

The West Wing Weekly  
0.12: "How Barack Obama Shaped Matthew Santos"  
Guests: David Axelrod and Eli Attie

[Intro Music]

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

JOSH: And I'm Joshua Malina, and today we've got a special season 6 bonus episode for you coming off the heels of our discussion last week with Eli Attie about the episode "Freedonia."

HRISHI: We're so thrilled to be joined today by David Axelrod. He's the former Chief Strategist and Senior Advisor to President Barack Obama. He's the founder and director of the University of Chicago Institute of Politics. And he's the host of his own podcast *The Axe Files*. We're also joined by our old friend Eli Attie, *West Wing* writer and producer and former Chief Speechwriter to Vice President Gore. Thank you both for joining us.

ELI: A great pleasure.

DAVID: Good to be with you.

HRISHI: Today we're talking about how the character of Congressman Matt Santos was influenced by then-Senator Barack Obama at the time of his creation. So I'd like to start a conversation by going back to the summer of 2004. Eli, could you let us know what was going on that summer?

ELI: Yeah and just as amazing as it seems, the character was really influenced by then-State Legislator Barack Obama.

JOSH: Oh yeah?

ELI: Which is kind of a crazy thing to think about. Basically what happened was at the beginning of the sixth season of the show, we had done one season already post Aaron's departure from the show and it was John Wells sitting down with all the writers, we had a little writer's retreat before beginning the sixth season, he made the, I think, the very wise decision that, you know, having survived—maybe barely survived, you know, one season without our sort of visionary/creator, that it was time to mix up the show. Why not mix it up? Why not introduce some new energy into the show also? Also, so the writers were not simply trying to write a lesser version of the show that Aaron Sorkin had written, quite frankly, and it was John's idea that he introduced to the group, that we run the next campaign to succeed the Martin Sheen character on the show, and we had a lot of discussion and debate about what that should look like and who a Democrat should be and who are Republican should be, and maybe this was a very California-centric decision, but we kind of came to the conclusion and John really sort of led us to that conclusion, that the thing that seemed most likely as something coming over the horizon in American politics—that maybe we could be a little bit ahead of—was a Latino Democratic nominee for President of the United States, you know, the character was created and introduced in a few scenes here and there in a couple episodes and you've already talked about some of those, but then John, because I think all my campaign experience, John had asked me to write two episodes together which would be shot

together actually on location in Toronto, which became "Opposition Research" and "Freedonia," that would really be the first two episodes all about this character Matt Santos. So we had him in a few scenes. He'd already given his little speech written by Brad Whitford about hope and change, which totally coincidentally seemed to parrot all of David's good work.

DAVID: I can't believe you stole that in advance.

HRISHI and JOSH: [laughing]

ELI: We stole it in advance. We stepped in our time portal, but I was sort of given the task and, I didn't create the character, but I was given the task of sitting down and writing two hours worth of material about who he was and what he stood for. And the first thing that I started to do was to research prominent Latino politicians, there's a number in California, and try to find somebody who looked like they could really be a player on the national stage and represent the kind of Bartlet-esque optimism and progressivism that we wanted for the show. And it was around that time that Barack Obama gave his unbelievable stirring keynote address at the 2004 Democratic Convention.

[Barack Obama's 2004 Democratic National Convention Keynote Address excerpt]

*BARACK OBAMA: The hope of a skinny kid with a funny name who believes that America has a place for him too. Hope, hope in the face of difficulty. Hope in the face of uncertainty. The audacity of hope, in the end that is God's greatest gift to us, the bedrock of this nation.*

[end excerpt]

ELI: I had known David a little bit in politics already and actually totally ironically, the one thing David and I had worked together on in politics was the never delivered victory speech for Freddy Ferrer who was running for mayor of New York in 2001 and you know would have been the first Latino mayor of New York, but basically, I'd seen David's name and some articles and I knew he was Barack Obama's guy and I just called him and we had a couple long conversations, where I picked his brains about Barack Obama who seemed to me to be more of what we were looking for in the Matt Santos character than anyone else I had seen of any race or background and the great irony of it for me is that I never thought Barack Obama will be President of the United States. At that point he was a state legislator: very appealing, very charismatic, a kind of a rock star, but it's amazing to look back at that moment from this vantage point.

JOSH: Had Obama been on your radar prior to the keynote address for Kerry?

ELI: Only an article or two that I'd read, maybe in the *New York Times*, just about this guy in Chicago. I mean, barely. I think he kind of exploded into everybody's consciousness. I mean obviously he'd been out there to be picked to give this keynote address, but I'd be curious David's perspective on how rapid that sort of cultural ascent was, it must have been weeks.

HRISHI: Yeah. I was hoping, could we go back now a little bit in the timeline with you David, about how did you first start working with Barack Obama?

DAVID: I knew Barack Obama from the time he was a returning law student from Harvard and a woman I know here, an activist named Betty Lou Saltzman called me and said, "I just met the most remarkable young man and I think you need to meet him as well." And I said, "Who is this guy?" She said, "Barack Obama". I said, "Barack Obama? That's an interesting name." She says, "He's running a voter registration drive." Here's the weird thing, she said, "I think he could be the first black President of the United States." This was in 1992.

HRISHI: Huh!

JOSH: Wow!

DAVID: Yeah. So I always joke that now when I go to the track I take Betty Lou with me.

HRISHI, JOSH, and ELI: [laughing]

DAVID: And I met him and he was, he was exceptional, and there was no question about it. First of all, he had been President of the Harvard Law Review, that was national news and he could have punched his ticket at any corporation or big law firm in America and instead he came back to Chicago to run a voter registration drive and he took a job in a small civil rights firm. He was very clearly, he said, "I want to be part of something larger than myself. I think I may want to go into politics someday." And we just struck up a friendship, but I didn't really work for him until that 2004 campaign.

HRISHI: What were you working on at the time when you did first meet him?

DAVID: I was an ex-journalist and I had opened a political consulting firm in the mid-80s and I was just working. I probably was doing 12 races the year that I met him. I mean I had a lot of exposure to a lot of politicians and the thing that I learned from all of that was that the world of politics divides into two very distinct cohorts. The first are people who run for public office because they want to be something and that's a pretty numerous category and then there are the people who run for public office because they want to do something, you know the kind of Sorkin-esque characters who you hope your public officials will be and Obama was clearly in that category.

ELI: I just want to say one thing about David that I don't know if it's as widely known and David, correct me if I'm wrong, but before that 2004 campaign, my understanding is that David really had a singular expertise in electing African-American candidates; helping to advise and strategize for African-American candidates who would be the first African-Americans elected in those states or districts.

DAVID: That is true and I was particularly active in mayoral races around the country, Harold Washington here in Chicago, and others. And in many of those cases those candidates broke barriers, and so I got some useful experience in how to present these candidates in these kind of barrier-breaking races, so that that was helpful to me. It also was a passion of mine and something that I believed in, but more than anything else and I think that Eli captured this so well in the Santos character, Obama was someone who, he deeply believed in politics not as a sport, not as an exercise in self-aggrandizement, but as a vehicle to do things to make a difference and he was deeply sceptical about the state of politics as we found it. Some of the lines in that "Freedonia" episode were very reminiscent to me of some of the conversations that we had because the artifice of

politics drove Obama crazy. He deeply disliked it. He was resistant to it, preparing for debates he would chafe at the performance elements of debates and this, the kind of scripted aspects of it rather than free-flowing exchanges.

[West Wing Episode 6.15 excerpt]

*MATT SANTOS: Look; we've got one more debate before this New Hampshire primary. Do we really want another joint photo-op—another 90-second sound bite followed by a 60-second sound bite—another beauty pageant without the beauty?*

[end excerpt]

DAVID: Eli, we had a long conversation. I was driving from my apartment in Chicago to a house I have in Michigan and Eli kept me company on the entire trip on the phone and we had a long conversation. I can't remember the conversation particularly, but I certainly saw elements of Barack Obama in the character.

HRISHI: Did you know who Eli was when you got the call?

DAVID: Yeah, and I took it anyway.

HRISHI and ELI: [laughing]

JOSH: [laughing] That was a good answer.

ELI: That was one of the few mistakes he's made in a long and successful career. David and I met actually at the 1996 Democratic Convention when I was working in the Clinton White House as a sort of a very junior communications aide, David may not even completely remember this, but I was assigned to kind of babysit certain primetime speakers while they rehearsed with a lovely man who I just had dinner with a few weeks ago named Michael Sheehan, who is kind of the preeminent Democratic speech coach, and David came in with a client of his, a friend of his, Dennis Archer.

DAVID: I do remember that.

ELI: Who was either the mayor of Detroit or running for mayor of Detroit?

DAVID: He was mayor of Detroit, yeah.

ELI: And I was just the kind of snot-nosed message cop from the Clinton White House who was standing in there to make sure that David and Mayor Archer's speech used all of our poll-tested pabulum every five sentences.

DAVID: And my job was there to keep an eye on the snot-nosed little [Eli laughs] twits from the campaign who were trying to keep us from saying meaningful things.

ELI: That's right, but so then I wouldn't have said we were particularly good friends at that point, but I passed him in the hallway at the White House when he would be visiting from Chicago, and maybe going to see Rahm Emanuel and then it really wasn't until that speech for Freddy Ferrer in 2001. It was actually a guy named Harold Ickes who worked in the Clinton White House who called me and said, "I'm working for Freddy Ferrer.

Would you write a victory speech for him in this primary?" He was running against a guy named Mark Green, and I said to Harold. "I actually am not supporting Freddy Ferrer just because I have close friends working for Mark Green." and Harold said, "But if he gives the victory speech, your guy will have already lost." So that was an argument I couldn't refuse and so then David called me and we worked on the speech together. So I felt that gave me, I had his number in any case and was shameless enough to call.

DAVID: And I knew Eli's reputation from the White House and from the Gore campaign. So he, I knew, was a serious guy and we shared sensibilities and so on so it was fun to hear from.

JOSH: Eli's reputation for writing undelivered victory speeches.

ELI: [laughing]

DAVID: Yeah, well, that's a whole but there's a whole volume of those. Yeah.

ELI: It's true. Hrishi and Josh will remember from my wedding reception, I sort of opened my toast that evening by saying, I was unfortunately someone politics who had built an expertise in that concession speeches and this was the first victory speech I was really involved with [Hrishi laughs]. I guess I'd forgotten about Freddy Ferrer. But I remember, if you want me to characterize it, I remember a lot about the conversation. I think it was a couple conversations that David and I had where I was sort of picking his brains about this Barack Obama guy who, at the time, seemed like just a guy.

HRISHI: Yeah, what did you want to find out Eli?

ELI: Well a couple things and maybe I went in also with an open mind and just wanted to try to see who was somebody who could be, we'd already cast Jimmy Smits, we'd already shot a handful of scenes with him, we knew we were trying to tell a story about somebody who at the very least wanted to be post-racial, if they weren't post-racial, in American politics.

[Barack Obama's 2004 Democratic National Convention Keynote Address excerpt]

*BARACK OBAMA: There is not a Black America, and a White America, and Latino America, and Asian America. There's the United States of America.*

[end excerpt]

ELI: And also somebody who, as David was referring to, wanted to bend the rules of the game to themselves and not just play the rules of the game. Somebody who wanted to change politics and, David said a couple things that really resonated that I never forgot and I think part of the reason some of those lines seem familiar to David is that he probably told them to me on those calls and I typed them and stole them.

DAVID: I remember saying to myself when I was re-watching the episode last night, those are brilliant lines, so [Eli and Josh laugh] maybe that's why.

ELI: Well, one of the things was, and this is something that I think it's close to verbatim what David said is, I remember him saying Barack Obama is of the black community but not limited by it.

DAVID: Mm-hmm

ELI: And that was a very important thing that the Santos character was somebody who was not running away from his race, was proud of his race, had roots in that community, but wasn't going to define himself that way.

[West Wing Episode 6.11 excerpt]

*MATT SANTOS: I don't want to just be the brown candidate. I want to be the American candidate.*

[end excerpt]

ELI: Even at a risk of hurting himself in the early going, because that's where he might find the base, would be very easy to put yourself in that little cubby hole and start from there. He sort of refused to do that. You almost saw somebody who was weirdly almost born into politics as a presidential figure, somebody who was speaking and thinking in those big thematic terms that most politicians don't even start to touch until they are at the top and he almost willed himself to be that person, part of "Freedonia," we referred to is about the presidential voice. This is a guy who just had it, kind of organically. I mean that's how I always have seen Barack Obama. People just slowly started to realize that he was probably presidential from the time he was 23.

DAVID: Yeah

JOSH: I assume some of that speaks to his talent as a writer.

DAVID: To Obama's talent as a writer?

JOSH: Yes.

DAVID: Yeah, even when I met him when he was in his very early 30's, he had uncommon perspective on the world, on politics. He had the sensibilities of a writer in that he was both of the scenes that he was in and he was able to step back and sort of, in his own mind, observe them and understand the irony of things, sometimes the absurdity of things. I mean I actually saw those qualities in the character that Eli wrote.

HRISHI: There are other things that Santos shares with President Obama: their age and also the fact that they had two young kids. Eli was that something that you were consciously looking at in terms of, I guess you already cast Jimmy Smits like you said.

ELI: Yeah, it's funny because I don't even know how much David knows about this, but as the series went on, articles were written after the show went off the air in, I think around 2008, about all these other parallels, and I would say that they were all completely coincidental. The fact that he had two young kids, the fact that he was around that age, the fact that he, it was sort of remarked on in some article that I saw that they both admired Bob Dylan which came up in a later *West Wing* episode, the fact

that the Phillies were in the World Series in our fictional year and then actually were the year Obama ran, some of that is just, you know, people kind of reading into things and maybe except, maybe the Dylan thing is just a generational thing. If you're of a certain age of any race, that's kind of what was going on. So I think maybe more was read into it over time. But there's no question that the grain of who he was and what he was trying to do, at least in these early episodes, comes completely out of this experience of Barack Obama, who in the way that we wanted the Matt Santos character to do, also came out of nowhere and vaulted maybe not overnight, to the top of the pack. That's a pretty unusual thing to do.

HRISHI: David, were you surprised by the arc that your candidate had? [David laughs] I mean, for so many people were like, oh we came out of the blue, but you're actually they're working the phones and putting your feet to the pavement. Did it feel like a surprise or...?

DAVID: No, I always thought if Matt Santos could do it then Barack Obama could do it.

ALL: [laughing]

DAVID: But no, listen, I always knew that he was exceptional and I always knew that he had extraordinary potential. I remember sitting in a bar in Milwaukee in the Pfister Hotel in 2004 and talking to Dan Balz. In that cycle, I was working for John Edwards in the presidential race. It was an interesting experience working for the two of them at the same time because Edwards was a guy, he's very talented, but he was a guy who kind of wanted the top line, he wanted the cliff notes and he could take it from there. Obama was a guy who wanted to drill down three or four levels into these issues and really think about them. And I said to Balz, "You ought to keep an eye on this guy, Barack Obama, I'm working with in Illinois". He said "Barack Obama. I never heard of them". And I said, "You're going to because, he really is an exceptional talent", but I never anticipated that it would happen so quickly. When we won in 2004, I mean, I knew the night he gave the convention speech and I actually knew that from the moment I saw the convention speech, which he largely wrote himself, that he was going to be a big thing, starting the night he gave it. I had been in the hall in 1984 when Mario Cuomo gave the keynote speech at the Democratic Convention in San Francisco and I saw what happened with Cuomo. I mean the minute he finished speaking, he was projected into the national picture, and was for several cycles after that. I stood on the floor in Boston and heard Obama make his convention speech and I watch the reaction around us, standing with Robert Gibbs our press secretary, and I said to him this guy's life just changed and maybe ours too. And the next day we were walking around the streets of Boston, he's literally being mobbed by people and that was the beginning, but we always thought after he won, we want to keep our heads down. We didn't want the people of Illinois to think that he was using the state as simply a way station and he went on *Meet the Press* in January of 2005 and said, completely sincerely, that he wasn't going to be on the ticket one way or the other in 2008, that he just wanted to be the best senator he could be from Illinois, but events really, we may have rode a little, but the tide of events really swept him along and by the fall of 2006 it was clear that there was an opportunity and as soon as that midterm election was over we convened very serious discussions. But even when he launched his presidential campaign in 2007, you know, it was viewed as a relatively long shot. We had this kind of crazy sense that it could happen and that he was the right person at the right moment. But yes, I was surprised. I mean who would

not be surprised about a guy who went from the Illinois State Senate to the White House in four years. That only happens on television.

ELI: There's another thing that I always think about, it's a story that may be well known but David, I heard it for the first time when President Obama went on your podcast, which is that at the 2000 Democratic Convention, Barack Obama who just lost the Congressional race, flew himself to Los Angeles. This is the convention that David was there and I was working there as a young speechwriter. Barack Obama flew himself there; I think his credit card was rejected when he tried to rent a car,

DAVID: Yeah.

ELI: And he couldn't get tickets to go into the hall and he flew back in disgrace to Chicago and eight years later, he's President of the United States!

DAVID: He lost a race for congress by 30 points, a primary race, and he was completely tapped out financially. Yeah, his credit card was turned down because he had maxed them all out in service of this losing race. By the time he and I hooked up in 2002, he was going through a very existential moment about whether he was going to go forward in politics, and he said, "Michelle and I have talked about it and I told her I just needed to take one more shot, if it didn't work out I go out and get a real job". He said I want to run for the United States Senate but he was, because he had lost so badly, and because in 2001 Osama Bin Laden had attacked the World Trade Centre, there was this conventional thinking that his name was prohibitive in this environment, that Obama couldn't raise the money. There are a lot of skeptics about whether he would even be competitive in that race and so it was an astonishing journey from that low moment to winning the White House in just a short period of time.

HRISHI: Let me ask you both what might be a naive question, but at what point in *The West Wing*, it's clear that Josh Lyman is in it to win it and he thinks that Matt Santos could be president, but Santos doesn't share that same feeling.

[West Wing Episode 6.11 excerpt]

*MATT SANTOS: Come on. We're lucky if we have two months with this. I don't want to waste it shaking hands.*

*JOSH: Two months? I gave up everything for this—you're not even in it to win?*

*MATT SANTOS: Maybe we have a different definition of winning, Josh.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And so he's trying to make big policy speeches, just to try and move the needle while he still can, before he has to drop out of the race. And after watching that scene and watching some of the 2020 candidates roll out their campaigns, I was wondering if there are candidates who announce and run without a sense that they might win, really where the actual goal is just to set something up for the future, you know future presidential run or something else and this is just a, there's just no better marketing plan for them than to be on the presidential campaign trail.



DAVID: Well, I think Donald Trump started off that way. [Eli laughs] I don't think he expected to be elected president. I think he thought it'd be a good branding exercise. He just spectacularly overshot the runway, but I think for most candidates, they may recognize it's a long shot. I mean the one who comes to mind here is Pete Buttigieg who's running right now, who's probably the closest to the Obama/Santos model. The guy who nobody takes particularly seriously at first, who makes a lot of progress and you could say, well he must be setting himself up for the future but, I have to tell you that in order; running for president is a really, really hard thing to do physically, emotionally and at some level you have to believe that there's a chance to do it or at least to do it seriously or else it's almost impossible to motivate yourself. It is a physically and emotionally brutalizing process. So I think you could be realistic about your chances, but hope also springs eternal and you need some of that to keep going.

ELI: Yeah. I mean I'm sort of embarrassed to admit that the moment, Hrishi, that you're referring to which is in, I think the episode is "Opposition Research," was probably designed more in retrospect as a plot twist, which is this moment of Josh Lyman pouring his heart and soul into this guy and realizing they're not on the same page at all. They really didn't talk that through as deeply as they might have. But David's so much more experienced than me in this, but I agree with him that it takes a sort of delusion, even for somebody with no shot, these extraordinary type A people who could be the CEOs of any companies and they're basically supplicant to everybody they need and living in cheap motels.

DAVID: Yeah, now I will say this. The one thing that does ring true is as ambitious as the candidates can be, sometimes the jockeys can be even more eager than the horses.

ELI: [laughing]

HRISHI: David, did you watch *The West Wing*? Were you a fan of the show?

DAVID: Well, first of all, I'm on *The West Wing* podcast so...

JOSH: You won't offend us either way.

DAVID: I'd be a fool to say anything other than yes, but of course I did. I mean, in a sense that it really spoke to me because I wrote my memoirs called *Believer* and it's not about one candidate. It's about this whole system and the Capra-esque nature of the series really spoke to me because I believe deeply in all of this and I want to believe that at the core there's something magical, special, extraordinary about our democracy and its ability to produce great leaders when we need them. And so yeah, I watched the show religiously and what's interesting to me is that I run this Institute of Politics at the University of Chicago and when I got here, one of the things the students wanted to do was have *West Wing* nights. I think Eli came and spoke before one of them.

JOSH: Oh, that's great.

ELI: Yes, I did and actually I don't know if this is every week, but it's basically pizza and they show *The West Wing* on Wednesday nights, the night the show originally aired, and I think they sometimes call it 17 Pizzas.

HRISHI: [laughing]

DAVID: Yes

ELI: Reference to the episode "17 People."

JOSH: That's very funny. Has it ever been definitively established whether or not President Obama watched the series?

DAVID: I never had this discussion with him, but my guess is he probably did, before he actually lived in the West Wing and experienced the drama with all its absurdity and warts and challenges, but you know at the core he's a believer too, so I'm sure that it's something that would speak to him. It's interesting to watch it now, I went back and watched the "Freedonia" episode last night, and even though it didn't focus on Martin Sheen and the White House, it reminded me, just the theme music, is in ennobling and uplifting.

JOSH: Indeed.

DAVID: And it's hard to associate that music with the sort of farce that's unfolding today. I mean, I guess farce may be treating it too lightly, but certainly; one of the things about Donald Trump and my view is because I am a believer in democracy that I accept the results of elections and I believe that the person who wins has the right to lead and make policy, we have the right to disagree. That's not the issue, but these institutions that are lifted up in the series, these institutions of our democracy as imperfect as they are, are really central core important institutions and they're being sundered every day by a president who really doesn't believe deeply in them. So just watching the episode last night made me nostalgic.

ELI: It's interesting to see that, I hear more positive comments about *The West Wing* just randomly anecdotally in the Trump years, in the W. Bush years, than in the Obama years because the Obama years, you could kind of see it on CNN. Where life was close to this show and it is not that way now.

DAVID: When I worked in the White House I very much felt the spirit of that show and I remember in fact one day, there was a particular day early in the administration when we were supposed to meet on whether we were going to intervene to save the American Auto Industry, and the thing got delayed because the president was in a long security briefing on some stirrings in North Korea, and then he went off to do a town hall meeting on the economy and then there was a meeting, meetings in the afternoon on Afghanistan and one on Iraq, then we reconvened and we had this very emotional hour-and-a-half meeting on whether he would intervene to save the Auto Industry, which he ultimately decided to do, and I went back to my office and I was exhausted and I slumped in my chair and the phone rang and it was Rahm Emanuel, the Chief of Staff, and he said get in here right away, Fargo's underwater, and there was a flood there and the town was, it was a disaster. And I said to myself, "What is this, an episode of *The West Wing*?" I mean, this is crazy, all these things happening in one day.

HRISHI: My last question for you is this, is there a character on the show that you identify most with?

DAVID: Oh my, you know, I mean, there are several of them.

ELI: I will say that Richard Schiff always tells people that he played you.

DAVID: Yeah.

ELI: But that doesn't mean you have to accept it.

DAVID: No. No, I know. I do accept it because he was a little bit of my personality type. I mean he was he was a low-key, a little tortured.

ELI: Professorial.

DAVID: Yeah, I mean all rumples, all that.

JOSH: [laughing]

DAVID: So I accept that. I accept that designation.

HRISHI: That's fantastic! [laughing]

ELI: It is a funny thing because I will say, I've known so many people obviously in politics and worked in politics myself and one of the joys of working on *The West Wing* was that even when I was out here in Los Angeles already I was able to talk to them constantly and still be in that world. I'm a junkie of that world, a fan of that world and there are very few people, you can count them on certainly two hands, who in their real lives and careers have embodied that kind of real idealism of the prototypical *West Wing* character. And David is one of them and even before the Obama election, I think, not to fawn here, but I think he's a historic figure because he's somebody who looked out and saw places that say, didn't have African-Americans getting a chance to represent them and he broke down those barriers and he never was one of those cynical game players who just kind of played the game the way everyone else had played it and that's what we aspire to capture on this show.

DAVID: You had me at Toby; you didn't have to go that far.

JOSH: [laughs]

DAVID: I really have great reverence for this. I'm the son of an immigrant who fled persecution and came to this country and was able to build a life and his son became the senior advisor to the President of the United States. I see great majesty in this country and in our democracy and it's been an incredible honor to be part of it. So what you said Eli means a lot to me.

HRISHI: Well, it means a lot to us that both of you would join us. Thank you so much for spending time with us.

JOSH: Thanks so much for your time.

DAVID: Great being with you.

ELI: A great pleasure.

JOSH: Thanks so much for tuning in, if you want to stay connected with our guests, you can follow them on Twitter: @DavidAxelrod or @EliAttie

HRISHI: You can let us know how you felt about this episode by leaving a comment for us on our Facebook page: Facebook.com/TheWestWingWeekly or on our website: TheWestWingWeekly.com or tweet at us: @WestWingWeekly. Next week, we'll be discussing "Drought Conditions" with special guests Debora Cahn and Richard Schiff.

JOSH: Thanks as ever to Margaret Miller, Zach McNees, and Nick Song. Thanks also to Radiotopia. We're proud to be a member of that fine collection of podcasts. You can find out more information about the other shows at Radiotopia.fm

HRISHI: Ok.

JOSH: Ok.

ELI and DAVID: What's next?

[Outro Music]