

Ep.22 - Why the YES Vote Matters – An IATSE Member Tells Her Story - Transcript

FYI: Timestamps listed here are not correct, but know that all of the content from the interview is here.

02:46

For a lot of people what we do it's a lot of people's dreams. And when there's a dream, there's a vulnerability and that vulnerability can be exploited as the only way I can explain how extreme this business is and why they get away with what they get away with and why it's as intense as it is because it's a workplace where people's dreams are coming true on the one hand, so it's like, well, do you want this dream or not? If we don't stand up now, if we don't vote yes for a strike authorization now and then go back to the negotiating table with that I think we will hurt generations to come. But right now it seems we have this growing movement to finally stand up and say, No, but we will strike now because it has to go in the other direction. And not only that, at a time when it's harder and more physically uncomfortable to work after COVID working these huge long days and masks, we can't even see each other's faces, you know, and it's harder and we're putting our health at risk. So things shouldn't just get back to the way they used to be. They should be better.

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Whether you're an actor, creator, butcher, baker, or candlestick maker, if you believe the creatives can save the world, then you're in the right place. Hi, I'm Brian Patacca. In this is Brian Breaks Character, where we slay the suffering artists myths so you can attract the right attention. Get out of your own way and become so aligned with your spiritual purpose that abundance in all its glorious forms finds you. Each episode will go behind the scenes with people who proudly walk the path of least taken inspiring activists, artists, creative folks, plus working actors and solopreneurs who will offer down and dirty advice and lots of laughs all while sharing how to bring home the bacon and make a living and a life in a creative field. Brian Breaks character is your new favorite. Listen, if you're done suffering for your art in second guessing every step of your yellow brick road. The International Alliance for theatrical stage employees just authorized a strike. Now if you don't know anything about this, let me give you a little bit of insight before you meet today's guest. So I IATSE is the union that represents the crew members on any set. So if you think about If that union goes on strike, that means production halts. Nothing gets to happen, a little different than the writer strike, which we had a few years ago, where they could continue to produce film and TV because they could pull out older scripts, right. But when you don't have the crew, you don't have nothing. So today's guest is Heather Fink. Now she is a director, and she's an IATSE member. So she knows both sides of this conversation. She's a sound technician on many big time sets, Marvel all kinds of fancy stuff. And what I love about our conversation today is that you get to hear not only what this union is trying to do to protect its members, but also what it's like to be a person responding to the fact that they're having too long of work days, and having days and they don't get to stop for lunch, or just asking for a time to sit down and get off their feet for a few minutes. Heather pours her heart out in explaining who she is being as an artist, and how it shows up in the way that she does her work both as a film director, and as a sound technician. Now, I think this is so vital for my listeners for a few reasons. One is that in case it isn't clear to you, this has been making front page news, and they just authorize the strike on Monday.

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Now they don't have to strike. But the authorization allows them to use a strike as a way to bargain for what they think their members deserve. Let's get into this conversation because I know you're going to fall in love

with Heather and it'll add a whole new context to understanding what this whole thing without is about. Let's get started. I am so grateful today to have Heather Fink with us. First of all, Heather, welcome to the show. Thank you for being here.

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Thank you happy to be here and talk with you. And we're recording

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this episode before the vote has happened. So this is gonna have some perspective to it as we're talking through the conversation today. But I said I'm gonna play the real nervous today because this is such a vital issue in our business. And as someone who was an actor understands actors worked with actors has been on hundreds and hundreds of sets. I want to really get to the heart of what is going on Heather and I think before we even go to like, let's talk about what's happening. I'd love for you just to share a little bit more about yourself in terms of where you see yourself in the business. And what led you to, I don't know being so empowered around this issue right now. Can you share a little bit of that?

07:07

Sure. Happy to I was a filmmaker before I joined I IATSE. Of course, I was a director first before I did sound and I am someone who never came from these this industry. I never understood it. I was actually more of in front of the camera myself. At first, I was a comedian and performer in New York City, I started making funny videos on my own in high school. I'm 40. Now so high school for me was the 90s when in college, I had my own comedy group. And that was just always my passion. So I always had a day job, had a lot of crazy day jobs, everything from you know, I was wanting to politics. So I was once like a senate intern to head of PR for a gay porn company. So I had a lot of different day jobs, some in tech, and my passion was just always in creating my stories, you know, through a comedy lens. And I really always wanted to direct films. But finally, in 2008, when there was an economic crash, there were no more jobs, I went to NYU grad film program. As a director, I stopped performing, but I still needed a day job. And I was attracted to the sound department because it is the best paying department below the line, which we can talk about the line because it's part of this conversation about IRC. And I liked that it was an integral part of the film crew, I liked how sound tell the story. And I liked how unlike the camera department where someone's always watching over your shoulder with sound, people have no idea what you're doing. They rarely understand. So that's how I got into it. I don't really have any follow ups on that, because I could talk about how I finally joined the union after that, yeah, I

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have a million things I want to talk about. But as a creative person who is funny, and that's the way you have your pathway into all of this. Of course, you don't have someone over your shoulder because there's a little bit

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of independence of having autonomy in your own voice weirdly to say that word voice, but in the sound department, but before I want to just poke for just a second about the moment when you said I'm now going to film school can you just give us just a little bit of like what brought that to be before we get too deep into the IATSE stuff.

09:07

I did stand up comedy in my 20s in New York, I always was doing it because I wanted to get hired to write or direct you know, that's what I was really passionate about. And I didn't really know how to get there. I was like making videos on my own. In the early days of YouTube I had my first viral video was in my space video. And I understood certain basic things but I didn't understand proper filmmaking until I started my path understanding filmmaking through the grad film school experience, which was really very indie especially I don't want you very indie film oriented. The moment I decided to go though, I just couldn't justify spending money on film school

when I had a day job. I was like a business type lady with a 10 to six jobs. So I'd done that for years before I joined film crews. So when there were no more jobs I mean, I just applied to the one film school to see if I got in and I did and I was like, Well, I guess this is the path My life is going to take. Without film school. I wouldn't have done so. You know, it was just in the nature of how film school works you in the first year everyone does everything you do the lights, the sound, the editing, you know you do everything. And first year I didn't even like sound it wasn't till second year that I liked it. And I got into it. So it was 11 years later of doing it. Yeah. But that's, I guess the next chapter of the story.

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So what you tapped into it was something that is like a certainly some kind of myth I've made up around anyone who is in crew who has ever worked on any film ever is and anybody who's not an actor, I've made up the story of maybe besides the director and the writer, right? I've made up the story that like, they have jobs like this is their job, because like when you're on a professional set, it feels like they have jobs, if it's like we're the weird actory people, ones, whatever. And then I'm just wondering how much of that as we get into this idea around, I think actors really buy into we have to sacrifice to work in this kind of career to have this kind of career. We must make sacrifices, which is all about what this podcast is about. We're not going to be doing that. However, I'm just curious, is that a mindset that comes to crew at all? Does that kind of land on like, there's gonna be sacrifices you make if you're going to be in this business?

11:03

Absolutely, of course. I mean, this whole business, we had our reckoning with me to the environment is prone to abuse and exploitation. I'm like, should I just launch into that? Watch and go for it. I mean, that's the problem is that for a lot of people what we do, it's a lot of people's dreams. And when there's a dream, there's a vulnerability and that vulnerability can be exploited as the only way it can explain how extreme this business is and why they get away with what they get away with and why it's as intense as it is because it's a workplace

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where people's dreams are coming true on the one hand, so it's like well, do you want this dream or not? Well, let's show me how much you want if

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you're transacting in more than just money here you're transacting in like my esteem about myself my choice to choose this as a career like do I believe in myself your worthiness? I totally hear what you're saying here Yeah,

12:02

yeah. And you sacrifice your body I mean you know just like an actor and I have great respect for actors as a reason I didn't want to be in front of the camera anymore because I find it painful it's it's painful what you guys put yourselves through the rejection you guys put yourselves through so in

12:20

talking all about you know the currency that we exchange isn't just money when it comes to any of the jobs or on a film set is also people stepping into their dreams and I think a lot of us might have as the actors might be like that guy over there in the overalls does not look like he's pursuing his dream right like we can be very easy to write that off or not imagine that about that role. I want to make everyone hear this right now you know we are going to get to how can we support and what we can do to help us as an audience but before we get there I want you to really tell us if I'm on set and I'm acting who around me is I and who's not your entire

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film crew everything from your camera department to your hair and makeup your wardrobe your sound people your lighting people just the entire film crew in LA your craft services people too in New York they're not but it's just it's a little different but your editors who aren't necessarily in the room the even the accountants who write the checks they are all IATSE

13:10

Hello most of the people they're the ones who are working the most they were the working or the athlete and then above the line which is something we're going to talk about a second is like director dp can be both like writers probably in that place as well would you write okay yeah, yeah, so it's so to me this is like the engine that this whole thing runs on?

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Is it Yes, absolutely. Right.

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And is that the perspective of the Union as well? Would you say?

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I mean of course Yeah, we're the engine that runs everything I think of Fight Club people aren't really talking about it but you know Fight Club or like the garbageman stop working I mean it's kind of like a weird thing to say Am I like garbage man but they are the infrastructure that makes our world work and you know the people who are garbage men are worthy of respect it's a you know, it's more technical it's different you know, it's a different kind of job but I should hope that I'm able to respect a garbage man's contribution to our world but either way it's different you know, I don't know garbage into someone's dream in the same way anyway, that's

14:05

sidebar. So right now the reckoning we're seeing is brought about by a contract is up and be this huge it stories Instagram account where we're socially sharing like basically horror stories of things that have had onset if you haven't checked out his Instagram account people like read it and you just hear like, I worked slept for two hours I drove in the dark I got no food like what do you think of like for actors who are listening when you've been on a shitty student film set, and you've like had the worst experience of your life except for it's like a real TV show on HBO and that is how people are being treated. That is kind of the experience people are having is that nailing it Heather my missing part of it.

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So here's the thing when I first saw that I stories account My first reaction I think a lot of it crew members, even non union crew members reaction upon reading it was well that's the way it is. That's the way it's always been and it took time it took like a pause for me to sit with that and realize that's not Normal it's not okay and I've known there was something extreme about my life you know I've been doing sound been part of film crew for 11 years now and I've known that there was something abnormal or weird or extreme that other people just didn't get about my lifestyle and about my work but it didn't strike me as something wrong until everyone started talking about it and then I started thinking about I mean I have all these medical ailments specifically from my work in film crew and I've missed out on a lot of things in my Oh No, I'm kidding. I've missed out on a lot of things I didn't want to miss out on

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and imagine like weddings, family reunions birthdays, things that you wish you could be there for that kind of stuff.

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Yes, absolutely. And it's aged me and the thing is because I also directed directed a ton of indie stuff and I continue to and I mean I can talk more to there because as a director, I thought my knowledge as a film crew would be more valued because I've been on huge sets huge movies and TV shows and I thought that the people who would hire me as a director would respect that knowledge because I've seen director after director work I've been on huge film sets I'm completely adjusted to working with huge actors with the biggest film crews I can walk on a set and just completely know my way around I've seen the expert film crews figure all

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these different things out I would think that information would be valued I would think that part of my resume would be valued but it has been treated as worthless by and large like I finally got to shadow an episode of a major television show with this great director and this producer there I was trying to you know like make myself look good I know very natural chill way but I said to this producer you know I think my time with film crew is a huge asset it makes me much better director and he just made some comment like well it's not like every film crew person can direct and I was just like, Okay, well I've directed a feature film I'm directed off but either way I was like he was so quick to shoot that down and it actually like I said this I stories made me open my eyes and realize a lot of things I just accepted as normal that I don't think it's normal that people look down on that or that I feel I should have to hide this hard work and this knowledge and expertise that I have I think it's a great asset and it's disturbing to me that it's looked down upon

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yeah and so to really hone in to the what this conversation is about, you know about the strike and what they're talking about specifically to really zero in on the hard work the working conditions let's just put that as a broad statement. Is there something that you can share is like you know, making a play on the spot here too much but like core story that's like the one that you're like this is the one that I always use this is the most clearly like this is when I wasn't treated well this is what I feel like happens too often.

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Well, I would say the hours are the biggest problem. And while we can't require them to not shoot past 12 hours, we can penalize and make it harder for them to shoot past a certain amount of hours. So there should be more penalties for night premiums for example because even if it's like you worked an eight hour day if it's an overnight it's punishing and you know, you actually always lose two days at least when you do an overnight when I say do an overnight for anyone who isn't aware it's when you start your day when the sun goes down and you work until it's the worst if

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I shot a commercial to start at 7pm and they're like we're gonna shoot from 7pm to like 4am I was like what like it was the first time I've ever heard that that was an option and I was like, Really? Wow, okay, that's the worst There's

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your thing. It was even worse when I was in New York and there's things I love about working in New York I love the film crews out there but when you're shooting in New York, they want to see New York it's not on stage as much so we would do more overnights and we'd be more outside on like I mean I when I said I was doing like superhero stuff like the superheroes always messing around on rooftops at night like And so we'd always be in these really dirty locations overnight and we do sometimes we'd start Monday with an overnight when I was working on that show and it was when I was working on that show that I was in such a brain fog that I just misunderstood the time at my friend's wedding was near where I live so I didn't have to like travel for it. So I'd

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worked overnight the night before and the next day I just messed up the reception time and the ceremony time and I'll never get to see my friends. Why do you get an A it really you know, I'm a career first over dating person. But like it says a lot to me that the one time I met my last boyfriend was when I took a day off of work.

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That's a universe talking moment if I heard one before,

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I know and I'm so desperate to stop working on these film crews. What were you said what's the biggest thing for me I have three major medical ailments and I'm an otherwise healthy 40 year old woman all directly related to how punishing physically punishing it is working on set and I had such an issue with my knees that I couldn't stand for more than a few minutes without pain. I went through physical therapy and it is better but it's still there. I have special foot inserts and all this stuff but it was directly related to standing too long. Just standing still too long. And just the way my legs are aligned like my bones are aligned that it was Putting this pressure on my knees and it really got better during COVID when I wasn't working for a few months, so

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wait. So question here. So someone might say, well, that's what you sign up for when you decide to be a sound person.

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Right? Yeah, you don't sign up for the mentality though. There's a mentality like a bullying mentality or guilty mentality about sitting. Since I had that knee injury, I try to sit as much as I can when I don't have to be on my feet and especially pa is because people say, Okay, IATSE does not include production assistance, pa is are all non union, but the way that you get treated like the way that we get treated will affect the how they get treated. And while our contract can't negotiate the ability for PhDs to sit, that larger conversation around this, I hope lasts longer and in more meaningful ways where we encourage each other to sit. And we encourage each other to use the bathroom because that's my second major medical ailment, which is I developed a condition called interstitial cystitis from holding my pee to long onset. Oh my gosh, I skaters get that too. From what I understand. geyser again, I injured myself, like last week, because I was a boom operator on this TV show. And you know, you have to like be there. The thing was, is, since I stories, I think people have been treating each other with a little more kindness on set. And this was a good crew, and everyone was kind, but there still is this, like, I'm really at the mercy of this. And if they call, you know, rolling, and I'm not there for the shot, like that's a problem. So I'm just gonna go and try and pee real quickly. And I also feel shame around the fact that I have to be

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Right, right. So here's a question that feels inside baseball that feels like I ought to be shaming other IATSE ease. In a way, it's a

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bit that Well, okay, I'll tell you who it is not the ADs. And it's not the director and producers and stuff. Those are people who get really mad at you for not being there or wasting their time. And the blame game comes from the top down. And there are absolutely abuse of sound mixers who I hate working for, and I don't want to work for, but feeding from the top down. Like if you're working in an environment that cares about your well being, then no one will feel so afraid that everyone's afraid to not be there when you're rolling. You know, everyone's afraid to go to the bathroom. People are afraid to sit down.

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What does the union asking for? Exactly? Do you know?

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I asked he hasn't had a strike since World War Two. And over this time, they have lost things contract after contract every time it's been negotiated. So you always hear old timers on set saying there used to be night premiums. You know, there used to be penalties for overnights and when there were those penalties. There were less overnights, okay. So, every time these negotiations happen, IRC loses more and loses more and loses more and now we're finally saying it's time to stop losing because if we don't stand up now if we don't vote yes for a strike authorization now and then go back to the negotiating table with that. I think we will hurt generations to come but right now it seems we have this growing movement to finally stand up and say no, but we will strike now because it has to go in the other direction. We have to penalize you know, not breaking for lunch, the meal penalties have to come back stronger, like they used to be or even stronger because we have to stop to eat. And not only that, at a time when it's harder and more physically uncomfortable to work after COVID are working these huge long days and masks. We can't even see each other's faces, you know, and it's harder and we're putting our health at risk. So things shouldn't just get back to the way they used to be. They should be better because why wouldn't we want that for ourselves and for our industry?

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Hey actors I'm gonna get really real with you for 90 seconds looking for representation is one of the most disempowering disenchanting and can we just say it dysfunctional parts of an acting career It feels like a one sided conversation everyone's got an opinion about what you should do and even your friends get weird when you ask them for referrals. So I want to shut down all of that noise. Join me for my free masterclass, make agents want you the three biggest lies that stop you from finding the right representation go to makeagentswantyou.com to register the class is on demand so you can watch it right away or schedule your own private viewing. And since you're a Brian Breakes Character listener, I just want to warn you right now in your big, beautiful, gorgeous heart, this class might piss you off, because you've been fed a lot of crap over the years that has actually been keeping you out of rooms, you're going to learn why a target list is the worst strategy you can use to find the right match. And agents aren't worried about your credits. half as much as you are in your reel is a giant waste of time and money. So before you go off and write a story about any of that I

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want you to get the juicy learning inside of this class snag your spot now and I will see you there makeagents wantyou.com or text agent gowls, one word 244222 and I'll send you an invite. Alright, let's get back to the show. And Heather one thing that is mind boggling to me and you can help me understand is like, even the possibility of being able to say, Oh no, we're gonna work for 12 hours or going to work through lunch is harming, damaging, like, great, they're gonna pay money for it, but like it's damaging to you as a human being. So what I'm curious about is like, when you're asking for these things, it almost feels like it breeds it. Well, we got money, so who cares, we can pay for it like we can, we'll take that we don't care about taking the money there. So is there some, like firmer rules that you're asking for, like, you can only do this many of them are like, it just feels like it's into the ethos of asking, like, we know that you're gonna want to do an overnight it feels almost like it's hard to ask for when we talk about

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it this way. Here's the thing, I can't say certain specifics of the contract negotiations because it is not allowed to be spoken about publicly, but I can give you a taste of what it's about. So yeah, it's for giving more penalties. And night premiums, having overtime start sooner, one big thing is we have to work a certain amount of hours within a certain timeframe in order to get health insurance, that could be changed, that's something that is on the table is how many hours we need to work to get health insurance. And that's really scary. Because I've worked so many hours, even if I took a month off to do something else, that I was able to get health insurance for the past few years, I just worked a lot. And in COVID, it went away. So we used to have a bank of ours that you know, say you have a slow month, you can use that bank of ours, my bank is completely gone. And I have to work even more like when there was a surge in January or February, I didn't want to be on set because I was frightened for my health. You know, if you have to work more hours to get health insurance, you have to be like I guess bullied into showing up on set more even when it's like a scary time and there's a viral pandemic going on. And in a time when you want your health insurance even more because it's so your health is so at risk.

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What you're saying is that because the union doesn't establish those hours, those hours are established by production. Is that how that works?

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No, they're established by the union contract of what I of these contract is with a AMPTP the the very contract that we're looking at right now, those kinds of things. Here's the thing, you know, there's certain things that you can address legally with a contract. And there's certain things you can't and there's two levels to this, the levels of addressing abusive behavior. That's stuff that's beyond a contract. But what it is in a contract is I mean, they're talking about how much inflation affects our fees and our and how much okay, well inflation is raised this much this year, the streamers are making this much now. That's one big thing about it is that streamers being called New Media is ridiculous, because it's not new media anymore. So our pay for those contracts can be less when they really are the major players out there

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like a streaming services treated the same way as like a random YouTube video production would be or something as that with that kind of fits into

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not exactly there's just different levels of contracts, different tears, like there's majors, there's new media, there's tears. And it seems that places like Netflix are the king of the content world, they have the biggest budgets, they're making so much money right now. So they have so much money and look COVID popped up and they suddenly had extra budget to handle the testing and the masks. So it seems like when there's push comes to shove, they get the money that we say that that money needs to be spent on the crew that are sacrificing their lives, their bodies, their health, their wellness, their families, their time with their children and their paths and their friends to show up. So pushes coming to shove and they need to reflect our value in numbers and in that contract.

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So in terms of like if let's pretend I was sitting here across from someone's from AMPTP. What would their argument be about

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like they're saying that we have it? Well, there are things that are good yet people are making their dreams come true. I will say in sound department I said my rate is high and my rate is higher than other departments. Okay, I can make good money if I punished myself if I destroy my bladder and my knees. I have other medical ailments related to it too. But we don't need to go into all that. But yeah, if I sacrificed my whole life and pet like what is it worth like how much money is at the end of the day worth it? We want to be recognized with higher rates and higher fees. And yeah, you know, you get to meet cool actors on set and sometimes fun, sparkly, great things happen. And sometimes they give us food trucks and yeah, like there's a lot of free food involved. But the free food thing happens because you don't have the option of leaving set. You don't have enough time or ability to even have the choice to eat anywhere else. So while it looks all glittery like oh look, you get all this food all day for free and people are bringing things to you. And like an ice cream truck. That is because you are held captive there because you cannot leave work.

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Yeah, it's like oh here Here you're saying is like we're like hopeful for fringe benefits to show up. When we are on set. It is not part of what's supposed to happen. And what you're saying now is like we need to have a certain guarantee like we're not going to break our back to be able to continue to keep doing this job. And do you find like, Are there people who are leaving the business because of what you're describing.

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There are so many people leaving the business because of these abusive conditions, especially during COVID when people had time to read evaluate their lives, especially with parents and especially the most vulnerable of us you know those of us who reevaluate our lives and maybe start over from square one I've had those moments where I'm like What did I do you know I went to college for all these things I have all this knowledge and ability and here I'm doing this job I didn't have to go to college for and it's not my dream it's not my heart necessarily and what can I do after this? Can I even go back to an office job like even for people who it's their dream like I have such a specialized skill set? What can I do that won't destroy my body? Should I be a professor you know, what do I do? How do I beat up a lot of people reevaluating because especially those who want to be with their kids or have families

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and it sounds like you know, the eye stories is probably just reaffirming like I made the right choice leaving was the right move for me right here. And let's pretend the strike happens. You're saying like I'm for the strike. I think it's a good idea. I was listen to NPR. And the guy from IA stories was on and he was saying, like, we don't want a strike to happen. But if it has to happen to get where we need to get that a strike has to happen. What will that impact mean, for the business and also for the normal us? Will we see a cut down and content Do you think

31:05

I think we will vote yes. And we will authorize a strike. I do not know if the strike will actually happen because there's a difference. we vote yes on the strike. Then we go back to the negotiating table with AMPTP and that may be enough. If it's not enough, then we will strike but I can't imagine it lasting long because it is not like Writers Guild, they cannot shoot on back scripts or anything like that. Like they can't shoot without us. And it's not just IATSE. I was really moved and I thought it was very meaningful. There was a letter that was written in writing that said the Teamsters, DGA WGA and SAG stand with us, they can't shoot anything and especially with the Teamsters, because they literally own the trucks and they will not run them and teamsters are the ones who drive the trucks, it's transportation. And I said to them, Hey, I saw the letter today. Thank you guys. Look, yeah, those trucks are locked with, we're with you. We won't, we won't, but they're with us. So it's really unlike a strike you've seen in this industry before, nothing will shoot everything will stop, they will not be able to afford it for more than a couple days. If anything like I would be surprised if there was a strike at all, because once we vote yes, that's incredibly meaningful. So hey, maybe there's a strike for a short amount of time, but they just can't afford to be without us. And I heard people talking about the threat of scabs. First of all, there is not a single person who wants to work in this business that wants to be blacklisted to never get to join the union. So that's ridiculous. And I heard someone say some rumor like oh, they're gonna get the kids at AFI to do it. It's like I went to film school, we're not qualified to do what is needed like we have a basic idea but like, it's a silly rumor, they cannot shoot without us. The industry does not want to lose that amount of money they've got to negotiate with us they've got to give us they've got to give they have to we are too powerful. So I just don't think people need to be getting ready to not work for a while I find that profoundly unrealistic. They are just

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going to see that we stand together and they have to negotiate with us if we get a no vote on that strike authorization it will be devastating we will have things taken from us that I don't know if we'll ever get back because I don't know if there's ever been such momentum to have a strike and without it it just shows what's the point of the Union if we're not willing Yeah, that's

33:23

a really powerful way to say this and do you find that there are other members that you know who are kind of sharing the exact same mindset as you do you know, anybody who's like we shouldn't do any people that members are like let's not strike what reasoning Do you hear behind those voices?

33:34

People are having conversations with each other and at first I felt I didn't want to strike either because I was like COVID just happened but then I realized how much it matters to show that we will and that there's no way like a no vote is the worst thing we can do with each other and we started talking like this on set with each other so when there's someone hesitant they we explain this and they get it pretty quickly so I would say everyone I've talked to is on board everyone

34:00

and wait wait so people are on set right now and this is all up in the air. Our sets weird.

34:05

sets are warmer and more loving than ever right now yesterday on the TV show I was working for the gaffers or the electricians the lighting people they rigged these signs on you know the the cranes like that you mount a big light on from outside that are like vote yes, strike authorization weaning there, everybody's really festive. They're wearing their IATSE pins and buttons and shirts, and the vibe on set is strength, unity, people having each other's backs in a meaningful way. And I do think that those who exhibit abusive behavior, it's being discouraged to be I think there's change happening that is beyond the contract and it's meaningful.

34:48

That is really beautiful to hear how they're ever question so just to help me as a novice when we're standing with you, does that mean that like when you go on strike we say we would go on to our authorization is your yeses are Yes, essentially

35:00

Yes, that's what that means correct?

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35:01

Right and so on set you know the director is with you as member of the DGA, whatever some imagine there is that, what was that face there, but that face me,

35:10

there are people who are not mindful of the people that are working for them and busting their asses for them. And so it depends on the person.

35:18

Got it. And so what I'm hearing also, this is like, what we're wanting is to systemically fix that that person is not going to have the power to do damage as often or as much as we are right now. They're gonna have a lot more penalties for being able to try to work us for this many hours or keep us on our feet for the song. And so you lit up when you talked about being a director who will have her own crew, what is your imagination of what that will? Do you want that to be like when you if you were to like say, here's the painting picture of what a great director's job is working with their crew, can you paint that picture for us,

35:47

I want to direct with a union I asked the crew so bad that I have this little like wished all someone gave me were you it's a Chinese traditional doll, and you'd color in one eye for your wish and you color on the other eye once it's happened or your goal. Now your wish. And that goal for me is to direct with the union crew, I just directed two different projects in August that were non union crews just because that's where I'm at. That's what I'm getting hired. For. At this point. I'm an indie film director. And it is my goal I want so badly to work with a union crew for so many reasons. One of them is that for so long, I have supported as a union crew member, the visions of director after director some great and some not so great, and brought my expertise and my knees and my, to their set. And I want more than anything to not just be supported by the quality of work that a union crew member can provide. But these are people who are experts, they have an expertise. And I would just be so happy to not have to worry when I'm directing with a non union crew, I do have to worry about the skill level of the other departments and how competent they are. And I'd love to just not worry about it. I'd love to just direct, I'd love to just direct, maybe hands off. That would be so luxurious to me, that would be like spa I mean, in a way because directing is hard enough, exhausting enough. But if I didn't have to think twice about how we're doing something, we're doing something incredibly complicated, but I knew I was in the hands of skilled technicians like the ones you can find on IATSE crews, I could do so much more everything would be better. I mean, it makes brings me a lot of joy to think about that day coming.

37:30

And what I love about the way you said to Heather is that's what you bring to the directors to the people you're trying to negotiate with is you bring that level of skill, that's the relaxed state that depth of spa like and whether it's because they know or you're wishing for them to know more often or recognize more often that they're in the hands of a real professional and artists who knows how to hold up their dream. So kind of almost full circle

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from the beginning is like your dream into doing great sound is when you're on a set that is respecting you, for lack of a better word here. Like in celebrating actually your talent is when you are feeling like you're living that dream or you're doing that thing that is part of what you want to do. And I think that's a really important piece at the end of the day. It wants there to be great content out in the world, and it wants to be that it's respected at a human level. So just to kind of sum up today to kind of put a parentheses or an underline around us today. For the people who are listening what is the best way, if they're a member of a union, if they're not a member? What's the best way that you know that they can support right now or show up for it?

38:28

I think everyone should follow the ay ay ay stories account it's ay ay ay ay underscore stories. It's not anything for profit, just follow it so you can read what people are going through and then all relevant links will be shared there. I know there's a petition being sent around that everyone can support. And I think for people who are in IRC who don't get to vote, a fundamental appreciation, respect and understanding of what people give, so that you can enjoy your Netflix or YouTube and I think something that people can bring to every industry they're in is the fact that I mean it's my opinion that you are incompetent, if you're abusive. If you can't do your job without abusing people that being a bully, you can't do your job because it's not necessary it's there's no there's no job I can think of where you need to be a bully to be competent and I hope people realize that and part of bullying is a lack of respect for someone's humanity for you know not respecting their meal breaks for not respecting their hours and I'll tell you I did shoot something recently that was indie. And we Our idea was to finish the scene by lunch and I lost track of time and the second I realized I lost track of time. I felt so horrible and apologetic. I didn't have an ad because it was so small. And I was like oh my god, I can't keep you waiting. I felt so bad and people should feel bad. They should be for that they should care people need to care about the crew and each other and the quality of life and to not feel I think a DS who are the ones who call you know when is lunch and all this stuff, they're bullying to their pressure, they have pressure from directors, producers, from people who live more comfortably to do things they don't want to do. And we shouldn't be putting people in the position where they have to make choices. Like give up seeing your children, or work in film.

40:19

I love what you just said, because I think what you're just saying is we want a more conscious industry. And I also just love with you that I want to just be forever, you're not competent at your job, if you have to be a bully is such a great, everyone, let's get bumper sticker. And remember that so we will link to the resources that Heather mentioned today. And also to Heather, if you want to follow her and get in touch with her. And Heather, I just want to thank you for giving up your time. Because right now, you know, we want to support in whatever way we can. And you know, when people are listening to this, we will know the outcome of the strike authorization, I'm sure even if that has happened, we're still gonna see more unfolding after that moment. And so this was just such a searing entry point to see what your personal experience has been like throughout this. And I think that's so helpful for us to know like what it is really like to be, you know, oh yeah, she put my microphone on me. I don't know much about her. And for the people who are listening, who aren't even actors,



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like what it means to do that job and the toll that it takes. So I really appreciate you being here today. And so thank you so much.

41:11

Thank you.

41:13

Oh, my goodness, thank you so much for tuning into Brian Breaks Character. Look, I know you have a lot of podcast to choose from. And a lot of different ways you can spend the time in your day and that you have spent it with me means the world to me, I poured my heart and soul into each of these episodes. So thank you so very much. If you haven't already done so please subscribe to the podcast on Apple. And that way you won't miss a single episode. And if you're feeling extra generous, go ahead and toss us a review. It means the world to me It can because it helps to boost the episode and gives me the chance to meet more creatives out there who are suffering and get them into action. And if you actually want to go a little deeper on this episode, or any of the episodes you've listened to, we posted the video of us recording this episode to my YouTube channel. It's uncut. It's unedited, it's a little more casual and a little more messy. So if you want to see those little spicy videos, head on over to my YouTube channel, and know that every Wednesday I will be delivering a new episode to you. And on Saturdays, the bonus episodes come out, we have a lot of great guests coming up and I cannot wait to share their brilliance with you. So thank you again, I am so grateful to be on this path with you to be on the planet with you at the same time. And whatever you believe your function is whatever purpose you are fulfilling on this day and in this moment, I hope that you feel the resolute peace of mind joy, celebration and alignment that I hope that this podcast can provide to you. So if I've noticed you along in your inspiration today, if it's pulling you a little bit closer to what you want to accomplish in the world, then I've done my job. If you know a friend or no one actor or creative who could use that kind of nudge, I hope you'll spread the word as well. Take good care of yourself. I'll see you soon. Wait, no, I won't see you but you'll hear me soon. Okay, you