

The West Wing Weekly
5.07: "Separation of Powers"
Guest: Michael Hyatt

[Intro Music]

JOSH: You're listening to The West Wing Weekly. I'm Joshua Malina

HRISHI: And I'm Hrishikesh Hirway, and today we're talking about Separation of Powers; it's episode seven from season five.

JOSH: This episode was written by Paul Redford and directed by Alex Graves. It first aired on November twelfth in the year 2003. So this is interesting - Paul Redford was involved with *Sports Night* and then he was involved with *West Wing*, both of these as a producer, for a long time. He had many co-written credits on *The West Wing* prior to this; this is his first solo writing credit. It must be very freeing to have worked with Aaron, and for Aaron, and on this staff in the collaborative way they did in providing material for Aaron to ultimately write things; then all of a sudden to be handed the reins and say, "OK go ahead now...now it's your turn."

HRISHI: Yeah, it's like Scottie Pippen after Jordan left the Bulls. Coming up later in this episode we're going to be joined by special guest Michael Hyatt who plays Angela Blake. So there are three main stories in this episode; there's a budget stalemate between the White House and the congressional Republican leaders, the negotiation is being handled by Angela Blake and Toby's not too happy about it and she needs some additional help to get the work done and she manages to get Donna on her team. Toby's also trying to do what he can to replace the Supreme Court Justice, Roy Ashland; the White House isn't supposed to interfere but Toby asks Joe Quincy, who clerked for Ashland, to broker a meeting. And finally Zoe is gearing up to do a high profile heart-to-heart interview with an expert newscaster who can catch her interview subjects off guard with some tough questions.

JOSH: Ashland portrayed by terrific Irish actor Milo O'Shea, may he rest in peace. I noticed this is what...I noticed first of all that his IMDB page lists credits from 1940 through 2004.

HRISHI: Mm-hm.

JOSH: That's a career. And this appears to have been among his final...I guess this and - spoiler alert - one other episode of *The West Wing*, were his final credits, at least on IMDB. He's got also a massive theater biography.

HRISHI: Here's one role I wanted to point out in the way of trivia. He was in the film *Barbarella*, the Jane Fonda silly sci-fi movie.

JOSH: Cult classic.

HRISHI: He played a scientist named Durand Durand and the band *Duran Duran* named themselves after his character.

JOSH: Oh, that is a good piece of trivia. Very good.

HRISHI: All right, so the beginning of this episode is chillingly timely.

JOSH: No kidding. In many ways this episode is eerily 'of the moment'.

HRISHI: Yeah, the frontal in the episode is...

[West Wing Episode 5.07 excerpt]

BRIAN: You know what this is? It's Korematsu. The mood is Korematsu.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And it's revealed that these are some of Ashland's clerks who were discussing a brief. We find out later that this is a case of prejudice against Muslims. Ashland says:

[West Wing Episode 5.07 excerpt]

ASHLAND: My clerks are preparing a brief. There's an Arab-American man, grabbed out of a line at the airport. What's next? Tribunals, identity cards, barcodes tattooed on our forearms?

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: But we don't know that yet, we just know they're talking about a case and they're talking about *Korematsu* as precedent, and then shortly after that the same voice says, "It's *Korematsu* all over again." *Korematsu* is the Japanese internment case that's been a blight really in the history books for decades, and it was just finally tossed out by the Supreme Court a few days ago, but it was done so in the service of the court ruling in favor of Trump's travel ban against travelers from seven majority Muslim countries.

JOSH: *Trump v. Hawaii*

HRISHI: *Trump v. Hawaii*. And just like the clerk in the episode says, that case *is Korematsu* all over again. The real Chief Justice - Chief Justice Roberts - wrote in the majority opinion, you know while upholding the travel ban, he said:

'Korematsu was gravely wrong the day it was decided, and has been overruled in the court of history, and - to be clear - has no place in law under the Constitution.'"

But it seems so wrong-headed and I wanted to also read a little bit of Sonia Sotomayor's dissent which is just blistering she wrote:

"By blindly accepting the Government's misguided invitation to sanction a discriminatory policy motivated by animosity toward a disfavored group, all in the name of a superficial claim of national security, the Court redeploys the same dangerous logic underlying Korematsu and merely replaces one 'gravely wrong' decision with another."

JOSH: Yeah it's very interesting. In researching this also I read a great op-ed piece in addition to the discordant note of *Korematsu* being overturned while *Trump v. Hawaii* is being upheld, there was an op-ed in the *Los Angeles Times* by Eric L. Muller that was suggesting that while there is reason to be pleased that *Korematsu* has finally been overturned, there is another case that was - *Hirabayashi* - that was a case in which a student at the University of Washington defied a curfew that had been imposed on Japanese-American students. Not on German-American or Italian-American.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: But on Japanese-American students, and that case has not been overturned. They ruled against the student, and if you think of these things as sort of creaky cases that, you know, whether it's been overturned or not we sort of know they were wrong. That case is

actually still cited, it was cited, according to this op-ed, recently as a precedent in a case pending in a military tribunal case in Guantanamo Bay. So these cases or misfires in terms of decisions by the Supreme Court that we sometimes think of as old and musty, even if they have been redressed, are actually used for precedent. We'll put a link to that op-ed piece. But there's a suggestion that *this* is the case that really ought to be overturned as well.

HRISHI: Yeah. But we hear in our episode, the clerks, in some ways, taking on these two sides. One of the clerks for Ashland, Lisa, is taking the Roberts side or the side that national security can be used to justify these decisions, and the two other clerks are kind of in shock that she's willing to uphold the...you know willing to condone...

JOSH: In the name of national security, go to such extremes. She's I think the one who says:

[West Wing Episode 5.07 excerpt]

LISA: And there's a reason Korematsu's never been overturned.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Yes, exactly.

JOSH: An incredible line of dialogue to hear a few days after it has in fact been overturned.

HRISHI: Right

JOSH: And then of course we get a major plot line or *the* major plot line about a new Supreme Court Justice vacancy or a potential Supreme Court Justice vacancy. It's just incredibly weird...I feel like this has happened again and again in the not only that *The West Wing* and its storylines are so evergreen, but that they seem to be strangely aligned with *The West Wing Weekly's* podcast schedule. Our storylines are synced.

HRISHI: Just one of these would have been an uncanny coincidence on its own, but both of them together is really crazy. Yeah, and so Ashland doesn't seem to have his wits about him fully and then collapses. And we've heard about the Chief Justice before, back in *Inauguration Part 1*, in that episode we heard he was writing his opinions in verse:

[West Wing Episode 4.14 excerpt]

LEO: "Guilty, or not guilty, past convictions frustrate, the judge who wonders should your fate, abate."

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Heh, heh, heh.

HRISHI: You know, so we know that on the show people have been concerned about the Chief Justice's mental acuity for a little while. We've actually met the Chief Justice before, in that episode, because in an inauguration, you know, the President has to be sworn in by the Chief Justice. He just had one line, he was played by an actor named Timothy Rice but they recast for the bigger role this time.

JOSH: That's right. I think the cold opening is excellent. I think Milo O'Shea does a great job with very few lines, just in this first scene sort of creating a physical, compelling presence of a man who seems to be battling dementia. And then the collapse and our belief that he's in

fact passed away, leading to the bombshell that Ashland lives. It's a very effective cold opening I think.

HRISHI: Yeah, after the collapse, we go to the West Wing and Toby and C.J. are discussing what's going to happen after this, and then Will jumps in and wants to contribute, and I love the continuing dynamic between Toby and Will. Will wants to jump in, Toby's still giving him the cold shoulder but Will seems completely unfazed by it, which is cute. Then I also like that C.J. is on Will's side.

JOSH: And it seems although Will, I guess weasels his way into the Oval at one point during this episode, I think we're on now for a while where Will is going to lead largely a Ryan-like existence in the White House. Walking back and forth in the halls and being seen only there.

HRISHI: Right, cause he doesn't have an office in the in the West Wing anymore.

JOSH: Indeed.

HRISHI: I like the fact that Will is in the Oval Office later because it makes good on the promise that, by appointing him as an advisor, that Bob Russell was going to have, you know, more of an active voice in the decision-making that happens in the White House. You know, he said, "I don't want to have the same kind of relationship that you did with Hoynes."

JOSH: Hoynes. Right, and Will's his point guy.

HRISHI: Yeah, I like that bit of continuity. Plus, of course, it allows us to keep getting Will in our life.

JOSH: What with the show be without that?

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: Please don't answer.

HRISHI: As we learned so often, celebrating too early as Toby does in this cold open really is just going to spell disappointment. It means disappointment's coming any second. Toby tempts the wrath of the whatever from high atop the thing.

[West Wing Episode 5.07 excerpt]

TOBY: We're going to appoint a new Chief Justice. Breathe new life into the Constitution. Do you know how rare that is? The last five guys didn't get to do it. We're gonna shape the future of jurisprudence, the laws that sustain...

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And then of course Will comes back in the office and says "Oh the by the way, no you're not."

JOSH: Heh, heh. Yeah, and there's just maybe a little hint of enjoyment on Will's part that he's ruining Toby's day.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: It was interesting, I looked up and it turns out only five of seventeen Chief Justices first served as Associate Justices.

HRISHI: Yeah...

JOSH: It seems like the kind of thing where you'd want to, you know...

HRISHI: Promote from within.

JOSH: ...promote from within, exactly.

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

C.J.: Promoting from within is very big in my family.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Apparently there's no experience required, most of the time goes straight to Chief Justice when that slot is vacant.

HRISHI: Yeah, it's pretty crazy.

JOSH: That must really annoy the sitting Associate Justices.

HRISHI: Who've been there for a long time...

JOSH: Right...

HRISHI: ...and...

JOSH: ...what the hell?

HRISHI: They get paid more too.

JOSH: Oh, interesting. You know what the..do you have numbers?

HRISHI: The Chief Justice is paid \$253,000 a year and Associate Justices are paid \$242,000. So the word Chief is worth \$11,000 a year.

JOSH: How about that. I wonder if the Chief Justice buys the donuts all year or something like that? I bet there's some sort of tradition.

HRISHI: Yeah. Did you say 'judician'?

JOSH: [singing] Judician. Judician.

HRISHI: Ha, ha, ha. It's...you just made that J-E-W-dition.

JOSH: That's right.

HRISHI: There's also another little running bit throughout this episode, which is that the flu is going around the office.

JOSH: Yes.

HRISHI: A little more mundane thing, and I love it because it provides my favorite moment when C.J. forbids Josh from sitting next to her.

JOSH: Yes.

HRISHI: When they're in this meeting in the Oval Office.

[West Wing Episode 5.07 excerpt]

JOSH: I'm past the infectious stage.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Toby and Leo get into the urgency and, also, what is really ethically allowed and legally allowed in terms of what the White House can do to exert influence over the Chief Justice to try and get him to resign, and Toby is really pushing for it. Leo says, you know, it's just not something that they can do and Toby's trying to, you know, grapple with what the ramifications are. I thought this was a nice little bit of writing in that exchange where he says:

[West Wing Episode 5.07 excerpt]

TOBY: How long before this gets dangerous Leo? Before we've got a cadaver up there ruling on when life begins?

LEO: What are you talking about?

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Yeah.

HRISHI: He's making his argument, but he did it with a little bit of poetry too.

JOSH: Yeah. I like the little discussion about how Ashland's son had arranged for a billion dollars in loans to President Bartlet how that affected the whole dynamic about whether or not they could bring up his retirement.

HRISHI: There's an article from June of this year that I think is interesting, about how the White House did try and push Justice Kennedy to resign. The article...the headline is, "*Inside the White House's quiet campaign to create a Supreme Court opening*" by Adam Liptak and Maggie Haberman. It exactly follows this kind of question of, like, what can one do? And the article says there were no direct efforts to pressure or lobby Justice Kennedy, but there are all these "*subtle and not so subtle ways*" that they did it.

JOSH: And was some of it sort of protecting his legacy, assuring that he would walk away looking good? Is that kind of...

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: I think Trump would say...had made public comments praising Kennedy and...I think, you know, there was a subtle build up - a suggestion that his legacy would be fostered by the President.

HRISHI: Exactly. And that the praise was strategic because, you know, and politically motivated because it doesn't actually fall in line...

JOSH: ...of the substance for their decisions.

HRISHI: Exactly. He's not necessarily conservatives favorite justice, he was considered the swing vote for so many decisions.

JOSH: You're the swing note of this podcast.

HRISHI: And you are the fruity aftertaste.

JOSH: And the triangle.

HRISHI: Anyway, that's an interesting article, and again I read the article the day that I watched this episode for the first time and it was mind blowing.

JOSH: One thing they didn't...since we're on that plot...because eventually you know you talked about Leo and Toby's discussion, and pretty quickly it shifts into Toby's approaching Joe Quincey.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: Huzzah. The reappearance of Matthew Perry.

HRISHI: [claps]

JOSH: Wow. My God we're good. And happy to see him back. Joe, of course, knows immediately what Toby wants from him and although I enjoyed their scenes together I did feel ultimately like their storyline...like a piece of taffy was kind of pulled across the entire episode. Whereas, I suspect that their original discussion should have gotten them to where they ultimately reach, and we end up getting three, four, five scenes discussion between Toby and Joe and they're kind of at loggerheads and, "I'm not going to do it". But then he does come to the hospital and then he lies to Toby and says, "He was in great shape, he's up, he was his old self. He was cogent. He was making jokes." Then he eventually admits, "No, he actually never regained consciousness." And then they have the discussion that I think they would have had originally, in which Toby makes clear:

[West Wing Episode 5.07 excerpt]

TOBY: I don't want to see him gone, Joe. I want nine Ashlands on the court.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: It's just sort of...it took an entire episode to get there and I think these two intelligent, fairly no nonsense guys, would have gotten there in the initial conversation.

HRISHI: It makes me think that maybe there is some nonsense to Joe.

JOSH: Ah well then there you go.

HRISHI: But Toby is definitely not at his most diplomatic in this episode and I think that that's because of the urgency that he feels...he's not a great diplomat on his best day, and then on a day like this where he's so revved up about how they need to make this happen right away he goes to Joe Quincy and, yeah, he really should have handled it the way that he does at the end, from the beginning.

JOSH: Yes. I wrote "Toby is out of line with Joe." And I guess you're right, maybe I'm being a little bit unfair to the storyline, that in keeping with Toby's character he doesn't sweet talk Joe at all and he just lays in his message with a brusqueness that maybe leads Joe to be a little bit defensive and so, you know, I'm not sure it's not credible at all that they would kind of have a little back and forth before landing roughly on the same page.

HRISHI: Yeah, I mean I think that your frustration is certainly justified in terms of the story. You know, want these two to just sit down and be like "you're not that...you're actually on the same page or you want the same thing in in a lot of ways but could you just have a conversation?"

JOSH: Also I was knocked out by, Joe says:

[West Wing Episode 5.07 excerpt]

JOE: I can do the math. You got a limited amount of time to pick the next guy and get him confirmed before the midterms politicize everything, but I was...

[end excerpt]

JOSH: And I was like, well how on the nose for today is that?

HRISHI: I know. Oh and when Toby's arguing with Leo, he's wondering what will happen if they wait to try and exert some pressure on Ashland. He says, "What happens if he ends up in a coma, then what? We go to our Republican Congress to impeach? Haffley will never do it." and then this line chilled me:

[West Wing Episode 5.07 excerpt]

TOBY: He'll leave Ashland on a respirator until one of their guys gets to wear the windbreaker on Air Force One.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Yep.

HRISHI: A little...

JOSH: There it is.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: No cobwebs on this storyline.

HRISHI: Really. It's true. Outside of the episode for a second I just wanted to mention that at this point in season five the ratings were actually up over season four. Season four the ratings were about thirteen and a half million viewers per episode and here they were back up to over fourteen million like fourteen and a half million.

JOSH: So while we're on it with *The West Wing* and *The West Wing Weekly* being sync'd up let me just do a slight brag and say that our listenership has increased with our coverage of season five as compared to previous seasons.

HRISHI: And both of these things I think are a little surprising to me.

JOSH: Yeah, and to me as well. It also suggests that maybe ratings-wise I didn't ruin *The West Wing*. Maybe it's purely qualitatively that I did.

HRISHI: Yeah. OK back to the episode. I really didn't like that this idea of negotiation - Toby's negotiation with Joe Quincy, Angela Blake's negotiation with the Congressional Republicans, and then eventually the President's negotiation with Haffley, that this is a kind of a running thread throughout the episode and we see people handling it well and not so well. There's a moment in that meeting in the Oval Office, and Angela Blake comes in and she gives them the rundown and Toby is incredibly frustrated with this as well. He feels like they're just giving things away left and right and he asks Josh to jump in and, you know, have his back - say something about how this is a travesty, and Josh says:

[West Wing Episode 5.07 excerpt]

JOSH: You gotta trust the person in the room.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: But the way he delivers the line, his body language and everything, you understand that he is still saying this from the position of the injured animal in the pack.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: He doesn't have the clout in that room to take her on, you know, to second guess the job that she's doing. Plus I think there's a little bit of sympathy in that moment because when he would be the person in the room...

JOSH: He didn't like getting second guessed by those outside.

HRISHI: Yeah, exactly, but then he doesn't listen to his own advice. He says that in the meeting, but then later in the episode we realize he really isn't...he doesn't believe it. Like he's just holding his tongue in that context. Later when Angela needs help and she wants Donna to help, and then he finds out that Donna is in the negotiations he has a little bit of a hissy fit, and it's just you know it's bad form. And then later when Donna and Angela are talking about how the things are not going well, he's pissed and he acts like somehow it's their fault. I wrote "Josh is being a putz."

JOSH: He is.

HRISHI: Acting like Donna is somehow attacking him by defending Angela Blake's work in the negotiations, just because they didn't come away with the win. And he doesn't follow his own advice to trust the person in the room.

JOSH: Yeah, it's hypocritical.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: I like in President Bartlet's discussion about these talks...he's concerned that the deficit is nearing two hundred billion, I think he mentions that figure in the Oval. So I ran and checked according to thehill.com we are nearing a six hundred billion dollar deficit in the first half of 2018, what with the mammoth unfunded tax cut that President Trump and his cronies have seen to bestow upon the wealthiest of our nation.

HRISHI: But that's good right? Six hundred is better than two hundred.

JOSH: It's three times better - that's my understanding. I think I also saw a prediction that perhaps the deficit would surpass one trillion dollars by 2019, so again look a little quaintness in the West Wing.

HRISHI: Wow.

JOSH: I also love the line:

[West Wing Episode 5.07 excerpt]

BARTLET: \$200 billion dollar deficit and Haffley wants tax cuts. Take away a few zeroes and he'd pass for a mob accountant.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: I thought that was...I liked that line.

HRISHI: Yeah. I love Donna's story in this episode. I love all of the moments in the show, since Donna said that she wanted to do more and she wanted to be more useful, I love the

evolution of her character. All the times when they've shown that her character is growing and she does get to do more. And it was also really nice to hear Angela Blake asking her to contribute and then taking her seriously, asking her opinion and recognizing her for the asset that she is.

JOSH: And Donna's stepping up to the moment.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: And having something substantive to say. I agree with you, I like that little story line too and I particularly enjoyed that she wasn't gaining greater agency, or she wasn't being taken more seriously as a result of, kind of, Josh's largesse, it had nothing to do with Josh.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: It was yeah earned, and it was somebody else's eye recognizing that she might have something to contribute.

HRISHI: Yeah, and that Angela Blake asked around "Who's the person who could help?"

[West Wing Episode 5.07 excerpt]

ANGELA: ...someone named Donna. Knows the docs inside out.

JOSH: Donna Moss. Okay, sure.

ANGELA: You're a prince.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Backwards and forwards, yeah.

HRISHI: It makes me think about how much the internal politics in in *The West Wing* can kind of resemble high school, or in college. Really any time when, you know, you have a relationship with someone where you meet someone and you're their inferior in some way, you know. When you're a freshman and they're a senior. I think this is like senior-freshman syndrome. There are people who were seniors when I was a freshman and I feel like no matter what I do or what happens in our in our lives, we will never escape that dynamic. They will never not see me as sort of 'the kid' and they're the, you know, wiser older senior.

JOSH: Oh yeah, that's absolutely a phenomenon to which I relate.

HRISHI: Yeah, and I think Donna has the same relationship with Josh and maybe with others in the...on the staff as well. And the nice thing about having someone like Angela Blake come in, is she has no prior history.

JOSH: No preconceived notions about who Donna is, where she belongs.

HRISHI: Exactly. Just 'this is the person who knows the stuff'. It can't be Josh - Josh obviously knows the docs well too, but Donna probably knows them even better.

JOSH: Yeah, I assume so - she keeps him up and running.

HRISHI: Right, exactly. And then Donna really does acquit herself well from there on out.

[West Wing Episode 5.07 excerpt]

DONNA: I think...our side's done a bad job explaining why what we're fighting for is important.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And I thought, the Democratic Party should put that on a T-Shirt. It could be their motto.

JOSH: I thought the same thing, as she said it.

HRISHI: It's a sentiment that has been said, you know, before on the show. I think Bruno said something along those lines as well, but I just...I like the way that she put it here and it's of course worth repeating.

JOSH: I have just one little moment that I particularly liked.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: I like how Alex Graves directed it, and handled it, and how the moment was edited. There's a scene with C.J., Leo and President Bartlet, and C.J. is bringing up the question of whether Zoey should do this T.V. interview - and C.J.'s against it and before the President responds definitively to C.J. he just throws a silent look to Leo, because these guys are so close and they can communicate without words. And I love that Alec Graves does not cut back to Leo, it's so...it's a quick little moment and if you know these guys you know that Bartlet is looking at Leo and he's getting something...

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: ...he's getting what he needs from Leo before he responds to C.J., and I just love that moment. We know these characters so well by now, we don't need to be spoonfed.

HRISHI: On that topic though, there is one thing stylistically that I am not enjoying so much in season five, which is the handheld camera. I miss this stateliness of the camera on the tripod or, you know, on the on a dolly or whatever. The stable camera work of seasons one through three especially, you know, every now and then we would get a handheld moment, but they always felt like they were earned by the story and motivated by what was happening in the plot. Now it feels like...I mean it's very...it was very of the time and maybe, I guess, still of the time, but that shift to the handheld shaky camera - I didn't like it then, I continue not to like it because it really is a...it's a very big move to make...

JOSH: Sure, it's a transition and it can be a little bit jarring. I guess I would argue that things are...I mean it gives more of a...an unsteady feel, like you say, things were more stately and more...things were locked off and presented in a more steady manner, but I think, you know, the wheels are kind of falling off or they have been for most of season five and in a way I think it kind of reflects the new kind of turmoil among our heroes, but I get how it could throw you.

HRISHI: No, actually I could buy that. I feel like it's, you know, it loses some of its power when it's all you get...

JOSH: Over-used.

HRISHI: ...you know everything is handheld. Like some of the scenes when they're at the negotiation table when, you know, in the White House, felt like these were moments when a locked-off camera would have made sense, but I buy your argument that overall there's a

pall across the entire series at the moment and the handheld camera reinforces that. I go with it, all right. I take it back.

JOSH: I'll take it.

HRISHI: Joe Quincy is a Republican, as we know. In fact we know that he worked for the Solicitor General of the previous administration. Which - by the way - it's so silly when Josh first hires Joe Quincy and he's like "I can't seem to figure..." you know it takes him so long to figure out that he's a Republican even though he knows, he's like, "Oh you work for the Solicitor General, what happened?" And Joe Quincy says, "You appointed a different Solicitor General." I started to look around to see if that happened with some frequency, that a Supreme Court justice would have a clerk, or clerk would go work for Supreme Court justice who ideologically skewed away from their own beliefs.

JOSH: We get a little piece of exposition from Joe:

[West Wing Episode 5.07 excerpt]

JOE: Every year he likes to hire a conservative clerk to argue with, and arguing with him helped me clarify the things I believe in.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: That is a neat distinction for Ashland because, generally speaking that isn't the case. There's a paper I found while I was researching stuff for this episode. "The Political Ideologies of Law Clerks and their Judges" In that, the authors found that judges tend to consistently hire clerks with similar ideologies, and also that clerks tend to be more liberal as a group than the judges for whom they work. Also as the courts get higher it's even more consistent that the clerks and the justices track, you know their ideologies track. So I asked the authors of that paper if they had encountered real life examples of liberal justices hiring conservative clerks and they said, yes they had. Here's an email I got from one of the authors, Kyle Rozema, he said, "Liberal justices sometimes hire conservative clerks. If you look at the paper..." which we will link to, "...figure eight three shows that it's not all that rare, and the book *In Chambers* by Todd Peppers and Artemus Ward describes how Justice Ginsburg acknowledges she's hired conservatives, on page three ninety four. I asked Justice Ginsburg if she prefers to have clerks across the ideological spectrum. She replied that she doesn't try to get such a mixture of preference but sometimes it happens." And then they quote her saying, "*One of my best clerks was a Federalist Society member.*"

JOSH: There you go.

HRISHI: So it's not unrealistic that this would happen with Ashland and Joe Quincy.

JOSH: Yeah, and I think Supreme Court justices often become proponents for the clerks that they mentored, when vacancies come up, right? Sometimes like they've got their guys or their gals that they're kind of pushing for, that they feel maybe they've helped mold their approach to jurisprudence.

HRISHI: I like the idea too that when they go to the hospital to visit the Chief Justice, the blonde conservative pro-internment fascist lady is there, and Joe knows her, gives her a kiss on the cheek...he knows her despite however many years it must have been since he worked for Ashland, you know, that there is a continuity...there's like a family feeling with all of the people who've worked for Ashland, you know that it continues even after your tenure.

JOSH: Well I got the impression that perhaps she took over the right-leaning slot vacated by Joe.

HRISHI: Yeah exactly, no I think she is in that slot. Imagine that that conservative position has been held by several clerks, since he's had the job himself, so she...however many generations later...they're still close, they still know each other, I think that's cool.

JOSH: Yeah I like that too. I like the scene between Milo O'Shea and Matthew Perry, I thought they did a good job, you know, they probably met that day so they did a good job I think of making the audience feel that these guys have a real history and a mutual admiration and I like the way the scene was written and played.

HRISHI: Yeah. Oh one other thing about the moment when they meet Lisa - she has nothing but a death glare for Toby, which I also really liked. I read two sides into that glare: one, she knows why he's here, the same thing that, you know, Joe knows...

JOSH: Oh, for sure.

HRISHI: ...trying to interfere, and trying to influence this man, that is beloved, to step down. But then also I thought just politically, "Ugh, this guy. Not only do I disagree with what you're doing right here and right now, I also disagree with all of your political views." and so all of that gives a lot of juice to the just ice daggers that she's staring into him.

JOSH: Lisa, portrayed by an actress named Amy Stewart. She was in *The Affair*, *NCIS*, she was in *Molly's Game*.

HRISHI: She was in *Molly's Game*!

JOSH: How about that she played Jordan's wife. You know what I've...we've been missing for many episodes, and I realize now why, we've totally ignored Gail's goldfish bowl. But somebody did point out that in the episode *Constituency of One* - and a hat tip to whoever pointed this out to me on Twitter - there is a color-coded calendar in Gail's goldfish bowl, which I think is kind of awesome. And then in this episode there's some sort of book in there, I'm not sure. is it possibly the Constitution? That's what one of the Gail-dedicated websites posits, that there's a little copy of the Constitution in her bowl.

HRISHI: Well I actually had a new game...

JOSH: Bring it.

HRISHI: ...besides spotting what's in Gail's fishbowl, which is: listen for the moment when they say the title of the episode during the episode.

JOSH: Oh is that happening with greater frequency?

HRISHI: It, I think, has happened in every single episode this season.

JOSH: Really?

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: OK, certainly *Constituency of One*, and *Disaster Relief*, and *Han*.

HRISHI: Yeah. And *Dogs of War* was an exception because they said it in part one, they didn't say *Dogs of War* in part two.

JOSH: We'll give them credit for the carry-over.

HRISHI: But yeah, they're a two-parter, so I think it still carries.

JOSH: Are we sure they don't say *Part Two* at any point?

HRISHI: They also say 7A-whatever, Zoey's file number, and then here Joe says:

[West Wing Episode 5.07 excerpt]

JOE: The White House can't be seen as pressuring a Supreme Court Justice to change his breakfast order, let alone resign. Separation of powers.

TOBY: I see.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And, I want to have a little *Pee-wee's Playhouse* style word of the day where everybody goes "Yaaay", when they say the word of the day.

[Pee-wee's Playhouse Episode 1.03 excerpt]

PEE-WEE: Today's secret word is: 'Help'. Hey, Globey, I sure wish I knew where Antarctica was.

GLOBEY: Maybe I can help.

[ALL]: Yaay!

[end excerpt]

JOSH: That's very funny. I'm looking forward to Brad's episode in season seven: *I can't act, I'm a terrible actor.*

HRISHI: This is a phenomenon that I don't really generally like, by the way.

JOSH: Nor I, although I have to say it hasn't been hitting me in the ear this whole season.

HRISHI: In *The West Wing* there's more of a big deal made of the title because we actually get a title card, which is rare. Most T.V. shows don't show us that.

JOSH: Sure, you know you wouldn't even know what the title of a particular episode is unless you went to the Internet.

HRISHI: In movies it really pulls me out of it when that happens. I think the most recent example for me was *Annihilation*.

[*Annihilation* excerpt]

DR VENTRESS: Our bodies and our minds will be fragmented into their smallest parts until not one part remains... Annihilation.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And I looked around...and that's the name of the movie.

JOSH: Yeah that is an annoying thing.

HRISHI: Like that time when Sean Connery says "Indiana Jones and The Last Crusade is what we're about to go on."

JOSH: Let's go! There's a great, really weird moment it's right in the sort of foyer of the White House, if that's even the correct term. You know where people are...people enter and exit, there's a little scene with C.J., I think she's talking about the proposed T.V. interview with Zoey and the possibility that she was going to take ecstasy and right before we get to C.J. and her dialogue there is a little mass of extras or background artists, who clearly had been told to wipe screen - to walk across with purpose, and there's just a little knit group of people. It just made me laugh because you could just so see - they were selling it hard that they were very important people walking with import in their stride.

HRISHI: I mean, you know, they're in the White House. They certainly believe that what they're walking towards is very important.

JOSH: Yeah, no, as they should and I'm sure that it's the correct direction, and they really took it to heart. I think it's funny, I may be wrong but just....

HRISHI: I'm gonna go back and look for it.

JOSH: Yeah. We have not yet discussed the T.V. interview with Zoey, and the thing I kept finding as this subplot was touched on, here and there, was what is the compelling reason for the..why must there be this T.V. interview? It does seem...I agree with C.J. that there seems to be a fair amount of risk involved with Zoey's taking this on, and is it just that Zoey herself wants to do it? Is there some other compelling reason for this to be...to take place?

HRISHI: Well, not to non-answer your question, but I had another question which is: what is the compelling reason for this to be a important plot point in the series?

JOSH: Well I guess the question beneath my question is, ultimately, that. It didn't feel super high stakes and when C.J. would bring up, again and again, the possibility that this is where this kind of attack dog interviewer is going to go I kept thinking maybe you shouldn't do the interview. And so it didn't feel super high stakes and also because it felt to me like there's an easy fix - don't do the interview.

HRISHI: But then also she does do the interview. and she does just fine.

JOSH: Yes

HRISHI: Everyone says she'll be fine, and she is fine.

JOSH: Yeah, and one thing that didn't ring true for me is, I liked seeing Zoey...again and again we see how poised she is and she's got remarkable composure for a young person being quizzed I guess on live T.V. But just as they get to the big question and she begins to handle it quite well, Abby and C.J. walk away and have a little discussion. You think they would have been riveted, like, "OK, let's wait, let's hear..."

HRISHI: "Let's see what happens."

JOSH: Yeah, exactly because there's this attack interview, or maybe they're going to turn it on her or something, but then they just walk away and I found that moment lacked credibility. Now you're walking away to have a little chat?

HRISHI: Right, but I do think, to answer my own question, the chat that happens between C.J. and the First Lady *is* the real reason for this C-story.

[West Wing Episode 5.07 excerpt]

ABBEY: We get newspapers up here C.J., you don't have to apologize for him not coming. I asked him not to.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: That being said, it's that the First Lady is still mad at the President.

JOSH: Which I love.

HRISHI: Yes, it's great, but we do know that we're spending a lot of time to reinforce that dynamic, to know that that's...that hasn't changed.

JOSH: I suspect you're right, that's ultimately the reason for the entire plot, but I do like that rather than tidying this up quickly or over the course of a few episodes, the First Lady's indignation remains.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: This is not a small matter in her marriage.

HRISHI: Right. Even as Zoey is getting better and is recovering and is able to enter the public spotlight with with grace, even as that condition improves - the marital condition has not. And the thing that I think that is important to the overall plot of this episode, that that motivates, it's definitely not explicitly made but I think that it helps a little bit in terms of setting up the President for this final scene and the negotiation with Haffley. We think we're heading into a moment at the end where the President has to accept defeat, yet once again, you know, he doesn't have the the strength to do it, but it's Ashland's speech that I think sets this up. We get to the negotiation. Angela Black has told us, "This is what they want: a one percent cut across everything except for homeland security and the military." And according to everything that everybody says, you know Donna sums it up, she says:

[West Wing Episode 5.07 excerpt]

DONNA: No, I'm saying we may have won in a landslide, but we didn't take Congress with us, and now it looks like we're not taking the country with us and the other guys know it.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Then Ashland, when he finally does meet with the President, he tears into him he says:

[West Wing Episode 5.07 excerpt]

ASHLAND: I have good days and bad. But on my worst day, I am better than the amped-up ambulance chasers you could get confirmed by the Senate. You can't do it Jed, you're not strong enough. The Speaker's running the table, and I can't take a chance.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And to have it be put so bluntly to him, you know a man whose mental faculties are maybe under question suddenly like with clear...

JOSH: Lays it out.

HRISHI: Yeah, just focuses and, the President described him as a friend and he just bluntly tells him how it is. I think that really sets the stage for the President's decision when they get into the negotiating room, but I do think that the First Lady's icing him out probably has something to do with it too, you know there's some... 'enough is enough' building up inside President Bartlet.

JOSH: Yeah, and you can see it in Martin's performance in the Roosevelt Room.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: I did like that. You know another moment that I really like is Ashland's decision to stand up out of his wheelchair and walk into the Oval Office.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: I found that compelling. Also with all these mentions of the name Ashland, I want to mention the Oregon Shakespeare Festival which is a regional Repertory Theater in Ashland, Oregon and...I've gone to many times - I want to give them a shout out. I kept hearing 'Ashland' and thinking of them. Tremendous productions. I think they do like eleven plays a year in Rep. Shakespeare and musicals and other playwrights and they just do tremendous work, and if you're ever near Ashland, Oregon I highly recommend dropping in on the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. That's my tangent for the episode.

HRISHI: Would you say they do Shakespeare justice?

JOSH: Yes I would.

HRISHI: Ok, so back to the negotiation room, in the final scene, after all of this is discussion about a one percent reduction, everything that Angela Blake had to do to try and just get to *that* point and a continuing resolution. Suddenly now Haffley says, "We want a three percent reduction." And there's a little moment that I love, there's a quick fade to black, before it comes back to the President. Haffley presents this like it's the most reasonable thing to ask for, the three percent reduction, and it's not going to be a huge...like it's not the huge defeat that he's asking the White House to take. And there's a blink. The screen fades to black quickly before it comes back to the President, instead of cutting.

JOSH: But is it that or is it not the storm-related light flickering as we've had.

HRISHI: Yeah, I think it is and I think it is supposed to be storm-related.

JOSH: That happened in the Oval as well.

HRISHI: Yeah, but the...just the fact of it. I don't think it's a coinc...I feel like the ...

JOSH: They used it well the...

HRISHI: Yeah, I think that all of that was a setup to this moment, you know the lights flickering, is really just so that he can have a diegetically motivated moment where there is this fade...

JOSH: Ah, I knew I was leading you towards that word.

HRISHI: Did you really?

JOSH: I knew it. I was...yes, I was too too shy to deploy it myself, because I think I learned it from you, so I wanted to I wanted to dish it up for the master.

HRISHI: And then the President says, "What's next?" But for the first time he's not using it the way that he always uses it. He actually is asking it rhetorically. This is not the traditional Bartlet, "What's next?" He's not saying, "When I ask 'What's next?' it means I'm ready to move on to other things." He's saying, "What do we agree to after this?"

[West Wing Episode 5.07 excerpt]

BARTLET: What's next?

HAFFLEY: Sir?

BARTLET: In two months, five percent? fifty? How many rounds do we go Jeff? I'm just asking.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And I love that there is this little breath before he presents that.

JOSH: Look at you digging in and enjoying season five.

HRISHI: I really...I really am.

JOSH: Do you regret not having watched it immediately after season four? Or did it take...was there...was this time necessary? Was this twelve year break necessary for you to come back and look at it?

HRISHI: In some ways I do regret not watching it earlier, because I think I would have...clearly I would have enjoyed it a lot more than I had feared. But on the other hand I'm glad that I didn't because it's really fun to watch these for the first time now while doing the podcast, and talking about it while these, you know, these thoughts are new and fresh, as opposed to... 'you know what I thought a million times when I watched...', you know, it's exciting - it's just different. So no I...

JOSH: That's great, that's great, that delights me and I think it's a boon for the listeners too.

HRISHI: Yeah, it's great to see there's like 'Oh there was a "What's next?" here that meant something different'

JOSH: Yeah.

HRISHI: I'd never heard it. Cause he was he says he was ready to cut the deal, he was ready to take the loss.

JOSH: Yeah, he walked into the room ready to sign off on it.

HRISHI: Yeah, then he says "No" and then we get this great and dramatic:

[West Wing Episode 5.07 excerpt]

BARTLET: Then shut it down.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Followed some big time *Law and Order* sound effects.

JOSH: Wamp wamp.

HRISHI: But I think...that's a great cliffhanger and I like the idea that we've seen the President sort of being pummeled for episode after episode, between the end of season four and the beginning of season five, and I think this is the first time that we really have seen the President you know stand up, and at the end he literally stands up, and say 'Enough'.

JOSH: On that cliffhanger...

HRISHI: Let's take a quick break, and when we come back we're going to talk to Michael Hyatt.

[ad break]

HRISHI: Joining us now is Michael Hyatt who plays Angela Blake. You've also seen her on so many other T.V. shows including *The Wire*, *Crazy Ex-girlfriend*, *True Detective* and *Snowfall* - Executive Produced by Tommy Schlamme, and so many other shows. Michael thanks so much for joining us.

MICHAEL: This is lovely I didn't even know this was happening, how cool of you guys. I can't believe people are still watching this show.

JOSH: It is remarkable. I mean Hrishu had a hunch when he came up with the idea to do the podcast, but we've been delighted to discover that people really do still watch the show, because of services like Netflix, and because the show was so good...

MICHAEL: ...because the show was so good. How wonderful. Yeah it was a pretty interesting experience for me.

HRISHI: That's what we wanted to know about.

JOSH: Your West Wing origin, how did you come to the role, or how did the role come to you?

MICHAEL: Man...completely bizarre set of circumstances, but then that is the business isn't it. I was living in New York and all I ever knew was my hustle in New York. I got ... came out of grad school and, you know, hit the pavement and I had just ended a relationship and my manager came to me - we'd bought a house and blah-blah-blah, the relationship ended and my manager said, "You know I think we have as much as we can do in New York. I think it's time for you to make the move to Los Angeles." Which scared the poop out of me. But I knew she was right, in my gut I knew she was right. So we sold the house and I said, "You know what, I'm just going to start from scratch I'm going to start all over and, you know, do the whole casting thing I know it's going to take a while and I'll just go on every audition to meet all the casting people and, you know, eventually something will come." I land in LAX, and my manager said, "Look you have an audition for this West Wing." And I was a complete fan of West Wing obviously, so it was a little bizarre, you know, I just landed on Los Angeles soil and I have an audition for West Wing. I mean it was just insane and I had absolutely no intention, no expectation of getting it, which probably is why I got it. And I was just doing the rounds, meeting the casting people, and just putting my name out there, and bloody hell if I didn't get the part. Which was insane!

JOSH: It's nice when it happens that way. Nice, and rare.

MICHAEL: Yeah, it blew my mind. So that's my story.

HRISHI: But when you were in New York, before you came to L.A, you were already doing TV right? I mean at that point you had already been on my other favorite TV show *The Wire*.

MICHAEL: Right, *The Wire* is the ... well I mean if you're a New Yorker, then you've done *Law and Order*...

JOSH: That's right.

MICHAEL: ...so I did *Law and Order*, and then, you know, *The Wire* came out of nowhere and I worked on that for however many years. *The Wire* was really breaking grounds for me in so many ways but it still felt so new and so...limited. And then, you know, this *West Wing* thing came and just smacked me. So it was a lot of new stuff going on in my world that I had - how does anyone ever prepare? - but I was totally not emotionally prepared for.

HRISHI: In what way were you not emotionally prepared?

MICHAEL: Oh my gosh. I remember - you won't remember this - but I remember we were in-between takes or in-between jobs and you and Bradley, you were talking to each other about ... I don't know if you had just bought a house, but you were talking about how expensive fire insurance was, and earthquake insurance and stuff. It was so out of my league, I mean you know, and again I had spent the first four seasons of *West Wing* being a complete fan, being in awe of the experience and now I'm working with...with all of these divas, whom I considered to be heroes in the industry because of the show and I just ... it's like, "What am I doing here? I'm so green."

JOSH: How soon after being cast were you shooting *The West Wing*?

MICHAEL: Oh dear, I mean almost immediately.

JOSH: Yeah. I had a hunch you'd say that.

MICHAEL: Yeah completely. I mean it was, you know, straight into fittings and ... yeah I think within like the next week.

HRISHI: And so for the actual casting process, do you get sides and then have to read stuff that actually ended up in one of the episodes?

MICHAEL: Yes. The scenes with John...

JOSH: Parking garage.

MICHAEL: The parking garage and the...that wasn't with John that was with...

HRISHI: Richard Schiff?

MICHAEL: Yes, such a sweet soul. So gentle, he was gentle with me and I gosh I appreciated it. Yes those two scenes were what I read for, was what I what I read with. And what I remember is, again one of the reasons why I had no expectation of getting it, I was told that it was originally written for - blanking on her name right now - how could I?

HRISHI: Richard Schiff?

JOSH: Richard...oh you beat me to the joke.

MICHAEL: No, no. Angela Bassett. The role was originally written for Angela Bassett. and for whatever she chose not to do it and so they were looking for a replacement for Angela

Bassett, so it was just... "What? I get this...?" And what's interesting about the casting process - there were a slew of people. It was the long because they went by character. I don't know why - I guess I was tired, I don't know - but I fell asleep and I woke up just as they were saying my name. I was a little out of it, right? I was totally out of it, and I walked into the room and just did it. And it was clean, you know the two scenes, it was clean, it was...the only way I can explain it, it was an out of body experience because I was not there mentally, I just wasn't. Anyway, what I remember is when I walked out the assistant that was...whose desk was almost beside the office looked at me and said, "Well, I guess you got the part." and I'm thinking, "What the hell...what is she looking at?"

JOSH: That's fascinating. I've only ever seen one person, and it also worked for him, fall asleep before an audition. I was waiting to audition for *Mars Attacks*, the Tim Burton movie, and Jack Black - whom I don't think I even knew from anyone - came into the room, lay on his back on the floor and started snoring. I was like, "This is the weirdest thing I've ever seen" They had to wake him up to go in for his audition, and then he got the part and, you know, and was Jack Black, and I was like, "Wow I'm going to take an Ambien before my next audition".

MICHAEL: [laughs] It was completely not anything that I had ever experienced before. And it was, to me, a message of, "You've made the right choice. This is where you belong." It was confirmation that this huge change in my life is being supported, you know, because I couldn't have planned that at all.

HRISHI: Was it the folks from *The West Wing* who told you that the part was originally written for Angela Bassett or did you find that out somehow through your representation?

MICHAEL: Through my representation.

HRISHI: OK. yeah. I can't imagine someone, you know, telling an actor something like that.

MICHAEL: Yeah right, put on the pressure. No, no, no. My manager told me that, she did all that stuff. You know, I tell you, once I got it, I remember having a conversation with Allison Janney. I have not a political bone in my body. I have absolutely no interest in it, and no knowledge of it. And I remember talking with Allison about, like, how did you do the research - because obviously she was so damned convincing with anything that she did - that I just assumed she was the person to go to. And she said, "You know what? I don't know, I just tell the story. Just stick to the script and be truthful to the script and it will tell itself. You don't really need to connect it to anything that's going on in politics now because the writing is so clear, and every single thing is right there, you know? That's all the research that you needed to do."

JOSH: Yeah, well said, and you're terrific in the role. Angela Blake seems like a political animal from the downbeat, from the first time we see her that's ... it seems like absolutely her milieu.

MICHAEL: Yes, absolutely.

HRISHI: So we are right now on the episode *Separation of Powers*, the point where Angela Blake has been made, you know, the point person on these budget negotiations. And one of the things that I love about this episode ... it's only just there, but we see a real ... like a relationship, or really we see a dynamic emerge between the character of Angela and the character of Donna when Angela pulls Donna in to be part of her staff. And I was wondering

if that kind of dynamic, of that newness and the sort of development of Donna in that way, you know through Angela Blake, if all these kinds of dynamics were things that were actually being discussed, you know, when you were shooting, between the directors, the writers or even between you as actors in terms of how it informed how you played those scenes?

MICHAEL: No. I'm sure the discussions were happening, but I was not a part of them, and I attribute that to being new and being a recurring character. And to be very honest with you gentlemen, I remember the scene that .. I remember a scene in particular, I don't know if it is the episode that you're speaking of, but I remember a scene - she had an opinion ... the character had an opinion that was different than that of the character that [unintelligible].

[West Wing Episode 5.07 excerpt]

ANGELA: *How do you think we're doing?*

DONNA: *Me? I don't...*

ANGELA: *You're an American citizen, you pay taxes, consume government services.*

DONNA: *I think... our side has done a bad job explaining that what we're fighting for is important.*

[end excerpt]

MICHAEL: It was a very intimate moment, and I remember the two actors also developing camaraderie with each other, and seeing that. I didn't see it when I was reading the script, all the intellectualizing that is *The West Wing*, it happened outside of me because all I could do was focus on this moment right here and making this moment work and thankfully, because it is such a good script, because it is such good writing, if you do that - just do that - everything will unfold as it's supposed to and fit right into the puzzle it's as it's supposed to. But all the talking about it and this and that, I had no part of that at all. I just needed to be present right here right now.

JOSH: That's great, it's actually ... your descriptions just now is fantastic advice to starting film actors, because that's how it happens, and you discover it in front of the camera. Yeah, that's beautifully put, a great articulation of how to act on camera. Especially when, as you say, the material is good. Things become more difficult when you're working with bad material, and there's a lot more maybe massaging and trying to figure out how to put it over successfully when the material is not so good. It's just occurring to me in addition to just being good general advice for film acting, what you describe is also exactly the kind of approach that Aaron Sorkin would have his actors take to material. But you came to us in the in the post-Sorkin era of *The West Wing* but you would go on to work with him for a couple of episodes of *Studio 60* is that right?

MICHAEL: Dude, you're telling me, you know what, I am so bad with who people are, if Aaron Sorkin was in the room right now, I wouldn't know who the man was.

JOSH: [laughs]

MICHAEL: That was my experience of all these people.

HRISHI: That's amazing.

JOSH: That's fantastic, and refreshing.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: What was the experience like on *Studio 60* for you?

MICHAEL: Again, I just felt like a fish out of water. It took a long time for me to get my ... claim my space legs. And you know what? Now that I know who she is I think I worked with ... was she on the show? Christine Lahti. Was she on the show, on *Studio 60* or was she just there as a guest one day?

HRISHI: She was on a few episodes.

JOSH: Oh OK, there you go.

MICHAEL: All right, so maybe she was there for that. But working with, what was that guy's name? from *Friends*?

[*talking over each other*]

HRISHI: Matthew Perry.

JOSH: Matthew Perry.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: This is fantastic. It's very humbling for everybody.

HRISHI: It's a good quiz show for Josh and me though.

JOSH: Yeah. Who can buzz in first.

HRISHI: That's so funny. You know if you had watched the episodes, because I don't think you had any scenes with him, you would know that you were in an episode of *The West Wing* with Matthew Perry.

MICHAEL: Right. Right. He did a scene with Richard.

HRISHI: Yes.

MICHAEL: And I remember. That's funny. I remember watching that scene from ... I remember they were .. I was in such awe, that I allowed myself to...was I in an actual scene with them though?

HRISHI: No no. It's in this episode that we're talking about, *Separation of Powers*, but you weren't in scenes together, but it was the same episode. It was this episode.

MICHAEL: So there was a scene, there was a touching scene between he and Richard Schiff's character. And I remember being in awe of the experience of them so much that I stood .. I was watching them as they were filming. And the close-up was on Richard, so I thought "OK, so I can just stand here, beside the camera and I could watch" And he's doing the scene with Richard and stuff, and I'm just like standing there watching all of this, in total awe. And then as they cut Richard looked at me and just, this face, could you just, could you just....

JOSH: [laughs]

HRISHI: Wait, could you just what?

MICHAEL: Move away from the camera. Because I was standing right there in his eyesight in such awe. I was a total friggin' distraction, oh my god.

JOSH: "Why is Angela Blake in this scene?"

[laughing]

JOSH: That's fantastic.

HRISHI: Did you know at the outset how many episodes you'd be coming in for?

MICHAEL: No. There was not a clear understanding of where Angela would end up once the government was back in place. And I realize now in hindsight, that the reality is that my greenness, I think...I know, sabotaged the opportunity for me, and I realize this now in hindsight and it has taken me years to forgive myself and forgive the experience. OK, what was blond-haired white guy...director? He was executive producer by then.

JOSH: Alex Graves?

MICHAEL: No, Alex was the black-haired Italian looking guy wasn't it?

HRISHI: That's Christopher?

JOSH: That's Don Corleone.

[laughing]

MICHAEL: There were two of them who were always directing.

JOSH: Yeah. No, Christopher Misiano: dark hair. Alex Graves: blondish hair.

MICHAEL: OK so...

JOSH: I love this game.

HRISHI: Really, after this we're going to develop a game show, it's going to be called, "*Guess who Michael is trying to tell you about*"

MICHAEL: Sorry. So perfect example of ... Alex Graves, I was so ... again grateful and just like in total awe, that apparently - I don't remember this, but I do ... remember it kind of - I would go up to him and just say, "I am so grateful for this opportunity, this is amazing and I'm just such in awe, blah-blah-blah..." And the first couple of times he was like, "Great", you know, "Welcome," and, you know, "This is your home, enjoy and do your thing," and stuff. I just know I didn't feel like I belonged, if I just had to thank everybody, because this is beyond me. So I went to him and, you know, for like the tenth time I said, "Thank you, and I appreciate it." And he said, "OK. Stop. I didn't do you a favor. This a job that you earned and you need to claim your space. I don't want to hear you say 'Thank you' again. That's it."

JOSH: Wow.

MICHAEL: ...and walked away. That behavior sabotaged my future, because ... I remember a scene it's with ... Bradley, they're arguing about North Carolina. When I came to work that day I was so intimidated by working in front of Bradley Whitford that I kept flubbing my lines, and we took like ten, twelve takes to just get that monologue out. And I would go to Alex, and I'm like, "Why is this happening?". "I don't know. You're fabulous and wonderful", you know, "You just ... do your thing." Eventually it came out, but see all of those little things created

doubt, I believe, in the writers, in the executive producers. Here's this woman who came in guns blazing, and she is backpedaling because she's so afraid, because she's intimidated and if she doesn't get over it it's going to get in the way of the work that we need her to produce. Which is exactly what it did. So it ended up being, once the government came back into blah blah blah, they found a way of, you know, moving Angela character on and out. And, yeah, I learned a lot from this.

JOSH: Well that's incredibly candid of you to share that with us. I will say this - there's none of that tentativeness or fear that you refer to in the performance, and what is ... and what you finally see. Which I guess you wouldn't know because you've never watched, but I can tell you having seen all of your episodes, it's not there in the performance.

MICHAEL: And it's funny because when I, you know, when I ... I always felt that even though - because I don't think Tommy was on the show by then.

HRISHI: Right.

MICHAEL: I remember him coming to visit, in hindsight. But I always felt that I needed to atone for that experience, and that's why I talked ... I went to Tommy, you know, now that we're working together again, and I said it to him and he said, "I cannot believe you're saying this to me. Do you not realize how fantastic you were, and I felt ... I wouldn't have cast you in *Studio 60*." And that's when I was like, "Oh my god are you ... was that your show as well?" And I didn't realize that, you know ...

JOSH: He was a fan.

MICHAEL: But I find a way to rise above it to get the work done, you know. But sometimes there is the personal journey that the artist is going through, and then there's the work, you know. And thankfully I allowed myself to let the truth come through and let go of the ego for those moments, and I was able to produce the work but oh the journey. Oy.

JOSH: [laughs] Oh the journey. What a fantastic interview. Thank you.

HRISHI: Well then you went on to be in pretty much every one of my favorite shows since then, so it doesn't seem to have slowed you down despite that. Michael you're on Twitter @MichaelHyatt16 right? If people want to follow you, and hear more about what you're up to right now?

MICHAEL: Yes my dear, that is it.

HRISHI: Thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us.

MICHAEL: Thank you for creating this. Thank you for giving this amazing experience an audience again, and allowing people to vibe with this again thank you.

JOSH: That's a sweet thing to say.

MICHAEL: Have a great day.

JOSH: That wraps it up for this episode of *The West Wing Weekly*.

HRISHI: And I want to give a shout-out to another podcast if you're interested in listening to a show that talks in detail about Korematsu you should check out Radiolab's *More Perfect* podcast there's an episode called *American Pendulum: Part 1* that discusses Korematsu and the show's really great, if you're not already listening to it you should.

JOSH: And if you're interested in anything else you will find a podcast that will meet your requirements at radiotopia.fm, of which collection of fine podcasts *The West Wing Weekly* and *Song Exploder* are a part.

HRISHI: That's true.

JOSH: I think that was a sentence ... scan it, get back to me people.

HRISHI: You can follow us on Twitter @WestWingWeekly. We're also on Facebook and Instagram and if you have a comment or question about this episode you can leave it on our website thewestwingweekly.com or on any of those social media channels that I mentioned.

JOSH: That's right, yeah follow me on Twitter. I seem to have reached ... I don't know what the word is for the point where I'm, even as I gain new followers on Twitter I'm sloughing off just as many every week. I'm in stasis, and I don't really care but I care enough to ask you now to follow me on Twitter.

HRISHI: Yeah. Thanks as always to Margaret Miller and Zach McNees for helping us put together this episode.

JOSH: And thanks to Zach McNees for thanking Margaret Miller in Leo's voice last episode, that was a big hit with the listeners.

HRISHI: And thanks very much to Michael Hyatt for joining us. Thanks so much for listening and we hope you'll join us next week.

JOSH: Ok.

HRISHI: Ok.

MICHAEL: What's next?

[Outro Music]