ZACK: [unintelligible][50:53]

ALICE: [unintelligible][50:55]

ANDREW: Someone from the hashtag calls out an episode from The Next Generation called, uh, "Ethics"?

ZACK: That's the one with Worf.

ALICE: That's the, that's the one about Worf, that we just talked about.

ANDREW: Ah, yeah... and by the way, I think I'm not as against the "Ethics" message, maybe, as the writer... but I think where that whole thing broke down, in the end, was that their only way that they could figure to get through the story was to have, uh, the reckless doctor, the reckless visiting doctor, come up with a miracle cure...

ALICE: Mmm-hmm.

ANDREW: ...so I didn't mind the discussion as much, and didn't mind Worf having the position that he had, because he is a Klingon, and it seemed consistent with that culture. Um, and everybody else was against it, but then, the only way that they figured out to get out of it... there's just no way he could continue to be disabled on that show.

ALICE: Right.

ANDREW: Like, that was just a non-starter, so of course, the only way out is for a miracle cure.

ALICE: The deus ex...

ANDREW: That bummed me out, just because it's so...

ALICE: That's a deus ex machina!

ANDREW: Yeah...

ALICE: And I think another thing that Day had texted... So because of the episode "Ethics," the one about Worf and suicide, we get a pretty decent Deep Space 9 disability episode called "Malora," and I'd love...

ZACK: Malora...

ALICE: ...for us to talk about that, when we talk about Deep Space 9.

ANDREW & ERIN (together): Yeah...

ERIN: ...definitely.

ANDREW: Possibly.

ALICE: I wanna talk about it!

ERIN: Yeah, um, we can, um, I just wanted to mention, briefly, the episode "The Loss," with, um, with...

ALICE: Troi.

ERIN & ALICE together: Troi.

ERIN: She loses her empath abilities for the episode. So what did you think about that episode... Alice? Or Andrew?

ALICE: I do remember she has a real sense of loss, she's going through a lot of mourning, and everything feels different, for her...

ERIN: Mmm-hmm.

ALICE: ...without her empathic ability... so she is like one of those newly-disabled kind of people, and again, like, uh, the other episode, you get a deus ex machina where she gets her abilities back. And it was just a temporary injury-slash-incident. But she has a taste of what life is like without her empathic abilities, and it's definitely a struggle. I mean, they're mostly, you know, if it lasted for, like, let's say, a year... how would she adapt, right? Would she adapt...

ERIN: Yeah.

ALICE: ...would she thrive and develop new skills, right? We'll never know that, but..

ANDREW: Yeah.

ALICE: ...it just did show, kinda, the traumatic aspect... which is, I think, very real for a lot of people who become injured, and disabled, you know, through a lot of, uh, horrible circumstances.

ANDREW: Or, wasn't there a big thing of, of, she basically saying, "Oh, I can't be a counselor anymore!" and the others saying, "You know, it was kind of cool that you could kinda semi-read people's emotions, but that's not a requirement to be a counselor. There are other counselors in Starfleet that are not Betazoids... so, you know... Get real!"

ALICE: Yeah, and I think, uh, isn't she trying to continue working, and, you know, she struggled but she ended up still being able to help people, while without her empathic abilities. So I think there were some examples of where she did figure out that there are ways to still do your job, and, you know, without your abilities.

ZACK: Leaving aside the fact that the counselors in our current 21st century are not empathic... hopefully.

ALICE: I mean, if that's your thing, right?

ZACK: Yes!

ALICE: ...I don't want my couns-...

ANDREW: No, I'm not sure, I've got to think about that...

ALICE: They don't want to know what I'm thinking... trust me. Not only do I not want them in there, but... but, they would be scared.

ERIN: [55:51] All right, on that note, we should talk about Deep Space 9, and we can start with the episode Mellora? So, anyone can just jump in. And say... Alice?

ALICE: Yeah, I've got something...

DAY: Me?

ALICE: ..Yeah, Day, go ahead!

DAY: So... interesting. Because they because they didn't really tackle disability directly, and yet at the same time, they used the excuse of a low-gravity alien. But what's kind of interesting is, the idea was that this character would use a wheelchair. What's-what's neat is that Dax... the Tril, but it was too expensive to do that, and so they put it off and did not include that, which is [unintelligible][57:01] an episode.

ANDREW: Expensive? In Star Trek?

ALICE: What was expensive?

ZACK: In the budget sense, right?

ANDREW: ...I mean, what does that even mean?

DAY: Right. Lo- [Unintelligible][57:18] as a permanent part of the crew. In the episode, they have her up on wires, because, er, uh, her quarters are low-gravity.

ANDREW: Right.

DAY: And, um, the other thing is, um, so she could operate, um, and then, it looks like an old piece of junk, um-and actually, it'd be a piece of junk compared to what we have, even! [Unintelligible][57:50] ...To show, which I thought was, to show just, what a way to make a twist from it, but it came from the character herself. She sent the plans to him .. to build her as being very independent, and, and, just as a callback to, um, Captain Pike and that horrible, like, blobby box with the BEEP BEEP BEEP, one button.

ANDREW: Yeah.

DAY: They actually originally wanted to use [Unintelligible][58:21] borrow the wheelchair that was used in The Next Generation. But it was at night, and the set wasn't accessible. So, they basically got the most stripped-down wheelchair that they could buy, um, out of a medical supply store. Yeah...

ALICE: Those are the worst.

DAY: ...kind of, where it came from. Um, but it's a fun episode. Um, she comes in, and they have this character that's very prickly, and "I'm all independent!" and "I don't have to do anything!" sort of a way, and because the idea was, um, was to create a disabled character who's accepted for who they are. [unintelligible][59:10] They molded the episode, and the best way to do [59:15] was to have the doctor find a, a, finger-quotes here, "cure" for the disability, which is a similar theme...

ANDREW: Yeah.

DAY: ... and then have the charact- [unintelligible][59:27] that's what was wanted. Like I said, this episode was written by a [unintelligible][59:35] Summers...

ZACK: Um, did...

DAY: ...wheelchair user.

ZACK: ...had character reject-you kind of cut off so I didn't catch the...

DAY: Was, um... I can't remember where I was.

ANDREW: Did she accept- did she go for the cure...

DAY: Yes!

ANDREW: ...or not?

ALICE: Possibly. It would...

DAY: Right! Because it would make it a choice, and have the character who is a wheelchair user who wrote it, intent in mind, [unintelligible][1:00:03] push back. Because who would believe this? Nobody would want that. And so the [unintelligible][1:00:12] three times after him, to try and make it work. And, to me, the idea is, you have to work really hard to make it believable for somebody to choose to remain disabled. And I'm like, wow, um...

ALICE: Yeah, I do remember there were some really, really interesting... the first time, you didn't really think about disability, as a culture. You know, um, her planet, because of the, um, low gravity, if she did get the cure, it meant that she could work, and live, and pursue, uh, her career, outside of her home planet. She meant-again, this is almost, you know, overlay these

things about assimilation, but, you know, she really wanted to go out. She's one of the few people in her planet, that went out of her planet, because of the gravity issues. And she's one of the few that made it, as an ensign. But, the choice was, if she had the cure, her body couldn't really revert back to a low gravity. So-

ANDREW: Yes.

ALICE: -if she wanted to be cured, and she could be cured, she could have a life of opportunities, which are rare, that she could never imagine. But it meant, they specifically said that, she couldn't go back to her home planet for an extended amount of time. She couldn't even, you know, have her own private time in her low-gravity unit, because her muscles wouldn't really, you know, switching back and forth would be too hard. So she made the tough choice, about leaving your culture, leaving your people and your way of life for, you know... So she decided to choose her people and her way of life.

ANDREW: So she...

ALICE: So that she [unintelligible][1:02:10]

ANDREW: ...that choice...

ALICE: Yeah.

ANDREW: Is that the choice she made on the show?

ALICE: Yeah.

ANDREW: Hideous.

ALICE: She totally [unintelligible][1:02:16] She had like multiple treatments, and it was, like, difficult, and he kept saying, you know, you have to, like, adjust to it. And the more she realized, I could do it, but it's at a cost of my identity, and in a lot of ways. I mean, she never said identity, but it's really about her identity as a whatever, um, species she is.

ANDREW: Right.

ALICE: ...And she needs that part of her, and I think she decide...

ANDREW: I've gotta watch it again.

DAY: Great way of saying "Fit in!" To make [unintelligible][1:02:54] I think... Alice nailed it. Um, because it's, um, you don't have to change, not, you know, not for somebody else, a man, not to fit [unintelligible][1:03:12] ... do it because it's what you want. And so it becomes her decision. And what's nice [unintelligible][1:03:22] where you see the person isn't being acted [unintelligible][1:03:25] ...is the one who is making [unintelligible][1:03:32]-ions.

ALICE: Yeah, and she has, she definitely has agency. And I did like how, they even mention how Deep Space 9 is a station, they had to build ramps, in anticipation of our arrival. And, you know Miles O'Brien was like, "Oh, man, now this station's not going to be perfect!" And, you know, they definitely, you know, struggled with that in terms of how to accommodate her. Because, I guess they haven't had someone who needed a wheelchair in centuries, and I think that was really interesting how not only by how, as Day mentioned, in the actual set of the show, is inaccessible, but the actual space station was ill-equipped for a new crew member, who needed it. And I think that's another aspect of accommodations that, you know, we don't often see that depicted in a show. So that was nice, but I think definitely made it most progressive, we see from the original, Next Generation, and now with Deep Space 9, and this seemed far more explicit about disability culture and identity, as something that someone claims, as something that they want for themselves, and that they're not, it's not... not a lesser choice.

ZACK: That's a great segue.

ERIN: [unintelligible][1:05:10]

ZACK: Sorry.

ERIN: Go ahead.

ZACK: We have a question from the... hashtag, from the hashtag, "How accessible are the vessels?", they want to know. They don't recall stairs on the Enterprise E, but they say that Janeway had stairs in her ready room.

ALICE: Aw, dammit!

ANDREW: What? In a room? ...Oh, yeah, I can see it, the sunken, like sunken living room type of deal.

ALICE: So seventies, guys.

ZACK: I have no comment... Voyager was the nineties.

ALICE: I know, I mean, sunken...

ZACK: Oh, sunken rooms?

ANDREW: It occurs to me that the, the Next Generation Enterprise had a lot of ramps. Like, on the bridge, there were levels, but they were ramped.

ALICE: Mmm-hmm.

ANDREW: On either side, so...

ALICE: Yeah, who knows how accessible, you know...

ZACK: I feel like, um, this is one area where area where I miss, maybe, since I haven't actually seen a lot of the episodes. But then again, I don't know, reading the script, reading the scripts is an interesting experience, because I feel like I get simultaneously more information and less. Because sometimes they are very detailed, and sometimes they, it's... an odd... an odd experience.

ALICE: [unintelligible][1:06:36]

ZACK: ...I have accessed this.... Sorry.

ALICE: Do they describe kind of, the layout, and things like that, that people who don't read the scripts would miss out on? Like, what kind of information are we missing out on, by not reading the scripts?

ZACK: Well... I think a lot of it is, a lot of the main sets and things are just kind of assumed, if you say "turbolift," or whatever, if you say "bridge," it's kind of assumed that folks filming will know what the set looks like. So there's not a lot of set description.

ALICE: Mmm-hmm.

ZACK: Um, except, like, maybe on unfamiliar landscapes or what have you. Um, planets...

ALICE: Well, I do have the idea...

ZACK: ...other places. The main... I don't know, I just, just, just think the area of accessing the show, as itself, this should be a topic of discussion.

ERIN: Mmm-hmm.

ZACK: If only because sometimes I feel like it's a little difficult for me as a blind fan...

ALICE: Mmm-hmm.

ZACK: ...to get a true sense of, uh...

ALICE: Are there video descriptions of Star Trek? I mean, audio descr-?

ZACK: Some, yeah, but it's not always easy to, audio-video descriptions, whatever...

ALICE: Hmm.

ZACK: ...It's not always easy to get... I think that the UK, for whatever reason, seems to get more of them available, and there are places where you can watch episodes of it with descriptions, but I don't know where they get the content.

ALICE: Yeah, I mean maybe it's created, like crowdsourced, but I mean, that reminds me of a recent Twitter chat about, uh, Netflix and Daredevil, and how, you know, they really... when it first came out, they didn't even provide audio description about, you know, the show, which was... so ironic... but, you know, they did it later on after, they...

ZACK: I have to... The... my experience, I did have audio-described versions of the original feature films, but not much after that, until, ironically, the new, the new Star Trek film series has had description, has had audio description, which is a nice touch. But it's still not quite the same, I guess, as the experience of folks who can see.

ALICE: [unintelligible][1:09:16]

ZACK: ...and have seen... all of the shows.

ALICE: Yeah, I think [unintelligible][1:09:23] in the special effects, yeah, and the detail about costume and make-up, I don't know how much of that goes into audio description, but that does add a lot to the characters, and the plot. But, uh, I do say that, uh, Day mentioned that, on, uh,

The Next Generation, she doesn't remember ever seeing anyone take the stairs, so maybe there, that's one, that's one plus, but I do think as an actual disabled person, as a wheelchair user, who was human in 2015, I would say that, you know, I would love the transporter, and, you know, oh my god, that that would just solve so many problems for me right now so to me, that's always been one of the fun aspects of sci-fi in the series, is the ideas of the [unintelligible][1:10:22], like you have their tablets, the ray in the sick bay, medication and treatments and surgeries, seem to go without a hitch. So...

Zachary: Yeah!

ALICE: ...as a disabled person, like, I'm looking forward to that one day.

ERIN: I um, I wanted to start wrapping things up, but first, we have, um, we have a few questions, and um, from John or Jay G. Little on Twitter: What can we say about Data as an-as a neurotypical representation, or Seven of Nine on Voyager, or even Spock on The Original Series? They're a neuro-, neurotypical representation of disability.

ZACK: Excellent question.

ALICE: I truly think Data is someone who is neurodiverse, and obviously superior in terms of his abilities, and I find interesting how he tries to emulate human behavior, human etiquette, all [unintelligible][1:11:53] little social aspects and social cues. So that to me really says a lot about, you know, neurodiversity, and people on the spectrum who are really observant and really cognizant that they seem odd, or that they don't get the humor or the irony. And he's constantly trying to figure out these little subtle differences, so to me, definitely Data makes, you know, it's very clear that Data and Seven of Nine, you know, are both kinda perplexed by human communication and human culture, and you can definitely see that as a metaphor for neurotypical people as human behavior, human verbal social behavior as, neurotypical people with enhanced, or... different neural nets, like Seven of Nine and Data, as neurodiverse.

ANDREW: Yeah, you know, the thing about Data is, I love Data. He's one of, uh, my very favorite characters of Trek. But, in thinking about Data and Spock, for instance, they both have

some relation, you could say, to neural...autistic people. Uh, but Spock, interestingly is, he's aware, too, of his difference. Um, and he's not always comfortable with it, but he does have a bit of a more, more of a pride in who he is, and, and is not trying to be more human. Data is like a puppy dog. He wants to be like everyone else SO badly, whatever that means, since he has no emotions, but you know? He wants, quote-unquote to be. And you know, I think maybe there's something there, I'm sure it wasn't conscious, but that's okay, um, you know, it's a [unintelligible][1:14:02] to you, do you want to fit in, is that your big priority, or is it a lesser priority? I think Spock, it was clearly a lesser priority, Data it seemed to be pretty high, and that's just interesting. And, and, both have, both are characters that people absolutely adore, so it's not like, it's not like Spock was viewed by the public as abrasive or anything, you know? We love him. But they had two different approaches.

ALICE: Yeah.

ANDREW: And I don't know...

ERIN: I think...

ANDREW: ...about Seven Of Nine, so I can't comment.

ERIN: I think, um, clearly, Spock represented a different race, rather than disability, whereas, um, Data, I felt he was more, um, geared towards disability. And even though my favorite that is a representation of disability is Odo from Deep Space 9...

ALICE: Odo!

ERIN: ...okay, I love him, I think he was the best representation of disability, without the show explicitly saying he is disabled.

ANDREW: Who? I'm sorry.

ALICE: Odo...

ANDREW: Oh! Odo!

ALICE: ...the changeling...

ANDREW: God, I love him.

ALICE: I totally agree, Erin!

ERIN: But, um, I think, you know, for me the way he was treated on the show, the way he feels like an outsider, to me, really connected to that...

ALICE: Yeah...

ERIN: ...way of thinking.

ALICE: ... I do remember, I think, such fear that people had, of changelings, and how he was experimented on, you know, before he was... you know, in his earlier form? When he was on the station. And, you know, that says a lot about, you know, different ways of being, and that's so threatening to a lot of people. And they're using the difference between solid people and, you know, changelings who did really... it's really disruptive, the thought that a creature can be any form, especially people like us, solid humanoids. So I thought that was a really great kind of example of difference. Really, not difference, but me looking at it from a disability perspective, and...

ERIN: And, um.

ALICE: Go ahead.

ERIN: Did you, can you read what Day posted, if you can?

ALICE: Yeah. Day's comment is that one of the key points about science fiction is that it tends to go in two directions: either toward dystopian, like Hunger Games, and Divergence, or strive towards the other end, which Rodenberry said, was what he was looking for, a better future. In a dystopia, we know what happens to people with disabilities, yeah, they don't usually survive, or are monsters. So when thinking of Star Trek as a positive future, what does it say about people with disabilities? And in answer to the previous question, I would argue that, no, Data is not neurodiverse, he is a robot. And, uh, in rela-

ANDREW: Owned!

ALICE: So I think we'll have to agree or disagree. And on, uh, Seven of Nine, Day says, I think a good argument can be made that, now that, now after the Borg interventions, she can no longer

think like other people. Of course, then one could argue that she has brain damage instead, and at the end of the day, isn't about the technology, or the world and environment, it's about the people and how we're connected. And yes, that includes us, people with disabilities, too. So that was from Day.

ERIN: Well, that was a great comment. I was just going to say, I think it's a bit tricky to compare Data to, um, you know, somebody with autism, or is neuro-, neuro-divergent. Because, what she said, Data is a robot, you know? He has no emotions. But somebody with a disability has emotions. So I think it's important to, uh, differentiate...

ALICE: But doesn't he have that emotion chip? I mean there's a lot...

ERIN: [unintelligible][1:19:38] Eventually, yeah.

ALICE: A lot is not known about Data. He is a unique creation, so it's not like he's a Roomba.

ANDREW: I agree with Day that...

ALICE: He's a little more than a Roomba!

ANDREW: ...yes. I do agree in a sense, that it can be tricky to, you know, take the robot guy and say, "Oh, they're like autistic people."

ALICE: Yeah.

ANDREW: But I think Data, as a character, is more than a robot, and a lot of what they explore with is, "What does it even mean, 'to be a person'?" and what does it even mean to be, "Well, you're a person but you're not a person!" And...

ERIN: Right.

ANDREW: ...that alone connects him...

ALICE: And I don't...

ANDREW: ...to disability themes.

ALICE: I want to make sure I don't, I'm not comparing, I'm not saying, "People on the spectrum are like Data," I'm going to say, it's an example of neurodiversity. [unintelligible][1:20:45]...

ERIN: Right.

ALICE: ...means of thinking...

ANDREW: Right.

ALICE: ...how people are wired. Not to say I want to get autistic people upset at me, I'm not saying that at all.

ANDREW: No, I'm not saying any of us really are, but I mean...

ALICE: Yeah, I just wanted to make sure.

ANDREW: It's a possibility that floats out there when we start talking about it.

ALICE: Yep.

ANDREW: There are probably a lot of viewers who would make that kind of glib connection, just because they, you know, that seems like that, voila! But, you know..

ALICE: Yeah.

ANDREW: I think there are similarities in, of the issues. But, yeah... anyway.

ZACK: We have one question from the audience, if you will, about why...

ERIN: Yeah, go ahead.

ZACK: ...about why we like Star Trek, so much. Um, it's, frankly, it's optimistic, and it's... it's fun. And you know, there is a certain amount of, you know, genuine escapism in it, and I think I like it a lot for that, and for the hope, especially, that in contrast to what Day says about dystopian science fiction.

ERIN: Mmm-hmm.

ZACK: Um, and... I mean, it's, it's... it tries very hard to be progressive and, uh, inclusive and so forth. It doesn't, as we've seen, doesn't always, but I think it does a pretty darn good job, all things considered. And that's why I like it.

ERIN: Yes. And Alice, why do you like Trek so much?

ALICE: Um, I do think that, you know, it's not to say it's a rosy, you know, happy, idealized world, but it, it does strive for something better, and I think that sounds hokey, but that's

something, you know, I think I really enjoy this idea, like standing on notions of diversity and difference, and...

ERIN: Right.

ALICE: ...you know, being open to different cultures, I think that's, again, you can really push and think about all types of people in that sense, so... And again, I like the idea, what are... how are people going to live differently? And again, the gadgets! The tech. I mean, I think we've seen there have been a lot of instances where things that were featured on the show are possible now. I mean, you know, so that's what's exciting, too, just different imaginings of how we're gonna live, and the different kinds of, um, things that we'll use to make our lives better.

ERIN: Right. Yeah, I think... I love Trek, for much of the same reason. I think it strives to better society. There's a message. The show has a message, but it also has a purpose, and that is, er, um, create for society, a vision of the future that recognizes diversity, and accepts diversity. So that's why I love Trek so much. And I, um...

ALICE: Can, can I read what Day wrote?

ErRIN: Yes, sure.

ALICE: Sorry about that, I just want to make sure I include her comments before we wrap up. So, Day said, "I love Trek because in it... because it, in many ways, epitomizes what is best in science fiction. Science fiction has been, and still is, a way to explore issues we cannot talk about today. We reframe them into a time far into the future. Science fiction addresses things like race and personhood, like Andrew mentioned. We're fighting for our lives to be seen, as people with disabilities, today, when they can gain their traction when it comes to arguing with emphasis. But an episode with Data, and personhood, and the value of unique individualness, and suddenly what we say makes sense. Science fiction has championed civil rights, women's rights, and has talked about unique families, and tolerance, and societal responsibility. Star Trek gives us the best of [unintelligible][1:25:57], I hope as it continues, in the future, there will be a

place for more visible, or, more visible place, for people with disabilities..." Well, that was a great comment by Day.

ANDREW: Beautiful.

ERIN: Definitely, yeah. That's great.

ANDREW: I would echo what everybody has said...

ERIN: Yes.

ANDREW: ...in the larger sense, but I do want to make a pitch, that what got me in was the original series is, certain relationships in Star Trek, that are just so compelling, and best is the three key characters in the original series: Kirk, Spock, and McCoy. And there's really nothing like that relationship.

ERIN: No.

ANDREW: And, it... I mean, the other series really don't relate to it in that sense, but, um, they set up their own relationships. That one is so amazing that, you know, it's what hooked me into the whole... whole franchise.

[unintelligible/feedback squeal][1:27:03] ...whoops.

ERIN: So... yeah. And I... I think that's why the original series, for me, captured the best characters on the show. I thought that was its main, strong point, of the original series, is that the characters are lovable... and everyone loves Spock, and I don't think any character in any of the series comes close to [unintelligible][1:27:44], to a character like Spock, you know?

ANDREW: Mmm-hmm.

ERIN: To me, he was the best of Trek. So, um, before we end, I want to make sure that everyone knows where we can find all of you. So, Alice, if you want, can you start and say where people can find you online?

ALICE: Yeah, thanks... uh, so I'm at, on Twitter, SFdirewolf, that's d-i-r-e-w-o-l-f, and there, again, is a hat tip or nod toward my love of another show, Game of Thrones, and I usually live-tweet that every Sunday night, and if you'd also want to find me on the...

ZACK: So, like which House are we talking about? Sorry, I had to ask!

ALICE: Yeah, well, we should connect... I'm also at the Disability Ability Project dot com.

ERIN: Nice. And, uh, Andrew? Where can people find, find you, online?

ANDREW: Okay, well, um, I'm "at Andrew Pulrang," that's P-U-L-R-A-N-G, on Twitter, and my website is Disability Thinking. And instead of reading you the address, you can just type "disability thinking" into Google and you will find it...

ERIN: Okay.

ANDREW: ...and it's a blog where I write most, pretty much daily, whatever I'm thinking of, relating to disability issues and stuff, and I also have a podcast called Disability dot TV, where I talk about disability on television... and you can get to that through my blog.

ERIN: Okay, awesome. And, um, Zack? Where can people find you, on Twitter?

ZACK: I am at Z, as in Zulu, Kline, K-L-I-N-E, and I pretty much tweet about whatever I'm interested at the moment, and it could be games, it could be disability, it could be tech, it could be a mix of all three. So yeah, follow me if you feel like it.

ERIN: Awesome. And um, you can find Day at, um, "D-A-Y, Day... Al-Mohamed," and, um, I'm having a hard time seeing, Alice, can you, uh, spell it out for me?

ALICE: Yeah, so it's Day, D-A-Y-A-L M-O-H-A-M-E-D dot com, and you can also tweet Day at "at D-A-Y-A-L M-O-H-A-M-E-D," Day Al-Mohamed.

ERIN: Thank you. So, uh, thank you, everyone for being on the show. Uh, this was my first...

DAY: Hello!

ERIN: ...this was my first...

DAY: [unintelligible][1:31:23]

ERIN: ...live panel, so I think, um, next time I'll know a little bit better how to, uh, run things. But it was a lot of fun, so thank you everyone, for coming on...

ANDREW: Thank you!

ERIN: ... [unintelligible][1:31:42]thank you and...

ZACK: Thank you for having us!

DAY: It was a lot of fun.

ERIN: Yes, it was... awesome.

ALICE: Even with all the [unintelligible][1:31:50] You know the law of [unintelligible][1:31:52]

ANDREW: Yes!

ALICE: Yeah!

ZACK: No thanks to you...

ANDREW: Bye, everybody.

ALICE: Bye, you guys.

ERIN: Bye...

ANDREW: Bye-bye!

ERIN: ... and, everyone can find me at "at Geeky Gimp" on Twitter, or at Geeky Gimp dot com.

So thank you, everyone. Take care!

DAY: Bye!

ERIN: Bye! Thank you.

(outro)

ERIN: Thank you for listening to "The Geeky Gimp Presents." I hope you enjoyed the podcast. If you have any questions, or comments, you can email me, or find me on Twitter, at Geeky Gimp.

Thank you, bye!