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## **SEASON 2, EPISODE 4: “Left in the Dark”**

### **ACT 1**

**Grace Lee:** Welcome back to Viewers Like Us.

In this episode, I talk with filmmaker Jane M. Wagner about what happened with her debut feature documentary called *Break The Game* which was originally part of POV’s Season 37 on PBS.

Jane’s story is a cautionary tale for anyone navigating the crisis-filled waters of public media right now. Her film was originally slated to air in November 2024. But then she was told it would be moved to April 2025, because of the U.S. presidential election. Then in February 2025, right before the Congressional hearings about PBS funding, PBS ordered it removed from the schedule entirely.

*Break the Game* is back on the schedule to air Monday, June 30, 2025. Jane and I talk about what happened from her perspective — adding another layer to the “death by a thousand cuts” theme of this season.

As we prepare to publish this episode, we’re waiting to hear whether the United States Senate will join the House of Representatives, which voted on June 12, 2025 to “claw back” all previously allocated funding for PBS and NPR.

Regardless of what happens, I encourage you to watch *Break the Game* on POV and continue to support the independent voices on PBS...while you still can.

I also hope you’ll be inspired by how Jane’s making sure her film reaches and engages audiences directly, regardless of the setbacks she’s faced in airing it on PBS. Her approach to livestream it via Twitch, followed by an in-depth discussion with viewers, offers one alternative model for documentary filmmakers like us to connect with the public on our own terms.

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### **ACT 2**

**Grace:** Jane, thanks so much for talking with me for this. Can you just introduce yourself, tell us a little bit about yourself and how you got into filmmaking.

**Jane:** I am Jane M. Wagner and I'm a director, producer, and editor. I make documentaries about how technology affects our emotional and romantic lives.

My first film, *Break the Game*, follows a video game livestreamer — Narcissa Wright — as she attempts to be the fastest *Legend of Zelda* player in the world, all streaming it live on her Twitch channel.

**Jane:** The film really looks at where we find meaning and connection in our increasingly virtual lives.

**Grace:** Awesome. And for people who don't know what *Zelda* is, or Twitch, could you just briefly explain?

**Jane:** *The Legend of Zelda* is one of the most popular and most critically acclaimed video game franchises that you can play on Nintendo systems.

And Twitch is the biggest platform for video game livestreaming. So people livestream themselves to viewers as they play video games, but the platform's also expanded so you can really livestream yourself doing just about anything in front of a live chat.

**Grace:** Is this a world that you were in prior to making your film, or what's your connection to Twitch and gaming?

**Jane:** This whole movie actually came about because I couldn't beat a boss in an old N64 game. So I went to YouTube to get some tips and I stumbled across people doing something called 'speed running,' which is when you play a video game as fast as possible, often competing for world-record times, using all sorts of glitches and tricks. and it really blew my mind. Then I came across the protagonist in my film, Narcissa Wright, who I could tell from videos of her playing *Zelda* that she was like a cult figure in her community, really beloved. And it was about a month or so after she came out as a trans woman and she was just streaming her life, and being really open and vulnerable about where she was and creating community in her chat. I knew instantly that what I was watching was a documentary. It was a whole new world. It was so immersive, and it felt like the future of both relationships and our media in general.

**Grace:** I don't know how old you are exactly. You don't have to say...

**Jane:** I'm 37. I'm open with it.

**Grace:** Okay, great. YouTube, Twitch, where does public television figure into your world?

**Jane:** I grew up on PBS, I remember waking up early before my parents would've liked to and crawling into their bed and watching *Sesame Street*. My favorite VHS tape was a video where *Sesame Street* goes to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and that really struck me as a child, and I think really even inspired me to get a degree in art history.

*Ghost Writer*, that was my favorite show, just follows a bunch of kids in Fort Green as they solve mysteries. So PBS has been very formative for me and something I always really believed in.

I wouldn't say it was necessarily my first thought of where my film would end up. But when I found out that POV was really interested in the film it felt like an opportunity to bring in younger viewers and the next generation into all that PBS has to offer.

**Grace:** Great. And just out of curiosity like what, as an adult were you watching on PBS? Were you watching POV documentaries or...

**Jane:** To be honest, I have never really watched a documentary on the PBS platform. But I have watched many of those documentaries, either in festivals, or other events or scenarios.

**Grace:** Can you give some examples of titles of those films?

**Jane:** *Thank You for Playing* is one of my favorites. It's also a film that I made sure to watch as I embarked in my own journey of making a film about gaming.

*Minding the Gap* I saw at Sundance in 2018, I think. And that was an incredible experience. It felt. yeah, so young, so fresh, so relevant. And it was exciting to see that a film like that could end up on a platform like POV.

**Grace:** Yeah, *Minding the Gap* is a great film and it's so much festival acclaim. There was an interesting collaboration with Hulu, I believe. And then it was nominated for an Oscar

**Jane:** Seeing POV pick up films like those films that spoke to my experience made me really excited about bringing my film, *Break the Game*, to POV and to that audience.

**Grace:** I know your film premiered at Tribeca Film Festival in 2023, is that right?

**Jane:** That's right. I won a special jury mention for Best New Documentary Director.

**Grace:** Great. So following your successful festival run, when did you first hear from POV?

**Jane:** I think I first met with POV actually in November of 2022, at the Doc NYC Industry Roundtables. So I knew they were interested and aware of the project, and I think a few weeks before Tribeca, my producer and I had reached out to Chris White, updating them on the project and we were invited to submit

**Jane:** I remember over the summer, I want to say in August, I was invited to submit additional materials for Ed Com, which is a system of review of potential POV films.

**Grace:** Yeah. So for people who don't know what Ed Com is, it's part of the process by which POV selects its season of films, its slate of films. They convene a group of panelists that include independent filmmakers, many of whom, who've had films on POV, and also people from within the public broadcasting system, from stations or executives. And it's actually an amazing experience. I really have enjoyed the process of watching all these documentaries and then talking about them with this diverse group of people.

It's a way to ensure that an array of the public has seen these films and deemed them appropriate or inappropriate for public broadcast anyway.

**Grace:** So you went through that process?

**Jane:** That was over the summer of 2023, and then I found out the film was selected I believe in November of 2023. And that was really exciting. I was thrilled. I was excited to have all that POV has to offer beyond just a broadcast state, but, the level of impact, engagement, community screenings, additional guides: all of these resources were really important to me in getting the film out there to not only the core audience of gamers, queer folks, young people who spend their time on the internet, but also a broader audience.

I wanted people to talk about the film and to really think deeply about what it means to live an increasingly virtual life, to experience mental health challenges in these spaces and know where to find resources if you're struggling.

**Jane:** POV was the platform that could help me achieve both my distribution goals, but also my impact goals.

**Grace:** In terms of the engagement and community guides, you were working hand in hand with the staff to do that. How does that work?

**Jane:** There's a whole department that is concerned with engagement. We even set up a survey for people to take after they viewed the film. And I felt really included in that process and really heard and really just excited about the whole team's enthusiasm for creating these resources and sparking dialogue and conversation.

**Grace:** Yeah. I just want to say too, as someone who's had films on POV twice, most recently in 2020, that whole process of working on the materials and understanding that your film will have not just a release, but find the people that need to see it. It was really exciting.

**Grace:** Okay, so let's talk about, so you're chugging along, making the materials, talking with POV staff. We can't ignore what's happening in the outside world, politically in the United States.

**Grace:** There's a lot of news items happening about trans people. I wanna just understand from your perspective the climate in which you're preparing for this film to be broadcast?

**Jane:** Originally the film was supposed to be broadcast in November of 2024. And I found out, I can't remember exactly when, but because of the election, it was pushed back to April 7th, 2025, and I didn't really think too much of it. I was a little bummed out, because I really wanted to get the film out there as soon as possible following our Tribeca release,

**Grace:** Can you say, when you heard that the film would be postponed, and what was the date?

**Jane:** I found out on April 18th, 2024, that, because of a crowded election cycle and limited slots in the fall, the broadcast would be pushed to early 2025.

**Grace:** What was your reaction to getting that email?

**Jane:** I was frustrated because I was ready for the film to come out. It would already be more than a year after its festival premiere at Tribeca in June 2023. I imagined it was because they would be focusing on election coverage. I

didn't think it was a political decision in any way. Now I'm not sure if it's as straightforward as there being limited slots.

**Grace:** Well, also back in April 2024, nobody knew what the results would be of the election.

**Jane:** And also, honestly, I thought my film was immune in some ways to political events, because it was being premiered on a place like POV that had a real diversity of voices and opinions and communities represented in their films. And even as Trump was elected, there was an American Documentary gala in New York City and I went and I felt like everyone was really upset about the election results, but really felt like everyone was invigorated to continue with the work that PBS and POV and American Documentary does.

Even as Trump took office and every day I was reading headline after headline, I thought, this is terrible for the world and it probably will be bad for PBS, because historically, when Republicans are in power, PBS becomes a target. But I didn't think it would affect *my* film. One because it was on POV, in particular. And two, because I don't consider my film an overtly political film.

There are social themes and political themes in my film, but it's such an intimate and emotional, character-driven film. My protagonist has always seen her identity as a trans woman as not the main focus of the film. And it's not the first thing I would say my film is about. I'd say it's a film about living on the internet more than it's a trans story.

**Grace:** Can you just describe what happened to your film?

**Jane:** I was working with a POV editor to produce a cutdown of break the game for broadcast — so a shorter version that's 52 minutes, that fits into a broadcast slot.

I also was working with POV's communication team on a draft of a press release that was going to be published in early February.

**Jane:** I got a lot of emails about how urgent it was to give my input on the press release. And it felt like it was incoming, but nothing was really being published. But then, in February of 2025, I got an email, from the Vice President of External Affairs and I'm happy to read it

*Hi, Jane. Hope you're holding up well, given everything going on, I'm reaching out to give you an update on marketing plans for Break the Game. We met with PBS and they have requested that we lay low a little bit, at least until the dust settles and have asked that we hold the*

*press release and social posts about the broadcast. They, and we, do not want any of our films, including yours, to be used as political fodder*

**Grace:** The dust settling from what? Give us some context.

**Jane:** I imagined it had to do with Trump's inauguration and all of the executive orders that were being dispatched. But I really wasn't sure what that email meant, to be honest. It felt really vague. If it was about political fallout, I didn't really see how the dust was gonna settle anytime soon, or at least for four years. So I didn't know what it meant that my film might be used as political fodder. I really didn't understand the email. My worst thought was, *Oh, is this because my film has a trans protagonist?* I actually asked for a call for more clarification and to get some understanding about what that email actually meant.

**Grace:** Okay. And then what happened? Did you get a call?

**Jane:** A zoom was set up for me and my consulting producer, Carrie Weprin, with Chris White, executive producer of *POV*, and Erica Dilday, executive director of *POV*. I thought we were discussing publicity and promotion of the film and what that email meant, but just as soon as we got into the call, Chris and Erica revealed that the situation was much bigger. PBS had asked *POV* to pull the film from its April 7th broadcast state because of the political situation and the upcoming congressional hearings that PBS and NPR were called to testify for at the invitation of Marjorie Taylor Greene.

**Grace:** So just for whoever's listening, years into the future, the context was Marjorie Taylor Greene, a Republican congresswoman from Georgia, called a congressional hearing to talk about, I think she described it as "anti-American activities" in public broadcasting.

Anyway, so tell us, what was your reaction when you heard this, Jane?

**Jane:** I was shocked, because I didn't even know that was the topic of the meeting, I had a lot of feelings. I was personally upset, because that call was eight years to the day when I started principal photography on *Break the Game*, and I really had just been looking forward to coming to the end of my journey with the film. But mostly I was really existentially freaked out at the thought that the political landscape would affect what films would be programmed on a strand like *POV*.

No one was saying, you can't broadcast *Break the Game* for X, Y, Z reasons. I know there had been executive orders about 'DEI.' But if it's just 'DEI' to be a trans person, then we're in a much bigger problem.

And I thought it was wrong to capitulate, and I voiced that. I voiced my opinion that I thought that the Trump administration, no matter what was programmed by *POV* or by PBS, was coming for public broadcasting, and I would've preferred for the film to just be broadcast.

I learned on that call that taking *Break the Game's* place would be a Maya Lin documentary from about 30 years ago.

And I did voice on the call that who's to say that the Trump administration wouldn't just make fun of Maya Lynn? And Erica Dilday said, *I don't want them to come for someone I care about and I care about you.*

And I said I feel like I have a responsibility to speak truth to power, and given all the attacks on the trans community, I felt like the trans community could really use a film like this at this time, and that to not show it would be turning our backs on that community.

Throughout the call, Chris and Erica were really upset to share this news. At one point, Erica said that she was worried that there would be a time where they couldn't program films about Black people or women.

She also shared that another title, another *POV* film, called *Who I Am Not*, which is a film about intersex people was released but without promotion and that they didn't want that to be the case for *Break the Game*.

She also shared in the chat a link to a Chalkbeat article about the removal of videos about LGBTQ history on PBS.

So she definitely knew this was a bigger issue. But at the same time, when I voiced my concerns, Chris White did say, *PBS is our platform and we have to respect their decisions.*

And Erica suggested there was another way to fight that didn't include keeping *Break the Game's* broadcast schedule. I didn't know what that method would be, but it felt like an open shut case that *Break the Game* would not be aired April 7th. There were no plans for its release. And that they would take the temperature some at some point after the hearings.

**Grace:** So the reason that it was being pulled from the schedule was what?

**Jane:** The reason the film was being pulled from the schedule was because of its trans themes and fear of political backlash due to the upcoming congressional hearings in late March.

**Grace:** Political backlash to whom?

**Jane:** I don't know. I think they didn't want the film to be used as like a talking point by the Trump administration as to why PBS was biased. And I suppose like looking forward at how the hearings transpired, there was a huge focus on the fact that PBS programmed films about trans people.

**Jane:** I did say I couldn't speak for Narcissa. We'd been making this film, we knew it would come out. Narcissa has always been a talking point. Even months prior to the call, there was another YouTube hit piece about Narcissa that had over a million views, and I felt like it was important to release this film, to be a counterpoint to these videos that just attack Narcissa and garner a lot of really negative attention.

**Jane:** I said, I don't mind. I feel called to stand up to power and put me in. I'm ready to go.

**Grace:** What about Narcissa?

**Jane:** I did end up speaking to Narcissa after this call, because to me, if PBS and *POV* were self-censoring their content and self-censoring, censoring this film, I didn't know what else might be self-censored

**Jane:** And to me, it is a step toward propaganda if public television is taking its programming cues of what content it shows from the government, that's essentially propaganda. By pulling *Break the Game*, it was setting a really dangerous example that would chill speech at a time when we really need to protect our fourth estate.

But at the same time, I did want to make sure Narcissa was aware. And would stand behind me speaking out. So I called her and broke down what happened.

And she said, I'm all for you speaking out. I'm concerned by what's been taken down about the Stonewall riots. So she fully backed my decision to speak out, and I wouldn't have spoken out without her blessing.

And same with Alex Eastley, aka D-Gurl in the film. I asked what she thought about the situation, and she immediately, before I could even finish asking the question, said, we need to speak out. Who should I get in touch with? What should we do?

I admittedly did not loop back to *POV* to say, *Hey, I talked to Narcissa and Alex*, because to me it was an open and shut case.

When I heard Chris say, *PBS is our platform and we need to respect their decisions*, it felt like that was that.

And following the call, I did reach out to Chris and Erica over email just with a summary of the conversation. And I'll just read the email, because I think it explains a lot.

**Jane:** So I wrote:

*Hi, Erica and Chris. Thank you for speaking with me and Carrie on Monday. We wanted to follow up with a summary of our discussion to ensure we understood everything correctly.*

*POV will not broadcast Break the Game on April 7th due to PBS's upcoming congressional testimony scheduled for late March.*

*Given the transgender themes in the film, PBS is concerned about any political backlash.*

*Currently, there are no plans or dates scheduled for POV to broadcast or release the film.*

*Since no broadcast is currently scheduled, POV will expedite processing of the film's final payment. POV will also allow for filmmaker-organized Twitch screenings prior to the eventual public television broadcast. We can speak freely about the film and promote it as we see fit. Please let us know if we misunderstood anything or if you have any questions.*

*Best, Jane and Carrie.*

**Jane:** So Erica responded to that:

*Hi, Jane. Thanks for reaching back out and again, I'm so sorry about this. I know that it is upsetting, and we are also disappointed that we will be losing the broadcast slot.*

*What we have been told as of now is that no POV film will be airing on that date. All of the things you listed above are correct. I want to reiterate that I am happy to talk anything through with you and please feel free to reach out anytime.*

**Jane:** There was no talk to Alex and Narcissa and see what they say, and then we'll have another conversation. It felt very much decided, and my

conversation with Narcissa and Alex was more about how I wanted to respond to that decision and if I wanted it to be a public conversation or not. And I felt like it was important for Narcissa and Alex to have a voice in that decision.

**Grace:** After that email exchange, what happened?

**Jane:** I felt pretty sure that I wanted to speak out in some form or fashion, but I wasn't really sure what that would look like. These hearings were coming up and I didn't know what that would entail, or how that would shape the landscape at all.

I reached out to some of the supporters of *Break the Game*, on the institutional side. I reached out to mentors, filmmakers who I trusted, and I just had conversations. I had tons of conversations. Everyone was extremely alarmed that I spoke with. They were shocked that this would be happening to a PBS film — and a *POV* film especially.

But when I spoke to people on the institutional side, while they were personally alarmed, there was the sense of don't do anything. Don't speak out.

I never expected to be in this position in making this film. To me, the worst-case scenario was that there'd be bad YouTube comments or some negative posts about Narcissa on a Subreddit, which there were already so many of those, I never really was expecting to be put into this position of almost whistleblower or free speech activist.

As a first-time filmmaker, I didn't really know what to do and I was looking for advice. So I reached out to the institutions that supported *Break the Game* in the form of fellowships, labs, workshops — that type of thing.

Gatekeepers of the documentary world. supporters of filmmakers, documentarians, and people who've been at the center really, over the past few years of amplifying marginalized voices and standing up for diversity in our industry.

**Grace:** Were you trying to tell them that you wanted to speak out?

**Jane:** I told them that I was alarmed by what had happened, and it shook me, and I felt like it needed to be a matter of the public record, because it affected us as a community. As a community of documentary filmmakers, we needed to know how to respond and protect what we do.

But also I felt like it was something that the larger public needed to know, because just, in telling some of my friends about this, they said, surely, that's not something that PBS would do. They stand for viewers like us. Surely they would wanna defend their content.

**Grace:** What do you wish people had told you, like when you were on these calls?

**Jane:** I wanted people to be as fired up as I was and use their positions in the industry to gather a town hall or connect me to other filmmakers who were going through similar things and these conversations were really impacted by fear and uncertainty, instead of what I feel like is that spirit of activism that we celebrate in our protagonists of our films.

So I decided I would speak out publicly in the press. So then, my next goal was to find the best forum to break the story and ultimately, I was connected to a reporter at The Atlantic, Daniel Engber, and we talked off the record about what had happened, and I felt like I could trust him to tell this story properly.

At the same time, we wanted to use the moment in the press to bring attention to the larger issues of censorship, and to encourage action and to get people to watch the film. That's always been the goal. So at the same time, I reached out to a Twitch streamer named trihex, who I had actually been in conversation with in the past about doing a live stream of *Break the Game* on Twitch followed by an in-depth discussion. We decided to schedule a screening that would line up with the publication of the article.

**Grace:** I heard about it and went to the Twitch screening and it was innovative and opened up so many different avenues to think about this film and who it's reaching. What was your experience?

**Jane:** It really exceeded my expectations. I've seen my film over a hundred times, in a lot of different venues from film festivals to theatrical screenings, to college screenings, and this felt the most immersive and the most engaging.

I could actually see in real time the audience's reactions to every moment in the film, so I could see what was emotionally resonating, what parts of the film were funny, what parts were distressing.

**Jane:** There's really nothing better as a filmmaker than to see that your work hits in the way that you intended. We had bots in the chat. So these are just automated messages that encourage the viewers to reach out to PBS and ask them to stand up against censorship. And then we had a really in-depth discussion that went longer and more in detail than any Q&A I've ever

participated in. And then we opened it up to other Twitch streamers for a broader political discussion.

We had about I think, overall, 5,000 viewers, but I think throughout the duration of the film, it was around 600 concurrent viewers. And the viewership stayed in the one hundreds throughout the entire almost five-hour stream.

**Jane:** So it kind of also made me think a little bit differently about distribution goals as a documentary filmmaker, and that it's not necessarily how many people are viewing your film, but *how* they're watching the film and *how* they're engaging with it.

**Grace:** Yeah. It's so interesting to think about when you first started talking about this film you didn't make, a political film. But in the end, the conversations that are happening about it, around censorship, is political. I find that really fascinating.

**Jane:** It's not a film *about* censorship, freedom of speech, but now it *is*, because of what's happened to it. That's really interesting to see how a film can change based on world events.

**Grace:** So it's May and your broadcast is scheduled now for when, on *POV*?

**Jane:** After I spoke with the reporter from the Atlantic. He reached out to PBS and *POV* for comment, and prior to his reaching out, I let them know I had spoken to a reporter and they would be reaching out.

And after he reached out, I got an email saying that I had a new broadcast date of June 30th.

It's not that hard to connect the dots that it was after he reached out that I got a new broadcast date.

It felt to me that date was because PBS knew I had spoken out and knew that there would be some level of scrutiny and controversy over the polling of the film's broadcast date.

Getting that new broadcast date before the article went live to me felt like an invitation to be quiet.

The reporter actually asked, *Do you still wanna go ahead with this?* And I said, yes, because my speaking out was never about getting *Break the Game* a broadcast date, but was about the larger issues of self-censorship at PBS. It

was important to alert the public that this was happening and can continue to happen.

Making some noise can make a difference, and I hope that would be encouraging to people who are afraid, especially in this political climate.

**Grace:** Can you describe the reaction to the Atlantic article when it came out?

**Jane:** I felt like the reaction to the Atlantic article was what I would've hoped — that it was sparking dialogue in the documentary community. People were reposting it on social media. I went to a party at a friend in the documentary world's house, a few days after the article came out, and everyone who was there had read the article and had been thinking about what the article brought up, and they were concerned. So I felt like I had done the right thing.

**Grace:** Did you hear from anyone from within the PBS system?

**Jane:** I was told shortly after the article went live that the communication department would be in touch about press and promotion, but there was never any reference to the article. I never heard anything about the article from anyone at PBS or POV.

**Grace:** What are your feelings about June 30th and the release: Do you have thoughts about or anticipate what might happen or not happen?

**Jane:** I'm concerned that the film will be buried and it will air, in some way, but without any of what I had hoped for when I chose POV as the home for my film.

**Grace:** That's sad.

**Jane:** But I guess, to speak optimistically, I've learned that I can do a lot on my own. I can get the film out there, even as one person. I can have more Twitch screenings. The film is available on Vimeo, and I am not done speaking about what happened and trying to get the film to audiences that want to see it.

**Jane:** This whole experience has actually invigorated me to think about new approaches to distribution and new ways for filmmakers to have control over their film, but still get the film out there and to engage with audiences. And that Twitch experience has really been the key to unlocking that thinking, and it's inspired me to push towards creating a 'microcinema' on Twitch for other films that can't find a home — either they've been censored or are considered 'too political' for mainstream outlets.

I'm excited to bring the films directly to audiences and bypass those traditional gatekeepers that don't seem to be standing up for our rights to tell our stories.

**Grace:** Yeah, I love the idea of the Twitch microcinema. It feels really fresh and also something that you can engage with other filmmakers who are in frustrating situations these days. And that's everybody, right?

**Jane:** It really is. And I've had, even since the article in the Atlanta came out, I've had filmmakers reach out to me, because they're worried about similar things happening to their films.

**Grace:** What do you see your future with public media? Is public media something that, right now, there's so many campaigns about trying to save public media. Where do you sit in all of this?

**Jane:** If *Break the Game* hadn't been self-censored and I was seeing these calls to stand up for public media, I feel like I would've been at the front lines, because I've always believed in public media. But I've found it challenging to direct my attention toward that fight, because from where I see it, public media is *not* doing what it set out to do, which is to educate and inspire *all* Americans.

It's turning its back on trans communities. And not standing for our freedom of speech, which is a very American value and is central to public media as a whole.

I don't understand PBS's strategy at all in not engaging US independent filmmakers on the front lines of everything and we found a home in public television. We want to protect it. And we haven't been engaged. We've been left in the dark. My film was deleted from the PBS website without any heads up or knowledge, and, I don't know if you wanna get into it, but learning guides and resources have been removed from PBS LearningMedia website without any communication with filmmakers. So I have a lot of complicated feelings answering your question.

**Grace:** I think even just two days ago, three days ago, I learned that World Channel is shutting down all of its independent, all of its documentary strands. It just feels — it's not valued, like independent voices, independent documentaries. So...

**Jane:** Yeah, and there's just been a lack of transparency and accountability, to learn about World Channel being shut down through like a pretty milquetoast Instagram post is very upsetting. It requires a larger announcement, a larger fight, more communication, with everyone who helped build the channel and bring these stories to the public. I don't see the fight.

**Grace:** Jane, thank you so much for sharing the story, like in such detail. I think it's really instructive for not just filmmakers, but just anyone who cares about living in a society where we can be who we are and say what we need. I hadn't seen *Break the Game*, but I watched it on the Twitch Stream, and I was like, what is the big deal? Like this is a story about like young people trying to figure out their way in the world, online bullying, mental health, and the trans thing is so tangential to the story — it's just, this is a disservice,

**Jane:** ...to all of us, because I think the film is really for everyone, and I've had positive feedback from all sorts of people: gamers, non-gamers, queer folks, straight folks, cis folks, trans folks, even my mom was able to watch it and take something away from it.

People will say, *oh, this is, we're pulling this because it's a trans story, or it's, about X marginalized group*. But I think almost, for *any* of those films, everyone can gain something from it. It's marginalized communities that are hurt, but it's really all of us, viewers like all of us.

**Grace:** Thanks for listening to Viewers Like Us. This podcast is executive produced by Joaquin Alvarado, Ken Ikeda, and me, Grace Lee.

Our editorial producer is Olivia Aylmer. Our audio editor is Chloe Behrens, and our sound designer mixer is Alec Cowan.

Claudia Meza created our theme music, and our historian is Susie Pak.

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