

The West Wing Weekly
6.18: "La Palabra"
Guests: Eli Attie and Angelica Salas of CHIRLA

[Intro Music]

HRISHI: You're listening to The West Wing Weekly. I'm Hrishikesh Hirway.

JOSH: and I'm Joshua Malina.

HRISHI: Today we're talking about "La Palabra." It's episode 18 from season six.

JOSH: It was written by a lot Eli Attie, it was directed by Jason Ensler and it first aired on March 9th, 2005.

HRISHI: Here's the NBC synopsis: Santos goes to Sacramento for the last few days before Super Tuesday and while he's trying to push his healthcare agenda, the media pressures him to take a stand on California legislation to provide driver's licenses to illegal immigrants. Russell decides not to go to California and Hoynes places his own game of dodging the issue. Donna steps up and takes a more proactive role in the Russell campaign by becoming the new spokesperson. And joining us today, once again, our buddy: the brilliant Eli Attie.

ELI: Thank you very much. You're too kind.

JOSH: People sure like their Eli Attie, so we may be pushing it, but he's back folks.

ELI: There's no accounting for taste as I've always said.

JOSH: True.

HRISHI: Thank you for continuing to say yes, whenever we send out the bat signal.

ELI: Oh, it's a pleasure.

JOSH: Oh, someone had a good suggestion for that, somebody tweeted...

ELI: Something about the "at" signal?

JOSH: Oh yeah, the "at" signal.

HRISHI: The "at" signal!

ELI: I shouldn't be enabling that kind of pun.

JOSH: No, it's good. [Crosstalk] I like it

HRISHI: [Crosstalk] It's very good

ELI: Either as a writer and as also the keeper of this name, but...

HRISHI: [laughing]

JOSH: It's certainly worthy of *The West Wing Weekly* [ALL: laughing] and our pun work. I wish I were giving credit the right person, maybe I'll figure it out but; the "at" signal.

ELI: I don't know what it's shaped like is the problem. Probably just me, it's probably shaped like me.

HRISHI: That's right. Eli can you give us some background on this episode?

ELI: Yeah. Sure. Obviously, there are so many episodes in season six that had Matt Santos in them and including King Corn and a number of other prominent ones, but in my mind I saw the three that I wrote in a row as a bit of a trilogy: "Opposition Research" and "Freedonia" and "La Palabra" and it was John Wells who when he asked me to write the first two of those had said, "We're going to take this candidate and give him Josh Lyman and show them huddled in the back alley of a coffee shop in New Hampshire with no reporters and nobody interested in them and take them into a viable campaign." And even though the stirrings of viability happened at the end of "Freedonia" when Santos got into candidates debate that he didn't think he would get into, this is when he first becomes a player, I think, on the national stage. He wins the California primary, which is a very big deal so, I also wanted to play around with the sort of Josh/Santos relationship here which started a little bit brittle. Santos is somebody who was not particularly interested in politics and wanted to present his issues and didn't know how long he would last. In this episode is now somebody who appears to Josh on the surface to suddenly be very political and pulling punches and not wanting to talk about issues that Josh expects he would want to talk about and the fun of changing that dynamic is that you get the storyline here, I think of Josh worrying that he's taken this decent, principled guy who he was trying to beat into being less decent and less principled at the beginning of this arc and he's ruined him somehow.

HRISHI: Yeah.

ELI: Of course Santos had different game that he was playing and some things Josh didn't know about him, and reveals himself to be more complicated, but that was really the intention and I remember outlining this script actually in Toronto in my hotel in between scenes or at least my appearance on the set for scenes of "Opposition Research" and "Freedonia," so it was all kind of happening at once and I just remembered being a really fun time.

JOSH: They were certainly keeping you busy during this period of *The West Wing*.

ELI: Yes. I mean, it was great because I felt like the show as we've talked about in the past, was starting to veer into new territory. It also, this gave me a chance more than anything I did on *The West Wing*, to really mine my experiences on the [AI] Gore campaign in the year 2000, just what it was like on a campaign plane for instance. The rolling of the oranges and so many of the little details of life on the road being handed these index cards so you could just talk to some idiot donor on a tarmac in Kansas City and make them think that you remember them.

JOSH: So reporters rolling fruit questions down the aisle is real?

ELI: That's an absolutely real thing. You have the candidate far up in the front, often in their own cabin with a door, but in the very front section of the plane, then you have the staff in a sort of a second section and then behind the staff in a separate area are the Press. You can't go forward unless invited. Reporters can't wander up

into the staff cabin, because we could be having a meeting, I could be writing a speech and it could be stuff that we don't want the press to see.

HRISHI: They're like vampires; you have to invite them in

ALL: [laugh]

ELI: That is exactly right and what follows is usually pretty similar too [JOSH: laughs] but the orange thing, it happened on the [A] Gore campaign plane, and I know it happened on other campaign planes. I don't know how it started as a tradition, probably somebody's written about it, but the Press would write silly questions, serious questions and try to roll them all the way up to the candidate who sometimes would participate in; write something on magic marker and roll it back. Jason Ensler, the guy who directed this episode, did a fantastic job I think and the end of the very first day of shooting, as I recall, he shot the orange; and it was very tricky to film it rolling straight that great distance and I don't know, there might have been a lot, I was on and off the set that night, but it took a bunch of hours and cost a lot of money.

JOSH: Really?! Just for the orange?

ELI: Yeah. I think, this is just a theory, I never really asked anybody about this, but Jason did a great job on this episode, but I think that's why he was not back to direct another episode of the show; was that he went way over budget on that first day filming this orange roll and just watching it now for the first time since the episode was done, it may have been worth it because it's a really cool shot.

HRISHI: Yeah 'orange' you glad that you actually did it?

JOSH: Ha ha

ELI: I'm glad

HRISHI: Wait, but I have real practical questions about the oranges. First of all, a question gets rolled up and an answer comes back down. I mean, there are how many reporters on there? Are there, I mean, is there just like citrus flying back and forth and you have to figure out who gets what answer? One comes back and you're like, "oh I got an answer to this question" and someone's like, "actually that's my orange, will you pass it over here?" Like, how does it...?

ELI: [Laughs] It was not really...it was more that there would be a single orange in play, I think on any particular leg of the flight, just by custom. I can't recall a second orange. This is almost like a The Lone Gunman theory of the Kennedy assassination, the lone citrus, it wouldn't be serious interview questions. It would very often just sort of be a mocking comment or you know, what did you think of the Cubs game or maybe a question about a poll, but it was more the fun of getting to interact with the candidate and with the senior staff from back in that press section. So what would happen generally, which we don't really show in this I guess, is the orange would roll up with a question and the answer would be written right beneath it and then it would be rolled back down.

HRISHI: Got it.

ELI: And in this episode Josh just kind of took the orange and maybe got some vitamins on the fly.

HRISHI: When we do actually see Santos later participating like you said, where he rolls the question down, "Where is Hoynes?"

ELI: Yeah and I thought that was a fun visual moment at least in my mind as I was watching it again. It kind of reminded me that it was almost a symbol of him feeling suddenly facile about the politics of the campaign. At that moment, he's functioning, from Josh's point of view, more like the operative as opposed to the guy above it all who's just kind of thinking about principled stands on issues. Suddenly he's advising Josh on tactics and he's just very freely participating in, I think you can see on Brad's face in that moment a little bit of surprise

HRISHI: Right

ELI: A maybe concern for what he's turned him into

HRISHI: So this kind of goes along with him now suddenly engaging with the polls, even though the polls are giving them bad news.

[West Wing Episode 6.18 excerpt]

JOSH: So, uh...Santos was reading our internals on the plane last night.

LEO: Politician reads polls. Film at 11:00.

JOSH: He barely looked at them before.

LEO: You've been complaining about that for months.

JOSH: I know, but the guy's playing this to win...

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Santos is reading them and Josh's surprised by this and also a little bit dismayed that his reaction to them is not to look at the reality in the face and say, "Well it's probably time to pack up and go home." He's looking at polling numbers at all, which should be good but the polling numbers are bad and instead he's saying, "Let's keep going."

ELI: I mean that's a real phenomenon too. To run for president at all, it's interesting looking at the 2020 field and you look at people like Pete Buttigieg and Beto O'Rourke and you know, even somebody like say Kirsten Gillibrand who's at 1% in the polls, they probably all believe at some level that they've got a shot at this. It's so hard, you sacrifice so much. There's a kind of necessary delusion, but it wouldn't be unusual for the candidate to want to keep doubling down.

HRISHI: Yeah

ELI: And it usually falls to the staff to kind of go and have that conversation as we depict in this episode that it's time to fold up the tent. Josh has the conversation a couple different times, a couple different ways, and Santos isn't buying it. So this is partly also based on a true story of a guy I worked for on Capitol Hill. Though it happened to him a good deal before I worked for him. Dick Gephardt, who was the Democratic leader of the House for many years, he ran for president in 1988. He was in the House at the time. He planned to resign from the House – win, lose or draw – in that campaign. He ended up staying in the race of longer than he should have. He

won Iowa, he won Missouri, I think he won one other state. But stayed in past Super Tuesday and blew through a lot of money and lent the campaign money of his own and actually ended up staying in Congress, even though he hadn't intended to or wanted to originally, and also selling his house and moving into a smaller house further out in the suburbs of Virginia

HRISHI: In order to pay off his debts.

ELI: Yeah, and it just was so sad and so wrenching and I think it wasn't the plan for him or his family at that point. I didn't know him then and I never really had that conversation with him, but that became a big story here. Just what was it worth to Santos? And of course he has a different reason and that's kind of the historic nature of his candidacy, being the first viable Latino running for president and I think that was the idea really.

JOSH: Was Gephardt's situation known by the public at all as it was happening or is this something that came out later?

ELI: It came out later. I got it from a great book that I've probably mentioned before in this podcast called *What It Takes* that was about the '88 presidential campaign, follows a bunch of candidates. I still think it's the best book ever written on campaigns. It just captures the feel of them, the tone of them and they're definitely lots of *The West Wing* writers read that book and I think anybody who reads that book all the way through will find lots of nuggets that were purloined for the show.

JOSH: I'm going to read that book.

HRISHI: Yeah, me too.

ELI: It's a really fun read

JOSH: I can tell you that it is available through my Libby app. I'm able to take it out from the library. This is kind of thing I've publicizing, I shouldn't, [Hrishi laughs] I've been publicizing this on Twitter actually, I was amazed how it really took off. I feel like a lot of people don't know that you can take out Kindle books from your library. It's the most fabulous thing ever.

ELI: I like a public library.

HRISHI: Eli, I feel like there are some really nice callbacks and contrasts that get made in this episode. Contrasts to things that we've seen previously on *The West Wing*

JOSH: [imitating the voice over at the start of *The West Wing*] previously on *The West Wing*.

HRISHI: There it is. I wanted to ask you about a few of them. Well, the first one is this thing that Santo says early on when they bring up the idea for the first time about the central issue of undocumented immigrants getting driver's licenses. Josh sees the political landmine that it is and he has to go and he thinks he has to gear up to tell the candidate that he shouldn't speak about this thing even though he knows that it's something that he's probably passionate about

[West Wing Episode 6.18 excerpt]

JOSH: We can only lose here. I know you're going to want to speak out on this...

MATT: I don't want to speak out.

HELEN: You don't?

MATT: No.

[end excerpt]

*HRISHI: And that particular phrase, "I don't want to speak" reminded me of *Let Bartlet Be Bartlet**

[West Wing Episode 1.19 excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: I don't want to go to sleep like this.

LEO: You don't have to

PRESIDENT BARTLET: I want to speak.

LEO: Say it out loud. Say it to me.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: This is more important than re-election. I want to speak now.

LEO: Say it again.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: This is more important than re-election. I want to speak now.

LEO: Now we're in business.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Even the specific turn of phrase, "I don't want to speak out." I thought was an interesting opposite to that idea of the president.

ELI: That must have been in my mind and certainly a lot of Bartlet moments like that were in my mind. You have this staff around you as a candidate whose job is to tell you the tactical thing to do and to kind of tell you the political cost of doing things and I think this is always true. They don't want to be agreed with a hundred per cent of the time. In some ways you throw off the balance as the candidate when you suddenly say, "Oh, yeah, I'll function as the operative here."

HRISH: Right

ELI: So I think it definitely was an echo of Bartlet and it's also a reversal of the dynamic that Josh has developed with Santos where he feels, you can even see his kind of weariness when he's first told by Ronna, well this law has been sent to the governor's desk and what a disaster and that Santos is gonna want to say something about it and Josh is used to having these fights and a little weary of them. But it's the dance they do.

HRISHI: Yeah

ELI: I think I was trying to turn that dynamic on its head, Josh then plays that Leo role later where he basically says you have to be who you are which is not well received.

HRISHI: Another moment was Santos and Hickman the finance director and Josh are talking about the impossibility of the campaign continuing at its current financial burn. So Santos says maybe we could mortgage our house and Helen is not into the idea. But Santos says this thing, he says

[West Wing Episode 6.18 excerpt]

MATT SANTOS: And plan our Texas campaign on the back of a napkin?

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And maybe because I was already thinking about this because of the "I don't want to speak out", but the idea of a napkin being introduced as part of a campaign plan also, of course, has echoes

JOSH: Sure

HRISHI: of Leo and the President.

ELI: Yeah, that would have been, if that was an influence, it was probably subconscious simply because to me that's such a common phrase-

HRISHI: Right.

ELI: to do something hastily but you're right. I mean the napkin is probably one of the most iconic

HRISHI: Yes

ELI: *West Wing* props that there is.

HRISHI: You can't invoke a napkin

ELI: You can't, yeah. We all serve at the pleasure of the napkin.

HRISHI: [laughing] Yeah, exactly.

JOSH: It's interesting seeing Santos makes that, he goes from sort of pondering the decision, to making it without his wife's consent or real input. It's a good scene and also a good setup for what she's going to do later in terms of that decision, but it was an interesting uncomfortable peek into the personal side of the equation.

ELI: Yeah, you know watching this all these years later. I realized that so many of the people that I worked for in politics, which includes Dick Gephardt, includes Al Gore, had wives who didn't really love politics. They love their husbands and their husbands loved politics, but this is certainly was true of Tipper Gore when I worked for Vice President Gore, I would say that's what Santos, in his defense, he was just saying just let's have the mortgage papers

JOSH: Ready

ELI: As a backup, he was not saying, he's not making the decision as much as sort of teeing it up, but yes, he kind of gets out ahead of himself. She's not happy to hear it, but she also understands what Josh doesn't, in that conversation.

HRISHI: I wanted to dig in a little about the real life fight over driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants. I spoke to someone who is on the front lines of the fight right here in California.

ANGELICA: My name is Angelica Salas. I'm the Executive Director of CHIRLA, the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights.

HRISHI: Thank you so much for joining me and talking to me about this issue that's at the heart of the episode. So in 1994, California took away driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants.

ANGELICA: It was legislation that required a social security number to get a driver's license in order to collect child support. And if you're undocumented you don't have a Social Security number.

HRISHI: So the Bill was about child support. But taking away driver's licenses from undocumented immigrants was just an unintended consequence.

ANGELICA: That's right, and it was unintended consequence, but then when there was a realization that immigrants would be harmed, the author of the original legislation said, "So be it." This issue is more important. The collection of child support is more important than the harm that will come to undocumented immigrants by not being able to have access to a driver's license.

HRISHI: So in 1994 the Governor of California was Pete Wilson,

ANGELICA: Mm-hmm

HRISHI: and then Gray Davis was elected and Gray Davis, I think, is sort of the representative model for Governor Tillman that we see in this episode.

ANGELICA: Absolutely.

HRISHI: But even with Gray Davis in office, undocumented immigrants didn't actually have the full support of the state government.

ANGELICA: Oh, definitely. At that time in the early 2000s, a lot of Democrats were still not convinced that they should support undocumented immigrants. It really required a lot of courage for somebody to stand up and say "No, in fact, this is for the well-being of all Californians that we have people who are driving safely and know the rules of the road" so Gray Davis was very ambivalent and we wanted him to support reinstating driver's licenses. And that was the fight. He actually vetoed our legislation once, we tried again, and then the excuse that he had was that there was a lot of national attention to individuals who got driver's license who are immigrants in the case of September 11, the individuals got on the planes showing their state issued driver's license.

HRISHI: Yeah. So what's your take on Santos's position and the fact that he has his own ambivalence, at least in terms of what he wants to do publicly, what was your reaction to that?

ANGELICA: Well because I knew it was so early in the 2000s I was like, oh, wow. This was really telling the story of what was happening. So my thought about Santos was that he reflected what most Democrats were feeling at that time which was, "We know this is wrong. We know that this is not something that we should support because it's attacking a vulnerable community, but we don't have the courage to stand up." And so I saw Santos in that light and I think the conversation that he has with Executive Director of La Palabra is an example of that.

[West Wing Episode 6.18 excerpt]

ED "EDDY" GARCIA: We need you to denounce it in your speech to La Palabra tomorrow.

MATT SANTOS: I don't think I can do that Eddy. It would define my whole campaign. I don't want voters to see me as just the brown candidate.

EDDY: Then I hope some of them have black and white TVs.

[end excerpt]

ANGELICA: I just have to say that it really sparked a lot of recollections of how angry and upset I was because in many instances the Latino politicians that we wanted to stand with us were very ones who backed off of being ardent and vocal supporters on our behalf.

HRISHI: Yeah. So did you feel like you identified with that character, who's the representative from La Palabra?

ANGELICA: Yes. I felt like, oh my goodness; he was living and expressing a lot of my own personal back and forth with a lot of our Latino elected officials in the State of California at the national level. I was very much engaged in trying to get them to stand in support of our community.

HRISHI: And what do you think of Santos's ultimate action, that he doesn't actually say anything but he stands behind Governor Tillman? Does it feel like that's enough? Would you have been satisfied by that?

ANGELICA: No, I would not. In fact, I was very, that's why I was like, oh I was so upset, because I thought he was trying to get all the political credit without the political work.

HRISHI: Exactly. Yeah, I agree.

ANGELICA: Yeah, so it's very upsetting and but it was so real too, because in many instances you have individuals who say, they have the right rhetoric, but then when it actually, when you ask them to take a concrete vote or a concrete legislative action, they don't do it. But what it really said to me is how, many times politicians want the positive media coverage without actually doing the work to get that positive media coverage. I think it was true. When he said to the governor that it was important that non-Latino's stand up for immigrants,

[West Wing Episode 6.18 excerpt]

MATT SANTOS: Because people don't need to hear it from someone who looks like me. They need to hear from someone who looks like you.

[end excerpt]

ANGELICA: But that also does not excuse you as a Latino from actually doing what is right.

HRISHI: So in 2013, Governor Jerry Brown signed into law AB60, which would allow undocumented immigrants access to driver's licenses and then it actually came into effect in 2015. What did it actually take for it to finally get passed in 2013?

ANGELICA: It was gruelling, I have to just say, it's one of the most difficult fights in my lifetime, in terms of any policy that we've ever moved. It was a nail-biter to the very, very end. It took a lot of convincing of elected officials. It took a lot of negotiation in terms of what that driver's license was actually in the end going to look like, and how and if it was going to be differentiated between driver's license that an individual with a social security number could get, and one without, so there is some significant negotiation on that. At least for me, it was for working directly with the author and with a principle that if it was going to be different, it had to be discreet you, couldn't have such a difference that anybody could notice it and continue to discriminate against a person who is undocumented.

HRISHI: Right.

ANGELICA: So that was a big battle

HRISHI: Right. It couldn't be a different colour driver's license.

ANGELICA: Yeah, no. With many of the politicians, some of them weren't going for it and finally, it really took a conversation with Ricardo Lara and Kevin De León directly with the governor and the governor saying, "This is what I'm willing to do." They came back to us and we said, "Let's go for it." This is the compromise so it was very difficult, I have to say is one of the most difficult fights, but we finally got it passed and today over 1 million people are driving in California with a driver's license. It's an AB60 driver's license, but it's very similar to the regular driver's license and it's made a world of difference to immigrant families in our state.

HRISHI: And it makes the state safer, right?

ANGELICA: Absolutely.

HRISHI: I mean that's part of the argument. What did you find was the most effective argument that you could use to convince somebody who might have an opposite stance at one point, but eventually came around? Was there one line of reasoning that you found was the most effective or most convincing?

ANGELICA: Well, I think safety on the highways and safety in general and that's why we were able to get the support of the community because we actually had spokespeople who were police officers and highway patrolman and certainly the Chief of Police here in Los Angeles was a huge reason why we were able to move it forward. In addition to that, I think the business community coming on board and really restating why having driver's licenses for all meant that there would be more productivity and just economic well being for all.

HRISHI: How did you feel this episode of *The West Wing* did in terms of its articulation of the arguments for why undocumented immigrants ought to have driver's licenses?

ANGELICA: First, it upset me that once again, you had a situation in which the Democrat, in this case Santos, talked about how the border needed to be more secure and agreeing that the border needed to be fortified and that that would be a solution. But that in the meantime, we shouldn't punish the undocumented.

HRISHI: Let me pause right there just because I think it is a line that we're so accustomed to hearing that, everyone takes it for granted. Yes, we need to make our borders more secure and then you go on from there. But you're saying even that first part, that underlying premise, that caveat, you take issue with. Can you explain why?

ANGELICA: The reason that I take issue with the idea, the embracing that we have to have fortified borders and security at our borders, has actually led to billions and billions of dollars invested every year in fortifying the border lands, the border regions, militarizing them without really taking into account really what is driving people to leave their homes and to have to be forced to migrate, so that that is never answered and so because we haven't answered it, means that we've really wasted billions of dollars on the wrong solution.

HRISHI: But Santos buys into this

ANGELICA: Absolutely. Santos buys into it just the way that so many Democrats early in the 2000s did. What has happened for all these years, because we have not passed immigration reform, has been that billions of dollars have been invested in border security. We now spend about over twenty billion dollars a year on border security. We have more ICE agents, more border patrol agents than we've ever had. We still are not solving the root problem, which is poverty, violence, war, that really deals with forcing people to come to the United States and flee their country. We still don't have legalization for the undocumented immigrants who are in this country and we're still having an erroneous debate on how much more are we going to fortify that border? And now we want to build a wall, the biggest wall that we've ever seen, and we continue to have immigration and immigrants as really scapegoats in this whole entire debate, but also utilized as a campaign issue and it continues to be a place where I think that Democrats have gotten so much better in understanding how they need to be proactive and not defensive on the issue.

HRISHI: Now that we're 14 years past this episode and even you know, six years since the passage of AB60, do you think that at least in the State of California, we're past the point of debating whether or not this is a valid system?

ANGELICA: Oh, absolutely. I'm so proud of the work that we've been part of and with many of my colleagues who are in immigrant rights organizations and labor unions and certainly those brave politicians that stood with us. We are a pro-immigrant state. We are a state that understands that half its population is either an immigrant or a child of an immigrant, that if immigrants thrive, we all thrive. Now with our new governor, Governor Newsom, his first trip outside of the country was to El Salvador to really drive home the idea that California can be a leader, a global leader on the issue of immigration and that the old ways and the old ideas of what solutions are not getting us anywhere. And again, that California moves forward if immigrants move forward.

HRISHI: Angelica, thank you so much. This is fascinating. I really appreciate you taking the time to talk to me about it.

ANGELICA: I appreciate it. Thank you so much for having me on the show. The driver's license issue is an issue that's very close to my heart. It really was a battle in my life as an activist. I learned so much but I also saw the incredible reward in terms of seeing families' lives change because they had access to a driver's license. So many people who came up to me and said, "This will change my life. I can actually drive my kids school without driving in fear", and there's just so many things that came from that are all good. So, thank you.

HRISHI: Ok, and now my third point of this Leo/Bartlet – Josh/Santos parallelism is at the end of the episode, after he sort of made the principled stand while still kind of adhering to some version of not talking about the driver's license Bill itself. He goes and he actually stands with the Governor of California as he vetoes it. He's sort of able to kind of have it both ways in that moment, but most importantly I think you know, he stands with his beliefs and visibly is objecting to the Bill, even if he isn't saying anything about it. Anyway, after all of that happens, he does one more round of press and it's only after that point, that you let him say the words. What's next?

JOSH: Ah, yes.

ELI: Yeah.

HRISHI: And I thought he earned it now.

ELI: Yeah, that's true. I always felt, I've said this before, this – even in his absence – this was Aaron Sorkin's show. Obviously Santos was a different guy. He was a Latino mayor, had this completely different background than Jed Bartlet, but some of this was imagining what the Leo/Bartlet dynamic would have been like, that we only got little hints of through their conversations and through the way they behaved in the White House. And that was the fun of this was, I always would try to imagine what Aaron would do. Could you reference something he had done? So all of that is deliberate.

HRISHI: Yeah, I loved how that was set up. At least the way that I read it, that there were these two moments of him being very sort of un-*West Wing*-like or un-Bartletesque and then finally he changes direction and then he gets to actually say Bartlet's words.

JOSH: I thought there was a nice tip of the hat to Aaron in the inability of any of the characters get Paul Hickman's name right. That was also Sorkinesque.

ELI: Of course. Yes. His tropes were certainly, open season on those.

JOSH: And we got to meet Tillman. I was delighted. It's obviously a major figure for Will Bailey having written the speech delivered by Gabe Tillman at the Stanford Club. It was nice to finally meet Governor Gabriel Tillman and see him in the form of Ray Wise.

ELI: Yeah, he was great and I thought he's a great actor. He was in the original *Twin Peaks* and has been in so many great movies.

JOSH: I just look at his *IMDb* page, has two hundred thirty eight credits, Ray Wise. He's been in everything.

HRISHI: One of my favorite credits of his is in the music video for the song *Wishes* by *Beach House*. Those directed by Eric Wareheim of Tim and Eric.

ELI: Oh my goodness.

HRISHI: Yep.

JOSH: I'll check it out.

HRISHI: It's a great, weird video and it really pulls in all of the weirdness of Ray Wise's Leland Palmer and unleashes it

JOSH: Huh

HRISHI: But you know it's funny because Tillman it is this big figure because of his prominence in our introduction to Will Bailey, but I was actually thrown off from connecting him just because of the casting of Ray Wise. It actually took me a second to realize that this was the same person, I think because Ray Wise has such a specific face. I don't know how to put this more articulately but he has such a specific face that in some ways, it's too specific for what I was imagining for Governor Tillman being this off-screen political figure. I just imagined somebody more generic.

ELI: Well, it's also true sometimes, that when you have an actor who's very recognizable from something, it's harder to imagine them as some fictional creation. You're bringing your other reference points to it. It's one of the reasons I think some of the great TV shows, *West Wing* included, the shows make the stars and not the other way around and I think that's often said about TV as opposed to movies. You want to just believe that Josh Malina is Will Bailey, that Brad Whitford is Josh Lyman and I think some of the episodes where we cast very recognizable guest stars. It takes you a little longer to sort of buy into them as the characters. That's always the case.

JOSH: Ok, let's take a quick break and when we come back, we'll have more on "La Palabra" with Eli Attie.

[Ad break]

HRISHI: Speaking of casting we're introduced to a new character on the Santos team, Bram who's played by Matthew Del Negro.

JOSH: Yes.

ELI: Yes. Lovely guy who Josh worked with on *Scandal* for a long time.

JOSH: That is true. It was fun. It was fun to be reunited. He's a great guy and a terrific actor and I clearly now have to work out the scheduling to appear on his, he has a podcast called *10,000 "No"s*, which is sort of about how failure figures into people's lives and they can learn and grow from it.

ELI: He's great. I mean basically he's a version of Charlie Young if we had gotten to see Charlie on the campaign trail with Bartlet more. It's really what we think of as a body guy.

HRISHI: It's funny because I didn't think of Charlie when I saw him, between the index cards and the reminders of who people are that Santos is going to meet with, and his you know, just his handsomeness. He reminded me specifically of a cross between Dan Egan from *Veep*.

JOSH: Yes!

HRISHI: And also, Gary from *Veep*. Like he was these two opposite figures in Selina Meyer's world: these two staffers one who is like this slimy know-it-all and the other is the person who just has every piece of information of who this person is at their fingertips. It's like you managed to combine them into this one character.

JOSH: That's funny cause I remember way back when seeing Dan Egan on *Veep* and thinking of Matthew.

HRISHI: Really?

JOSH: He's like that guy.

HRISHI: Yeah, exactly

ELI: Interesting, interesting. I mean Matt did such a great job in the show. He was a recurring actor on *The Sopranos* before we cast him in this and you just instantly believe him in this role.

HRISHI: I think it's so interesting when a new character gets introduced because Bram is going to continue to be in episodes into the future. So when you wrote this character, when you were writing the script, did you know that you were writing a new recurring character? I mean, it seems like you've added a member to the team and I'm wondering like was there a directive in the writers' room that, "hey we're going to add a new person", because it puts more pressure on the casting process. I mean, it's a, it has different ramifications, right?

ELI: Yeah, that's absolutely right. No, as I recall there wasn't a big group discussion of it. But when I was sitting down and starting to work on this episode and thinking about what it's like to campaign when you have your own plane, when you're really in the bubble for the first time which was not the case in the early going of Iowa, New Hampshire where you trying to really just be out there on your own more with voters, you need a person like this and I just remember, I remember when I first started, when the Gore campaign first began, and it was, we were in a crazy bubble from the beginning because he was the Vice President. I thought these index cards were hilarious, the fact that he was actually briefed on, you know, you sat next to this guy, you talked about his daughter being a sophomore at Princeton and what she's studying and it just seemed so...then you would you'd show up on the tarmac and say, "Phil, it's great to see you. We had so much fun at the Giants game and how's your daughter Amy?" and they would think you really remember. It was so craven and cynical and weird. So I think the character, I really probably created the character for that, to be a vehicle for that and had it not worked out, we just would have dropped the character after an episode. As it turned out, all the writers liked Matt's work a lot. Sometimes it's a plan and you try to cast a name or you sort of advertised it as a recurring role, which can get you an actor of bigger stature. I think we just hired Matt for a single episode and we just all liked him and kept using him. And that's the best way to do it. You kind of look at what's on the screen, you look at what you're getting. TV is so great in that way as opposed to movies because it's a constant feedback loop.

HRISHI: I want to talk for a second about Donna. It's another instance of parallelism I think in this, within this episode that I really like, because you mentioned how Josh was fretting about this idea that he had changed Santos into this political thinker and this contrast between the operator and the believer that Leo brings up. There's a similar dynamic for a second between, not that she's a candidate, between Will and Donna where he says, "I've created a monster."

[West Wing Episode 6.18 excerpt]

DONNA: They're just sitting around buying this sore throat nonsense? If we can't interest them in our education plan, maybe we can interest them in this.

WILL: I've created a monster.

DONNA: Bad idea?

WILL: No. Good idea. That's what worries me.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: This is such a nice episode for Donna and just such a huge shift. It really like brings to light how dramatic the change in her career has been where over four and a half seasons with Josh Lyman as her boss, she tried to do more and she rarely got the chance to and she had to kind of claw her way to getting anywhere at all. Where as here she goes to Will to try and make a case for her to be able to do more for the campaign and before she's finished her pitch, she's gotten a promotion

ELI: Right.

JOSH: That's Will. That's Will for you. What a great guy. A better boss.

ELI: I think it's um, well there's I guess two things I would say about that: one is the as Josh knows better than anybody, this was kind of Will Bailey's own story, right? He was thrown in the deep end, twice really, both when he was hired as a presidential speechwriter and not even accompanied to his first big meeting with the president and then when he was hired by the vice president and in politics, the staff are young, they're always thrown in the deep end, there's more than enough work to go around always, but I just think especially for somebody who was an assistant for so long, which does happen and she's so talented and she's so smart and he just knew that already and it was what he'd been through. So the fun of that was simply saying yes before she got a chance to finish her sentence and suddenly she's doing the job.

HRISHI: Right

JOSH: Yeah. Completely put on the spot in front of cameras, and she handles it with aplomb.

ELI: Maybe I had a bit of a view of Will Bailey as a little unsentimental at times and I like that that would be his way of doing it. That there's not a sort of a flags billowing in the background moment with her, that he just empowers her and lets her kick ass at her new job. And he's worried that he's turned her into a monster, you know Donna, I think especially in the earlier seasons of the show represented sometimes a bit of an innocent.

HRISHI: Right

ELI: She was an assistant and here she is functioning like an operative and a strategist, which of course she would after being around it for five years.

[West Wing Episode 6.18 excerpt]

BILL BREWER: So you're the new spokesperson.

DONNA MOSS: I think this was kind of a tryout.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: I like that he makes her read it once to him first. It's kind of like a little audition, "Here read this," she reads a few sentences, "Ok now turn around and read it."

ELI: They're nice scenes and you guys had a really nice dynamic I think.

JOSH: I had fun working with her.

HRISHI: And then Donna is the crux of this discovery of what happens ultimately to Hoynes. Throughout the whole episode Hoynes is really, he only appears in one scene, but his presence is felt everywhere because he kind of looms like the spectre over the California primary race between the driver's license Bill which Russell has already come out against, which is a political calculation because 67% of Californians are against it, and Hoynes comes out for, and there's political calculus there as well. He gets the endorsement of the governor and a third of voters in California are Latino and the expectation is that he'll get their support too and everybody's trying to make their moves based on what they think Hoynes is doing or is going to do or the way the voters are going to react to Hoynes's actions and I really love how Donna is the one who pulls on threads, has this chance encounter with Brewer, the Issues Director and then manages to kind of have her own little detective story in the episode.

[West Wing Episode 6.18 excerpt]

DONNA: He's just cancelled his first policy speech, and Brewer's not packed, and this isn't a guy who throws things in a duffel bag, and why would he be working on a press statement if they were physically...

WILL: Whoa, slow down. I'll lend you some punctuation.

DONNA: Hoynes is still here.

[end excerpt]

ELI: Especially in crowded primary campaigns, there's a bit of a complicated chess game going on and your candidate only has limited time and he or she is the most precious resource you have, so what states you choose to play in, in a crowded contested primary is a really important decision. And those decisions are usually very closely held. Candidates don't release their schedules far in advance to the Press, usually just the day before and so it's entirely plausible that Hoynes wanted to fake out the Santos campaign and make them think he wasn't going and make them make some kind of been politically unhelpful statement on this driver's license Bill and then

show up anyway and clean their clocks. And so that was all from my own experience on the Gore campaign of learning that George W Bush was suddenly campaigning in a state that we didn't think he was campaigning in and how do you react to that? And do you change your schedule? And is it a head fake? I love that stuff.

JOSH: Are there stories of elaborate subterfuge where events are planned that are, no one ever intends to attend? There's creating a fake itinerary that you're not going to honor.

ELI: Well, I can't think of something like that. But the thing that comes closest in my mind is toward the end of the 2000 campaign W Bush actually started campaigning in states, I think possibly California, maybe even New York, that he had no chance of winning and no one was sure why and it was definitely a psych out. And a lot of people thought that what Karl Rove was trying to do was make swing voters think that he was going to win so big that he actually had a chance at these states

HRISHI: Right

ELI: Because there's some research to show that undecided voters break for the person who they think is going to win toward the end of a campaign.

JOSH: Oh, that's fascinating.

ELI: So that was one fake out but you're on the opposing campaign and you suddenly see your opponent is campaigning in one of your best states. Sometimes a state that you should have written off, you visit simply to make the other side put more time and money into ads and personal appearances there, just to defend something that should have been left to you. You're going to win it anyway, but they make you work harder to win it

HRISHI: Eli, do you know, is the California Democratic primary a winner-take-all situation, or is it a slice of the pie situation?

ELI: That's a good question. I don't know the answer off the top of my head. I guess I thought it was winner-take-all, but I'm not a hundred percent sure.

HRISHI: Yeah, because then of course that makes sense why that you might not even bother showing up because if it's not winner take all then it would make sense to invest what you can in the state anyway in hopes of pulling at least some delegates, right?

ELI: Absolutely.

HRISHI: We can just say in the world of *The West Wing*, it is a winner-take-all state.

ELI: Yeah

HRISHI: Right

ELI: But I think for Santos, even if it isn't winner-take-all, what he's doing makes sense because what Hickman's explains when he finally gets to meet with Santos early in the episode is that, really for the donor community if nothing else, Santos needs to beat expectations

HRISHI: Right.

ELI: And if he doesn't, he's dead.

HRISHI: Right. So the second place might not even have to do with anything about delegates.

ELI: That's right

JOSH: Right. It's about raising money.

ELI: At this point he's just got to stay viable

HRISHI: Got it.

ELI: And I think it's said in the episode that Russell wins the bulk of the Super Tuesday States and Santos wins California doesn't mean he's on his way to the nomination yet. It means he lives to fight another day without mortgaging his house.

HRISHI: Also, at the beginning of the episode it was he was third in a three-way race now, he might be second in a two-way race and it might even be close.

ELI: That's right and who gets Hoynes votes. Everything is turned on its head in the last, you know few minutes here, but I think it was David Axelrod who had said to me that as a candidate, the first thing you need to do is beat expectations. And the next thing you need to do is beat the other guy.

JOSH: Hey Hrishi, you mentioned the character Brewer earlier who I guess is Hoynes's Issues guy.

HRISHI: Yeah. Yeah, the person who kind of is flirting with Donna.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: And she uses it like a good spy. She uses it to her advantage.

JOSH: Yeah, it's kind of yeah; she sees a honey pot situation.

HRISHI: Yeah

JOSH: Not that she created intentionally. I think Eli you have a – don't you have a story about casting that role.

ELI: I do. I was a giant fan from the first minute I saw them of all the early Whit Stillman movies: *Metropolitan*

HRISHI: Me too.

ELI: And *The Last Days of Disco*. I also love Noah Baumbach's movies, especially his first one *Kicking and Screaming*; I thought it was such a wonderful little film. And Chris Eigeman was one of the main actors in all those movies and I just always thought that not only was he great in those movies, but he had the kind of fun sort of verbal dexterity that would have made him perfect in an Aaron Sorkin vehicle, but I needed somebody to tell the Hoynes story from the Hoynes side and it wasn't going to be Hoynes because the whole story is, where is Hoynes? And what's up with Hoynes? And does he have a sore throat? So as I was just outlining the episode I

called our casting department and said, "I've got this part" and then I just asked them, "Do you want to offer this role to Chris Eigeman?" and they did. I think they waited till I had a script, but they did and he would have been so great. But he, I think had a wedding or some personal plan and just didn't want to travel to California to shoot those scenes, which was very disappointing to me. The guy who stepped into the role was fantastic and did a great job. So it's no dishonor there

HRISH: And that was Michael Reilly Burke.

ELI: Yeah, he was great and he fit right in

JOSH: Who wasn't too good for *The West Wing*.

ELI: Well, I you know, Chris Eigeman, who knows he might have been personally busy and I still am a huge fan of his

HRISHI: Josh, I forget if I've talked to you about this on our podcast previously about the love I have in my heart for Chris Eigeman.

JOSH: I think so. Yeah.

HRISHI: Yeah actually because of *Kicking and Screaming* too, Eli, we talked about Carlos Jacott who was on an episode, he was one of the Governor Bartlet meetings about leaf peeping.

ELI: That's right.

HRISHI: And when he showed up, I was really thrilled about that and those characters occupy a place in my heart and my sister's heart that Josh, you also occupy, especially at the time in like the around 1999-2000. And it would have been a thrill to see him in a *West Wing* episode.

ELI: I felt the same way about Josh Malina myself, really from *Bulworth*, which is I think the only thing I'd seen him in other than maybe his one or two scenes in I guess it's *The American President*, but I think that he and Chris Eigeman had a similar and have a similar ability to be fun and verbal in a very specific way that's just perfect for this kind of material.

JOSH: Thanks man. I appreciate that.

HRISH: I want to mention a thing that happens that Josh, you do in this episode that is nonverbal that I really love. This happened once one other time on the podcast where we talked about it, Josh, where Will Bailey suddenly had this little streak of Josh Malina that really came through on screen

JOSH: [laughs] I'm excited to hear what it was.

HRISH: It's the moment when, after Donna wakes up Will, and she tells him her theory; you roll over onto the bed and you pick up the phone and the way that you've picked up the phone [JOSH laughs], I was like, "There's Josh, right there!"

JOSH: That's a good bust. That's a hundred percent true. I kind of flip it into my hand with my other hand, yeah

HRISH: [laughs] Yeah, you don't just pick up the phone, you have, there's a little panache where you flick it and you in catch it in your other hand and it's just; I love what it gives Will, which is the idea that he can go from asleep to back up in action not just awake and groggy but like actually had a little pizzazz to him too. I like what it gives him but it also just felt like that was a moment of like, "There's my friend right there on TV".

JOSH: [laughing] Yeah, that's very funny. I thought the same thing when I watched it. I was like; I hope that works because that is just me like [Hrishi laughs] I could do this with this with the receiver the phone that would be fun. And I do remember filming that scene; it's funny, as great as the dialogue always is on *The West Wing* and in this episode, it's really, really enjoyable to have a scene that's largely just behavior and it's just it's a great scene and the relationship between Donna and Will and there's three in the morning and I also, I'm always tired, so I like playing scenes in bed. It's just like, "I can do tired very easily" and I also remember there's always a lot of waiting, people doing lights, I would just stay in bed and just lie there which was fine, "I'm like just maybe I'll actually fall asleep and she'll wake me up".

ELLI: That's hilarious.

JOSH: And it's also super fun when, you can't really screw up having water poured in your face. It's just like; it just is what it is. Like there's no acting [crosstalk]

HRISHI: [crosstalk] It gives you everything you need

JOSH: Look what you just did. That was a lot of fun to do.

ELLI: One of the fun things about this period in *The West Wing* for me anyway, is that by mixing up everybody's jobs and objectives, you get to see people play very different things and it's interesting to look at the arc of Will Bailey suddenly being a boss

JOSH: Yeah

ELLI: And the kind of a busy boss, which is very unlike Will Bailey when he was just a presidential speechwriter and communications aide. He doesn't really have time to explain what Donna's new job is to her. You know, he doesn't really, it's all done on the fly and he takes on so much more authority and I don't know if Josh had that experience in this season, but in, and this is true of Donna too in this episode, it's fun to see how they act really different roles.

JOSH: Yeah, no. That was a great thrill for me. That's why even as I think people started to like my character less [laughing] I was enjoying doing all that. I was enjoying the shift in professional situation and how that affects a person and yeah, maybe is less charming and less boyish and less likable. He's gotten something more important to do now. He's in a different slot work-wise and he's got to get things done.

ELLI: Yeah, it's not that character's job to be likable

JOSH: No

ELLI: In any case.

HRISHI: I still don't get the likeability thing really. I mean, I know that people said that they didn't like Will Bailey or whatever. I don't get it. We don't need to get into it again. But I just like, even just watching this episode, I like this character of course, like who's not going to like somebody who recognizes the innate talents and abilities in Donna and doesn't hesitate to like vault her into a more important position. That's awesome. I mean, like everybody loves Donna, as Josh Lyman has said

[West Wing Episode 4.20 excerpt]

JOSH: How can you not like Donna? She's from Wisconsin.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And, I don't know, he's great. I think he's great, even you know, he's trying to do his job. He's got his candidate. He's trying to do the best thing.

JOSH: Look, Will has his supporters. They're just a more, a smaller and more discerning lot than the average [Hrishi and Eli laugh] *West Wing* fan; Wing Nut, who's all about the original core heroes.

ELI: It's like that line from *Spinal Tap*; it's not that he's less popular

[This is Spinal Tap excerpt]

IAN FAITH: I just think that their appeal is becoming more selective.

[end excerpt]

ALL: [laugh]

JOSH: There you go.

HRISHI: One last thing I was going to say about the phone flip, which is that it falls into this category that I really love that, my friend Kevin and I have talked about for years since we were in high school. It's cheap thrills, we just call it cheap thrills, and Josh, I think one of the ways that you and I relate is a tacit understanding of the love of the cheap thrill.

JOSH: Mm-hmm

HRISHI: It materializes just in the classic way I think of it is, you know, you're walking down the sidewalk and there's a low fence and instead of walking on the sidewalk for the length of that fence, you hop up on there and you do a little like tightrope walk across that. It's just a cheap thrill.

JOSH: The cheap thrill. I love it. I found a new phrase.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: That's the story of my day every day. I've maybe someday I should; maybe we should work on it together, I've always had my mind, a little short film of how I go through the day, but where like every moment is a cheap thrill

HRISHI: Yeah

JOSH: Because nothing is, nothing is done normally

HRISHI: Exactly! Exactly. You gotta go for the cheap thrill

JOSH: Any little opportunity like that is taken. Yeah.

HRISH: There's one part of this episode that cracked me up to, just again because of echoes in the past, poor Josh Lyman just can't avoid putting his foot in his mouth when it comes to race. The moment when Santos says to him

[West Wing Episode 6.18 excerpt]

MATT SANTOS: And not for nothing Josh, Garcia can tell me if he thinks I'm not Latino enough. You can't, ok?

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: We just made me immediately think of Fitzwallace saying to Josh.

[West Wing Episode 6.18 excerpt]

ADMIRAL PERCY FITZWALLACE: No, but could you tell me more about Jackie Robinson and breaking barriers?

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Which was funny but it also made me wonder about this central issue to this episode, that Santos alludes to over the course of it, but especially I think boils it down in the limousine with Ray Wise where he says that talking about this issue, about why this Bill is wrong doesn't need to come from someone who looks like him, it needs to come from someone who looks like Ray Wise. It needs to come from somebody white in order to have the kind of impact that it needs. As a writer, when you're writing for a character and you're talking about an issue like this, how much are you concerned with that idea as well? As a white person, did you feel like you had to take particular cares or go through additional steps or just think about this differently because of the racial component of the subject matter?

ELI: Unbelievable amount of care that I took and felt that I had to take. I made a million phone calls to staff people working for Latino state legislators in California, contacts I'd made back from the beginning of this season, when I was working on the first of these campaign episodes. I had long talks with Jimmy Smits, who at the time I was really conceiving this episode and outlining it, I was in Toronto with him a lot of the day because he was shooting other episodes on location. So I never would presume just based on my silly imaginings, to do something like that, but it was a concept that somebody had mentioned to me. I think while researching one of those earlier episodes that, with these tricky sort of immigration issues. Not that it sets it back, if say a Latino politician comes out against something like the Trump immigration policy, doesn't necessarily set it back; they all have and they all should, but it's easy to dismiss that opposition. It's easy to say, "Well, you're the person, you're the race that benefits," and there's something very powerful and it was not an idea I made up, it was an idea that somebody gave me. I can't recall who. That the courageous thing the thing, that might change minds, is that somebody who seems like they should be on the opposite side of the issue comes around. You know, it's Nixon in China to some degree. And you know, I had some really interesting conversations with Jimmy about what it was like to be a Latino actor who became a

huge star, when he was on *LA Law*, and suddenly like a Latino icon and how did he feel about that? And did he want to be viewed that way?

HRISHI: And at the point when you were writing this, had you already had the conversation with David Axelrod about State Legislator Obama and that candidates desire to be viewed as post-racial.

ELI: Absolutely. And I think there's lines in this episode that come out of that same, well, things that Axelrod had told me earlier that I was still kind of using. Just this idea of, "I'm not going to be the brown candidate, but I'm going to find my way to advance that cause" and look Barack Obama, even though he refused to be defined by and limited by his race, to sort of borrow Axelrod's words, he simply by being viable as a mainstream politician and by being elected president, let alone being the nominee and winning all these states in the early going, he advanced that cause in historic terms.

[West Wing Episode 6.18 excerpt]

MATT SANTOS: I am running for President in that Texas primary. And those kids are going to see me do that. And that's the only statement about my skin color I intend to make in this campaign.

[end excerpt]

ELI: It all boils down to the story that Jimmy, that Matt Santos tells Josh about these kids in his old neighborhood who thought the only reason the FBI would show up was if someone was in trouble

JOSH: It's a good story.

ELI: By showing them there's another model. Yeah it's an amazing story, which is completely stolen from the life of Charlie Rangel.

JOSH: Fantastic.

ELI: Who was a congressman, long-time congressman from Harlem, and he told that story. It was a little bit different but basically he was up for a job at Bobby Kennedy's Justice Department when he first got out of law school, but they came back to him and said, "We can't give you the job because we can't confirm even basic details of you from talking to the people whose names you gave us." And he went back to his old neighborhood in Harlem and a bunch of people his age came running down the street toward him as they saw him and they said, "Charlie, Charlie! The feds were here looking for you. We told them we never heard of you."

JOSH: [laughs] So great. It's one of my favorite parts of the episode.

ELI: It's a great story. I can't take any credit for it.

JOSH: Do you know if Charlie Rangel ever heard his, that version out of Matt Santos?

ELI: That's a very good question. No, I have no idea. I never really interacted with him again.

HRISHI: To bring it back again to an earlier *West Wing* episode, it restates in a really beautiful way and a really poignant way here of, and of course this characters much bigger figure in the in our lives now, but it reminds me of the moment in "20 Hours in America" where the president is talking to a new congressman, new Asian American congressman, and he says, "You have a symbolic responsibility."

[West Wing Episode 4.01 excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: But your biggest responsibility isn't symbolic, right?

CONGRESSMAN PETER LIEN: Yes, sir.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: What is it?

PETER LIEN: It's to my district, my country and the Congress of the United States.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Welcome, my friend, to the show that never ends.

PETER LIEN: Thank you, Mr. President.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: It's a mini version and I feel like you expanded that idea and made it kind of come to life. It was like the seed and you gave us the whole plant.

ELI: It's such a fascinating and complicated issue as America now is on its way to becoming a majority-minority country. I think people under the age of, I don't know, 18 or 20 now in this country are majority-minority. It's one of the reasons I think that Trump style politics will be not possible when that generation is older and most of the voting population, but Santos was designed with an eye on Barack Obama, but designed to be a sort of a transitional figure and it's really tricky for those transitional figures to navigate, leading the generation behind them, while not alienating the generation above them

HRISHI: How deeply did you want us to believe that Santos was going to lose, that this was the end of the road for this campaign. You send Josh in to once again try and have this conversation with him, about the realities of it and this one is the big one, he puts it in no uncertain terms. He says, "It's time to step off the stage," and to me it felt like it wasn't played as a set up for a dramatic irony or some kind of...it really felt like the way it was written and the way it was acted and directed, it really felt like it was just an introduction of a possible end for this storyline.

ELI: Yeah. I mean I had, very deeply as the answer to your question, I definitely wanted people to think the whole time that this could well have been Josh Lyman's folly and then he goes back to the White House and maybe we follow these other candidates. The impact of the ending is only greater if you think that there's real jeopardy there, there's a moment that I read about, when Bill Clinton was standing on the side of the stage for his nominating convention in 1992, and he was about to go give his big convention address as the Democratic nominee for President, talk about a come-from-behind victory given all the disasters that happened in that campaign

HRISHI: Sure.

ELI: And he was standing next to George Stephanopoulos and turned to him and said, "Did you ever think we'd get this far?" and George said, "No." And Clinton went

out and gave that speech and Matt Santos shouldn't have won California. There's 50 reasons why he shouldn't have won but this is the realm of the unpredictable. It just is, and hopefully everything seems plausible. You know, Hoynes had his Me Too problem, which wasn't the first one that he had. But you're just kind of along for this crazy ride and you don't really know the outcome.

HRISHI: Eli, thank you so much for joining us again.

JOSH: You've done it again

ELI: Pleasure. It's so much fun.

JOSH: Thanks for listening, that does it for another episode of *The West Wing Weekly*.

HRISHI: If you don't already, go do yourself a favor, follow Eli on Instagram or on Twitter. He's @EliAttie on Twitter. He's @Eli.Attie on Instagram and you can leave a comment for us on our website, on our Facebook page, or you can tweet at us as well. *The West Wing Weekly* is a proud member of Radiotopia from PRX. You can find out about all the great podcasts on Radiotopia at Radiotopia.fm

JOSH: Ok.

HRISHI: Ok.

ELI and ANGELICA: What's next?

[Outro Music]