

The West Wing Weekly
1.03: "A Proportional Response"
Guest: Dulé Hill

[West Wing Episode 1.03 excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: What is the virtue of a proportional response?

[end excerpt]

[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 discussing episode three of season one of *The West Wing*, "A Proportional Response". Later on, we'll be joined by Dulé Hill, who makes his first appearance as Charlie in this episode.

JOSH: Very exciting, our first guest.

HRISHI: But first, Josh, what did you think?

JOSH: I'm not going to be coy, Hrishi... I loved it. I think it's a pretty great, rich, layered, firing-on-all-cylinders episode. As much as I loved one and two, something blossomed in this one, where it's sort of rich and everything's coming together in a very enjoyable and thoughtful way.

HRISHI: I totally agree. This is really, I think, our first taste of a 10 out of 10, fantastic episode.

JOSH: Mmm hmm. And an indication of what this show can and is going to be.

HRISHI: So, the episode is called, "A Proportional Response" and on the surface, the title is about the military action against Syria for taking down the plane that Morris Tolliver was on, as we learned in the last episode. But I think there's actually a great metaphor. It's a great phrase for a lot of things that are happening in this episode. There are these, sort of, analogous dichotomies that are set up throughout the episode. And of them, one is military, the proportional versus the disproportional response, and the other is maybe governing, the act of governing, versus the game of politics. And uniting these is your righteous feelings and what you really want to do, what you think is the right thing to do, versus the way things look and having to sort of balance those two.

JOSH: Correct.

HRISHI: The President wants to, this is his first real military action, and he wants to bring you know, American fury down.

[West Wing Episode 1.03 excerpt]

FITZWALLACE: Pardon me, Mr. President. Just what else is there?

PRESIDENT BARTLET: The DIS-proportional response. Let the word ring forth from this time and this place gentlemen: you kill an American, any American, we don't come back with a proportional response. We come back [fist slam] with total disaster.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And he's told by everybody that it's a bad idea.

JOSH: In the Situation Room. Our first glance at the Sit Room.

HRISHI: That's right. And he smokes in the Situation Room.

JOSH: Indeed, he does.

HRISHI: I didn't know you could do that.

JOSH: I think he's trying to lay down his bad ass street cred.

HRISHI: This is also our first introduction to Admiral Fitzwallace.

JOSH: Yes, John Amos.

HRISHI: Who I first loved in *Coming to America*.

JOSH: See, I'm much older than you, and I first loved him in *Good Times*.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: Which was just a classic, iconic Norman Lear sitcom. And I'd like to think I shared with him how much *Good Times* meant to me. It is the background of my Twitter page, or the header.

HRISHI: Oh, yeah.

Josh: Yeah. So, *Coming to America*, I've never seen that.

HRISHI: WHAT?!

JOSH: I know. I have huge gaps in my cinematic experience. That's apparently one of them.

HRISHI: It's great.

JOSH: How great is he as the... he's the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I like actors who just embody what they're doing. There's something about when he just stands there, he is barrel-chested and he's got a look in his eye and you just trust this guy.

HRISHI: But he always has some great, funny lines. I did not remember, one thing that I remembered this time around, is that his first line is funny.

JOSH: And what is it?

HRISHI: He says, you know what... [laughs]

[West Wing Episode 1.03 excerpt]

FITZWALLACE: You know what I was just thinking?

SITROOM STAFF: What's that, Admiral?

FITZWALLACE: This is different coffee than we usually have.

[door opens]

[end excerpt]

JOSH: [chuckle] That's funny.

HRISHI: It's so great.

JOSH: That's good. He also, I want to say, I can't remember what episode, I never worked in the Sit Room. Will Bailey, being of fairly low-level clearance, he would have no reason to be in the Sit Room; but one, I would visit it now and then. I wanted to just see the set itself, and like, several of the sets, I would think primarily of the Oval, it had an effect on you. Just walking into that set for the Situation Room, made you feel like important things happen here.

HRISHI: Huh.

JOSH: And perhaps I don't belong here. And I also remember a story that in a much later episode of the show, in the Situation Room, it was getting very stuffy and hot, and during filming, John Amos fell asleep. Which I thought, like wow, that's badass. All right, smoking a cigarette is one thing. But falling asleep in the Sit Room, while you're actually filming a scene, that's true badass [laughs].

HRISHI: Yeah. Ok, so the reason I wanted to jump right into this dichotomy of cosmetic wars versus real wars is because there's a meta component to this. This episode introduces us to Admiral Fitzwallace, but also Charlie Young. Who by the way actually makes his first appearance in the opening credits of this episode, so when he shows up, you already know he's going to be a big part of the series. But, I think there's this really central moment that happens when after Josh has talked to Charlie about the job and he goes in to talk to Leo about it, and he has this concern about what the optics are.

[West Wing Episode 1.03 excerpt]

LEO: What's the problem?

JOSH: He's black.

LEO: So's the Attorney General and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

JOSH: They don't hold the door open for the President.

LEO: What're [cross talk] you worried. . .

JOSH: [cross talk] I'm not wild about the visual, a young black man holding his overnight bag.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And he talks to Leo, and Leo's like, "It's totally fine."

[West Wing Episode 1.03 excerpt]

LEO: I'm fairly sure I'm right about this.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: But even despite his confidence, he then asks Fitzwallace for, like, confirmation about this.

JOSH: In the midst of rather more important things...

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: ...going on in their day, I thought it was interesting that he takes the time to ask him.

HRISHI: And also kind of speaks to their relationship [cross talk] I think too.

JOSH: [cross talk] Mmm hmm.

HRISHI: And Fitzwallace kind of echoes what Leo had said to Josh.

[West Wing Episode 1.03 excerpt]

FITZWALLACE: I got some real honest-to-God battles to fight, Leo. I don't have time for the cosmetic ones.

LEO: Thanks, Admiral.

FITZWALLACE: Yeah.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And it kind of echoes what Leo had said to Josh, where he says...

[West Wing Episode 1.03 excerpt]

LEO: This is serious business; this isn't casting. We get the guy for the job and we take it from there.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And the thing that's really interesting is that in both the cases of these new characters who are being introduced, there is some aspect where the casting was about politics. Because before *The West Wing* actually started that summer, the NAACP threatened a boycott of a bunch of major networks because so many of them had almost exclusively had all-white casts. Here's something from the New York Times from July 1999, an article about the NAACP boycott:

"Pointing out that not a single prime time show among 26 to be introduced on the major broadcast networks this fall has an ethnic minority character in a leading role, the President of the NAACP yesterday announced the start of a campaign to pressure both networks and advertisers."

And then later, it says:

"One of NBC's most touted new shows, *West Wing* is a drama about the White House under a liberal democratic administration, yet, its cast is virtually all white."

JOSH: Yeah.

HRISHI: Now 17 years later, I think maybe things are better on TV, but we still have, you know, Oscars so white for two years running.

JOSH: Right. The issue, if anything, is intensified. Certainly hasn't been fully addressed. But that's an interesting thing that you point out, because one of the great things about Aaron's writing, I think, is that whether he's writing about a newsroom or a sports show or affairs of state, his writing is also very personal, and I forgot or I didn't notice on this

re-watch, the use of the word casting. You know, certainly, neither character feels shoe-horned in, like, 'Oh, my God, we've got to get these two characters in'. They both work very dynamically and well with the goings-on of this episode, and adding Charlie especially as an outsider to this world of complete insiders is a nice little route in for the audience.

HRISHI: It never occurred to me when I first was watching this show that the casting choices were anything but organic and yeah, the fact that he can work the issue that they are working out into the language and the plot of the story of something that they are working out [cross talk], incredible.

JOSH: [cross talk] Fiendishly clever.

HRISHI: There's another moment like that, that made me think of maybe Aaron Sorkin was harkening back to some personal experience, when at one point Josh says...

[West Wing Episode 1.03 excerpt]

JOSH: Me, I got nothing to do.

DONNA: Yes.

JOSH: Like a writer on a movie set.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Oh yeah. I thought the same thing, too. I thought, 'Wow, is that a, would Josh Lyman know that?' [Laughter]

HRISHI: [Laughs] Right?

JOSH: That really was a moment of, 'Yeah, Aaron really should have stepped in and said that line'. But it made me laugh, nonetheless. Also, Aaron is, you know, I guess, alternately lauded and pilloried for revisiting and rehashing things. To me, it's one of the things I like about his universe, where you could say, 'Oh, he kind of, he brought that up there, or he looked into that there'. It occurred to me as I watched this episode that the A-Plot, the whole proportional response of it all is visited in *The American President*, and there is an issue there where President Shepherd questions the sense of a proportional response.

[*The American President* excerpt]

PRESIDENT SHEPHERD: Someday someone is going to have to explain the virtue of a proportional response.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Something that Aaron has explored before and obviously something that interests him.

HRISHI: Hmm. That was really Aaron Sorkin's first stab at writing something that takes place within the White House.

JOSH: And he harvested much of his cast from *The American President* for use in *The West Wing*.

HRISHI: It is kind of like a *West Wing* origin story in some ways. Because there are like meetings that feel similar when they're sitting in the Oval Office and Michael J. Fox plays a character who is sort of, maybe like a Josh Lyman, Toby.

JOSH: Look, I'm not as familiar with the movie. I made it and then basically, my interest in it is waiting for residuals. Thirteen-dollar residuals.

[laughter]

HRISHI: That was a fun detour into *The American President*. I haven't seen [cross talk]...

JOSH: [cross talk] Or perhaps it wasn't... we'll find out later in the comments section.

HRISHI: Another reason why I thought this was a grade-A Aaron Sorkin piece of work is there were some great insults [cross talk]...

JOSH: [cross talk] Yes.

HRISHI: He gets some back story and résumé in, in the midst of insults, when you have Josh and C.J. yelling at each other and he calls her...

[West Wing Episode 1.03 excerpt]

JOSH: You paranoid, Berkeley shiksa feminista!

[end excerpt]

JOSH: [chuckles] Yes.

HRISHI: And she calls him an...

[West Wing Episode 1.03 excerpt]

C.J.: Elitist, Harvard fascist, missed-the-Dean's-list-two-semesters-in-a-row, Yankee jackass!

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Oh, now we know where those guys went to college.

JOSH: Yeah, there you go.

HRISHI: And then the other thing he sneaks in that I love is C.J. and Sam, when C.J. calls Sam into her office, they really have this, in a very explicit way, this idea of what this fight is really coming down to, the idea of looking good versus being good.

[West Wing Episode 1.03 excerpt]

SAM: This isn't tawdry.

C.J.: I don't care what it is. I care what it looks like.

SAM: And I care what it is!

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And so, for me that dovetails with the cosmetics of Charlie's hiring and the weird decorum that goes around how you bomb your enemies.

JOSH: One other example I'd forgotten about is a little C-plot about the indignation over a Democratic congressman's choice of words.

[West Wing Episode 1.03 excerpt]

SAM: [quoting Congressman Bertram Cole] Folks down here are patriotic, fiercely patriotic. The President better not be planning on making any visits to this space. If he does, he may not get out alive.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: So again, in that language...

HRISHI: And that's another example of the disproportional response, Toby's reaction to it.

JOSH: That all backs up into one of my favorite scenes of this episode, personally, was seeing the team at work in an early meeting, staff meeting, to discuss among other things, this Bertram Coles' words about the President. And it's only the third episode and already, the writing and the performances are so in the groove that you can see there are lots of little looks. They're alternately pumping each other up, pushing each other's buttons on purpose. They know they can rile Toby up and then Leo will call him down. It's just such a great scene, where you see the sort of, interchangeable parts of this machine that they are as a team. It's interesting to me. Did they just immediately have this chemistry? Did they talk about their relationships? Because there's just in the looks and pauses, and there's just these, all these great little relationships going on. These two against these three, and you know, oh, this guy catches her eye, and you can tell that they've discussed this before. And I'm wondering how much work went into that, or it was just, this sort of, a natural thing they fell into.

HRISHI: Yeah, or how much of that is the director, you know, and the editor putting that together.

JOSH: Also true, yeah.

HRISHI: So, besides Dulé Hill and John Amos being introduced to the show, we also get our first appearance of Kim Webster, who plays Ginger.

JOSH: Ginger, yes. We will have to have her on. She's a delightful person and she would be fun as a guest.

HRISHI: And Ginger is one of the assistants in the... for the Communications Department, Toby's assistant technically.

JOSH: I believe you're right.

HRISHI: And her first appearance is, as Toby, having been talked down about going after Bertram Coles, manages to get his, like, subtle revenge by picking up some documents from her, and then casually walking over to where some press people are and dropping this hint about...

[West Wing Episode 1.03 excerpt]

TOBY: Secret Service investigates all threats made against the President. It's White House policy not to comment on those investigations.

REPORTER: Are you telling me there's going to be a criminal investigation?

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: It's a cute move because he can't come at the guy directly.

JOSH: He's been told in fact that, in that meeting, the consensus was don't take the bait, even though he really, really wants to. So he does what I guess what is, in his mind, is a compromise. Does the sort of passive aggressive thing of dropping that bombshell.

HRISHI: Right. He takes the path of a proportional response.

JOSH: Ah, there you go. We know that Bartlet and Leo are going to have revisit Bartlet's righteous personal anger about the loss of his friend, Morris Tolliver. And that's, I think, sort of, towards the end of the last episode, we have that great quote.

[West Wing Episode 1.02 excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: I'm going to blow them off the face of the Earth with the fury of God's own thunder.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: And in this episode, it is... it really is Leo in that great scene where he talks him down and explains to him as the only remaining superpower - this is back in '99, world's changed a little bit now - he better be willing, essentially, to kill everyone, in order to create this situation that he, Bartlet, envisions where an American citizen is safe anywhere he may travel. It's really Leo, and I think we learn that Leo and Bartlet, they've got a real close friendship, and Leo, at least, is the one person, I guess, who can really say anything to him, because [cross talk]...

HRISHI: [cross talk] Right...

JOSH: And he even says...

[West Wing Episode 1.03 excerpt]

LEO: And you better start with me, 'cause I will raise up an army against you and I will beat you.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: I mean, it gets really dramatic, and I think it's ultimately Leo who can, on occasion when warranted, talk him off the emotional ledge he might work himself up onto at times.

HRISHI: And there's again, really skillful use of exposition in the middle of all this. We find out that Leo's the one who got the President to run in the first place.

JOSH: That's right.

[West Wing Episode 1.03 excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: I think of all the work you put into get me to run, and I think of all the work you did to get me elected. I could pummel your ass with a baseball bat.

[LEO chuckles]

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: We also get the first appearance of Danny Concannon.

JOSH: Yes. Danny comes to the White House to let C.J. know that he has caught wind of the whole Sam with a call girl, of it all. And in pretty short order, that he warns her this is going to be a real thing, this isn't nothing. This isn't something you can sweep under the carpet. He also does her a big favor essentially by saying, 'I'll drop it'. So, I think it's our first little sense that maybe there's a little romance here or a little something personal for a guy who's obviously a top notch investigative journalist to that quickly acquiesce, he might have a little thing for C.J. We discussed the, sort of, male clubbiness of the staffers in the second podcast, the fact that Sam Seaborn is getting advice about the whole situation with Laurie from Toby and from Josh, and they're all doing an end-run around C.J., or keeping it from her.

HRISHI: And we talked about this idea that the female characters in the episode were kind of dis-enfranchised. And I love that in this episode, we really get the assertion of C.J. as a very powerful force. And she responds to this idea that those guys were keeping her out of the loop by saying, 'You can't do that, you need me, and I'm here to protect you'. And it's totally badass.

[West Wing Episode 1.03 excerpt]

C.J.: I'm your first phone call.

SAM: When?

C.J.: Before. Now. In the future. Any time you're into something and you don't know what. And you can't tell me that you thought there was nothing to it, because you sat down with Josh and you sat down with Toby. Any time you're into something and you don't know what, you don't keep it from me. I'm your first phone call. I'm your first line of defense. You have to let me protect you, and you have to let me protect the President.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Despite how upset C.J. is with Sam and how, you know, she tells him, 'Yeah, I'm your first call, because I'm the person best set up to defend you', and then she makes good on that in the conversation with Danny. She's the one who has, she has his back.

JOSH: Yeah, she sort of inverts her entire argument. Which is, that is a good friend who tells it to you one way, and gives it straight, and then when she's in a situation to defend you, says whatever needs to be said in order – yeah, I liked that.

[West Wing Episode 1.03 excerpt]

C.J.: Sam knows the difference between right and wrong, and so do you. Would it make my life easier if he wasn't friends with this woman? Absolutely. But Sam is a grown-up,

and I don't get to choose his friends, and your readers don't get to judge them. And I'll tell you what else. There's something commendable about Sam's...

[fade out]

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Yeah, that's a good friend. I don't want to run past the cold open of this episode, is Josh and Donna in very high flirt mode during a walk and talk. So that struck me. I thought, 'Ok'. Even prior to this in the first two episodes, we get a little sense of it, but they are flirting hard and heavy. It's ostensibly about Donna's wanting to get a raise.

[West Wing Episode 1.03 excerpt]

JOSH: Do you think that this is a really good time to talk about a raise?

DONNA: Mmm, I think it's the best time to talk about a raise.

JOSH: Donna, you're not a very nice person.

DONNA: Gotta get to know me.

JOSH: Donna.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: This is the true downbeat to the, 'will they, or won't they?' plot line that is pretty significant on the show.

HRISHI: Like, the way that Donna speaks to Josh, and Josh totally goes along with it, you know, this is not a typical kind of assistant relationship.

JOSH: No [laughter], this is not the most professional relationship.

HRISHI: I love this line.

[West Wing Episode 1.03 excerpt]

DONNA: The best I can cobble together from the small shards of information I've been able to overhear in the restroom and at the Danish cart.

JOSH: Donna.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: [Laughter] It's just, like, that's a great Donna moment, and also gives you the sense of the world of the assistants, you know, which we don't see a lot of. We see them as they interact with the senior staff, but that there is this other intelligence gathering network that also happens and she's a part of, and I love it.

JOSH: Quick little question.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Do we learn in this episode, it's certainly mentioned in this episode, is this the first time we learn that Mandy's real name is Madeline?

[West Wing Episode 1.03 excerpt]

MANDY: You couldn't stop staring at me.

JOSH: Well, you were wearing quite the ensemble that night, Madeline.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: So why isn't she Maddie?

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Or why isn't her real name Mandolin?

[JOSH and HRISHI laugh]

JOSH: It seems to me, it's really got to be one or the other.

HRISHI: #Mandolin

JOSH: If we ever get Aaron on here, I'm going to ask him that. Gonna talk to him about that for 45 minutes.

[ad break]

JOSH: All right, it's time to introduce a buddy of mine. Our first ever guest on *The West Wing Weekly*. What can I say about this guy, in addition to being a friend of mine, he is that rare triple threat. He is a singer, dancer, actor. He's appeared on Broadway and off. He starred on the USA Network's hit show *Psych*, in which I memorably guest starred. He's one of the founders of the cool social media app, Nomino. You can catch him currently on HBO's *Ballers*, and he has a pilot in the can for CBS that's called *Doubt* and we're wishing him good luck on a pick-up soon for that one. He's a pretty busy guy. He's here to talk about his involvement in *The West Wing*, on which show he played Charlie Young for seven seasons. Let's welcome my favorite actor with an accent aigu in his name, Dulé Hill.

[theme music]

JOSH: Episode three, season one.

DULÉ: Yes.

JOSH: Your first appearance on the show.

DULÉ: It was. It was a life-changing appearance, and it was a career-changing appearance. Right before that, I was just about broke. I remember telling Freddie Prinze Jr. I said, 'If I don't get a job soon, I'm either going to have to move in with you, or move back to New Jersey'.

JOSH: And how long after that did you get the good news?

DULÉ: About three weeks [cross talk]. Three weeks after that, I booked *The West Wing*.

JOSH: [cross talk] Really?

DULÉ: And I was only guaranteed four episodes. I was not a series regular initially. I was guaranteed four episodes. I had a series regular deal set up and after my first episode, which is this one, they picked up my option.

JOSH: Oh, right away?

DULÉ: Yeah, they picked up my option right after the first episode.

JOSH: Watching, re-watching the episode, you feel like the last piece of the puzzle, and you really do sort of complete the team. And they also used you very well as an outsider coming into this pre-existing workplace and situation so that the audience could kind of see things anew through your eyes, through Charlie's eyes.

DULÉ: And I was honored to be a part of the cast. I remember when I first saw the pilot and I watched it, I called my agents and I said, if they can do this show or anything close to this show every week, this will be one of the greatest shows ever on television. I said the challenge is, the question is, can they do this every week, 'cause this pilot is brilliant.

JOSH: Did you see the pilot during your audition process [cross talk] or once you got the job?

DULÉ: [cross talk] Yes. Before the audition process, I saw.

JOSH: Ah, so they dangled in front of you [cross talk] what you might become a part of.

DULÉ: [cross talk] Yes. I was like, 'Wow, like, this would be incredible'. To me, it was mind blowing to me, the fact that this could be a television show. And I remember when I went to the audition. I got to give a lot of thanks to Kevin Scott. Kevin Scott is a cast... one of the casting directors, and he had searched me out, because I had tested for a Warner Bros. pilot the year before, and I didn't get it. But he was the casting director on that, and he remembered me. So, when the role of Charlie came up, he actually searched me out. He called me in and he actually brought me into his office before I went in to read with Aaron, and he said, 'You know, it's fast paced and this is how Aaron does it, and this and that'. And I'd already known Aaron's work. I mean, he wrote, "You can't handle the truth". Who d... I mean, come on.

JOSH: That's right [laughs].

DULÉ: So, I was nervous. I remember being nervous, and I ran it with Kevin in his office real quick. And then we went into the casting room. It was Tommy Schlamme, Aaron Sorkin, and Marc Buckland?

JOSH: Marc Buckland [cross talk] directed this episode, very good.

DULÉ: [cross talk] Yeah, yeah. I believe he was in there. And the character's supposed to be nervous [laughed], so I just used it and it worked. I auditioned once, and then I got a call back about a week or two later. And I remember I had a blue Mossimo shirt, it was a collared Mossimo shirt. And I also remember that someone had told me along the way, maybe my acting teacher back in New York, that when you get a call back to wear the same thing, because some... like, don't try to change anything up, because whatever was there they liked, so if you get a call back, just come in with the same.

JOSH: I never thought of that, maybe that's why I don't work more.

DULÉ: You see. [laughter]

JOSH: That makes a certain amount of sense.

DULÉ: So, I wore the same outfit back and this time, I believe John Wells was in there. And at that point, my mind was blown, because I'm sitting there with Tommy Schlamme, Aaron Sorkin, and John Wells. I mean, it's like, John Wells behind ER and China Beach.

JOSH: Sure, that's an imposing trio.

DULÉ: I'm like, what the hell [laughter], you know. And then, I read it, and I got it. I mean, maybe a couple days later, I got the call saying, I got it. There was no screen test or anything.

JOSH: You got the call.

DULÉ: Next thing I know, I'm working on a stage with Allison Janney and Martin Sheen.

HRISHI: Were you reading the actual episode? Was it the lines [cross talk] from this first episode?

DULÉ: [cross talk] Yes. My audition scenes were the two in the Roosevelt Room with Brad. You know, that was the two scenes. Both of those scenes, I think the scene where Rob comes in too? And he says [cross talk], yeah...

JOSH: [cross talk] ...yeah, that's right. And he's not digging the fact that you're being asked personal questions because he's got his own stuff going on.

DULÉ: Right. Side note. What I did appreciate what they did with the show also is, and I didn't even remember it until I watched the show the other day, is Mrs. De la Guardia who sent me up there is actually Lily Tomlin, who comes back around.

JOSH: Wait, what?

[laughter]

DULÉ: [cross talk] Yeah.

JOSH: Oh snap, I didn't realize that. [cross talk]

DULÉ: Yeah, oh yeah. [cross talk]

JOSH: [cross talk] I gotta dig deeper.

HRISHI: Yeah, it's a deep, deep call back. [cross talk]

JOSH: [cross talk] Holy moly.

DULÉ: [cross talk] That was a pretty early plant there.

HRISHI: [cross talk] Yeah.

JOSH: [cross talk] Damn, he's playing some long ball, I didn't even catch that.

DULÉ: [cross talk] That was some long ball.

HRISHI: So, besides Kevin saying, 'This is what the pace of the show is', what other prep did you have, or have to do before you went in or...

DULÉ: For the audition?

HRISHI: ...for the audition, and also when it came time to actually film the scenes?

DULÉ: For the audition, it was the words. I mean, you don't need to do much prep beyond Aaron Sorkin's words. You just deliver the words as they are. When you're working with a greater writer such as Aaron, it was all right there. You know, somebody, he lost his mother, he's trying to handle business for his sister. He's kind of just, thrown

into this whirlwind of this world. He lives just on the outside of Camelot. You know, he lives in D.C., he can see the castle, but he can never go in the castle. And now, all of a sudden, he's right at the center of the castle. Like, it was really, like, Dorothy landing in Oz, like, what the heck is going on here? Into this whirlwind of a world, and all of a sudden, now, I'm in the Oval Office talking to the President of the United States. It's, I mean, there wasn't much to, really, for the audition, it's just that awe of it all.

And I will never forget, when I actually got the role, I decided that I would not go into the Oval Office until we were getting ready to shoot. Because I had never been to the real White House, I had never seen the Oval Office and I heard that it was just the greatest set piece just going inside there. So, I said to myself, 'Why I am going to rob that experience? Let me just wait'. So, I was there, I think I was there for maybe, about a week before we actually shot the scene of me going into the Oval Office and I'd never went in. I walked by it, did everything. And the only time I went in was the day when we started to rehearse it. So we rehearsed it once. We blocked it out, or however how long we rehearsed it, left, got wardrobe, came back in and then shot it.

JOSH: Aww, you're making me feel bad, because it'll be another 68 episodes of this podcast before we really discuss it, but when I joined the show, I couldn't resist, and I snuck on to the Oval [HRISHI and DULÉ laughter]. And I guess a better actor would have saved it, but I snuck I was in the dark too. And I remember I took like two steps into the Oval, and I was like, 'Oh, I don't belong here', [HRISHI and DULÉ laughter] [cross talk] and I ran out.

DULÉ: [cross talk] Oh man, let me tell you something. I felt the same thing. I was like, 'What the heck am I doing here?' [cross talk]

JOSH: [cross talk] There was real power there, yeah.

DULÉ: I mean, walked in and there goes Martin Sheen and John Spencer, and Rob Lowe and Richard Schiff, and Allison Janney, you know. I'm like, 'What am I doing here?' [laughs] I was just, maybe a year, a year and a half ago in New York with my acting teacher, trying to get the tools to be able to hopefully play in the leagues, and now, I'm actually here with these masterful players. What am I doing here? And I never forget, early on, Martin came to me and he introduced himself and one of the first things he taught me was the handshake that Laurence Fishburne taught him during Apocalypse Now.

HRISHI: Huh, wow.

DULÉ: And it was the same... Martin and I will still do it now [cross talk] when we see each other.

JOSH: [cross talk] I was going to ask you about that. I get nervous, as when I shake any black man's hand, when I shake your hand, 'cause I'm not sure what you expect of me. [HRISHI and DULÉ laughter] I'm just really... I'm only qualified to do the straight ahead white man's... [cross talk]

DULÉ: [cross talk] I expect you to shake my hand... [laughter]

JOSH: Well, I never know are there going to be four moves? Is it a three-move thing? I try to just do the white guy straight ahead, but then you and Martin... [cross talk]

DULÉ: [cross talk] Yeah, I think it's the... [cross talk]

JOSH: [cross talk] ...Martin, who I would have thought was whiter than me... [cross talk]

DULÉ: [cross talk] I don't think it's the white guy. I think it's the Josh Malina straight ahead...

JOSH: It might be. [HRISHI AND DULÉ laughter] You might be right, [cross talk] you might be right.

DULÉ: [cross talk] I think that's what it is.

JOSH: You and Martin had this incredibly complex thing, so I didn't realize there was a history to it. [cross talk]

DULÉ: [cross talk] Yes.

JOSH: So, talk me through it. This is something he taught you the first... [cross talk]

DULÉ: The first time I met him [cross talk]. The first time I met him on set, right outside the Oval Office. You know, it was, 'Hey, I'm Martin, you know, welcome to the show', and this and that, and he said, 'You know, Laurence Fishburne', I think he was calling him Larry, you know, 'He taught me this handshake during Apocalypse Now', and he goes, boom, boom, boom. And I was like, all right. And for me, it just made him, it just made a connection there, of, 'Oh, this cat is cool'. He's not, I mean, he is Martin Sheen, but he's also Martin Sheen. You know [laughs], he's Martin. Cool. It really, let me feel, welcomed me to the show, and to the cast.

JOSH: That's very cool, and you guys do still do it, [cross talk] when you see each...

DULÉ: [cross talk] We still do it, we still do it.

HRISHI: That's amazing.

DULÉ: Yeah.

JOSH: That's awesome. How about the rest of the cast? When... did you first meet everyone at a table read or just one at a time? [cross talk]

DULÉ: [cross talk] No, I just came to the set [cross talk]. Yeah, I just came to the set and they were already in it.

JOSH: [cross talk] You were dropped in it, you really were. Very first scene you shot was?

DULÉ: Was the audition scene, so I came in. [cross talk]

JOSH: [cross talk] So that's the Roosevelt Room...

DULÉ: Yeah myself and...

JOSH: Brad...

DULÉ: And Brad.

JOSH: I'm sure he was nice.

DULÉ: Yeah Brad was.

JOSH: He's a cool cat.

DULÉ: Yeah, everyone was cool. There was no one who gave me any bad energy. Everyone was so welcoming, and I still remember just how welcoming everyone was, especially Martin; especially John. Of course, you know, there was Rob, and it was like oh, [expletive deleted] that's Rob Lowe. [HRISHI and JOSH laughter] You know, what I mean, cool, that's Rob Lowe over there, chillin'. You know what I mean? So that was cool. And I was just thankful to be there. I wanted to come and just handle my business to make sure that I didn't mess up this wonderful masterpiece that I saw going on. A random side note about the episode, "A Proportional Response", from, if I'm not mistaken, and this is something you can ask Aaron about, I believe is extra pages from *The American President*.

JOSH: [cross talk] Oh, what?

HRISHI: [cross talk] What?

DULÉ: Yes.

JOSH: Wait a minute, we touched on the fact that... [cross talk]

HRISHI: [cross talk] The idea of the plot...

JOSH: ...Issue of a proportional response had been proposed to President Shepherd [cross talk] of *The American President*.

DULÉ: [cross talk] Yes, yes.

JOSH: So, you're saying he actually took material...

DULÉ: It was extra pages from *The American President* that made its way into *The West Wing*, that whole tirade that Martin goes on about what is the virtue of a proportional response [cross talk] and all that...

JOSH: [cross talk] In the Sit Room, oh interesting.

HRISHI: Wow.

DULÉ: I mean Aaron could confirm that.

HRISHI: One thing I wanted to ask you was the difference between getting ready for that pace and doing that in the audition room, but then doing it with the cameras, and doing it with Bradley Whitford and everything. Did that throw you off at all, or did you have to find your way into rhythm of that?

DULÉ: I actually didn't, and the key thing you just said there was rhythm. I'm a tap dancer and it connected from the beginning. I got it. I said ok, this is a musical. This is music, like the words are music. Here, where we're all singing a song, and if you're playing a song, if the beat, if it's a beat, a little pause, and you're supposed to come in on a two, then you come in on a two. That's how you play the song. And that's how from

the beginning, I got it. I said, ok, it's rhythm. 'Yes, sir'. 'Yes, Mr. President'. 'No, Mr. President'. [cross talk]

JOSH: [cross talk] Now it all makes sense.

DULÉ: You find that, I guess, that dance that happens.

JOSH: That's very in keeping though, I think, also with the way Aaron talks about his own writing. That's right on with how he works. He found the right person to work with in you.

DULÉ: It made perfect sense for me. I said, 'Ok, I get this'.

JOSH: So, here's something... here's a question I had. I asked on Twitter whether anyone had any questions. 'Did you have to summon up Charlie every time you were on set, or does he come straight out of your personality?' And I had been thinking about asking you something like that, because I know you as such a funny and sharp and sophisticated guy, it made me laugh to see just this super [DULÉ and HRISHI laughing throughout] young - in fact, his name's Charlie Young - seem so sweet and so innocent. I was like, 'Damn, he is a good actor, he's neither of those things'. So, is it just because you were in fact so much younger than, and you were a little bit different, or were you just pulling on a little piece of you, or...

DULÉ: I think it's tapping into a certain part of yourself. I mean, that's who the character was. I think Charlie's way more reserved and way more closed off than I am. At the same time, Charlie has experienced way more, like traumatic hurt, at least at that stage of his life than I had, and it was just a matter of...Once you put the suit on, then it starts to become second nature, but early on, I would make certain choices and figure out, how does he walk? How does he talk, you know? How does he hold his hands? And once I got that, then I went with it. But I guess to answer, early on I would have to really process it before I went in. But maybe after the first few episodes, it was second nature. [cross talk] Yeah, yeah.

JOSH: [cross talk] Sure, yeah. You were in the groove.

HRISHI: Did you meet and talk with people who actually had that job?

DULÉ: I did. I give a lot of thanks to Dee Dee Myers because Dee Dee Myers, she was an advisor on the show, and she connected me with Kris Engskov, who at the time, was President Clinton's personal aide. So, on our first trip to DC, Kris and I got together. We went to, I think it was, like, the Park Hyatt or something like that, there's a hotel out there. And we sat out there and we had a coffee, and he just talked to me about the job. And it just opened the whole thing up to me, 'cause I never realized how much access this young individual has. He's like, he's pretty much the gatekeeper for people having access to the President, and he meets heads of state, and they all know him by his first name. And, you know, all the things he gets to see. He gets to see the President in public, and he gets to see the President in private. He's pretty much the first person that he hears from in the morning, because he has to wake up the President. And the pressure of the job too, 'cause he has to make sure this guy has all his stuff in order. I mean, this is the leader of the free world, and you can't slack on that job. I start to realize

how close the position is. It becomes less of a job and more of a real solid relationship, and one of the few solid relationships that the President has, so I got that from speaking with Kris. And then after Kris left the White House, which by the way, President Clinton had invited me to the White House to roast Kris - Kris, when he was leaving the position. So, I walked out of the Oval Office, out into the Rose Garden, and it's Joe Lockhart, Kris Engskov, and President Clinton, and I got to do a little speech.

JOSH: Damn.

HRISHI: Wow.

DULÉ: There, in the Rose Garden, just because of *The West Wing*.

HRISHI: Yeah.

DULÉ: Which, a side note on a side note, John Spencer used to always say, 'We wouldn't get this if we were on a cop show'. [HRISHI and JOSH laughter] 'Cause we would always have these amazing experiences, and he would always say with a big grin on his face [laughs], 'We wouldn't get this if we were on a cop show'. After being with Kris, once he left, I met Doug Band, and both Kris and I become friends and Doug also. And Doug really opened up the world to me, I really appreciate the time that he, the access that he gave me. There were times where I was able to just be a fly on the wall and just watch. And the main thing that I got was the familiarity they had with each other. That's something that I realized that because you spend so much time with each other, you really become a family. It's less about my boss, and I took that from what I gathered to bring it to the screen. Yes, he's still the President, and yes, you obviously are very respectful. And if you go back and look at, I think, the relationship Martin and I had on the show, there has to be a way that I can, kind of, jab him a little bit just to get him to do what needs to get done, that's what I gathered. I mean whether they actually do to that to the real President, I don't know, but that's from the conversations - that's what I took from it, knowing... and knowing when to assert yourself in that way, and knowing when to ease back and kind of disappear into the paint.

HRISHI: Yeah, that's fascinating.

JOSH: So, you watched, you re-watched this episode [cross talk] just before this discussion. Previous to that, when was the last time you had taken a look at it?

DULÉ: [cross talk] I did. Oh man. Phew, years. Maybe, one time, it was on Bravo or something and I saw it.

JOSH: Flood of memories [cross talk]. Was it how you remembered it? Was anything different?

DULÉ: [cross talk] It was. I mean, it was actually a little emotional for me [cross talk], because you're talking 19 years ago now? That was '99... [cross talk]

JOSH: [cross talk] I'll bet. [cross talk] Seventeen years ago.

HRISHI: [cross talk] Seventeen years ago.

DULÉ: Seventeen years ago. Now you have to call out my math...

[ALL laughing]

JOSH: We'll fix that in post. Just kidding. We'll highlight that you cannot subtract.

DULÉ: But, I mean, yeah. You're talking about 17 years ago, and I remember it was the beginning of my career out here. And I remember coming to LA, having a dream, wanting to really just get it going out here and make it happen. And that just brought it all right back there. I remember auditioning for it, I remember doing the scenes with Brad. I remember vividly the scene at the end of the episode where I'm in the Oval Office. It brought back all the memories of being at Freddie's house playing video games saying, 'Yo, look. I need to get a job 'cause I have a month and a half worth of dough left, and if I don't get a job soon, I'm either coming to live with you, or I'm going to Jersey'. I remember, it brought back filming the episodes. It brought back my trailer being on the other side [JOSH laughter] of the soundstage. Because I was a guest star the first few episodes, it was like rinky-dink and it was right across... like, my trailer sat right across from the Friends soundstage, and they would park all their cars, so I would see, like, the Range Rovers and the Porsches and the Ferraris [laughter]. And I'm sitting there, like wow, this is crazy. I'm just thankful to pay my rent for the next four months. You know, just the memories. It was the beginning of a journey out here. I have made life-long friends who I consider family. I love every last one of them. You know, I give Malina a hard time... [cross talk]

JOSH: [cross talk] Terribly hard time.

DULÉ: I love everyone so, like, deeply and watching it, it made me miss Johnny, it made me miss John Spencer, miss Kathryn Joosten. It's an opportunity that I could never repay. I was... I'm just so thankful to have had that job. I was able to work with all these fabulous actors. I mean, countless...

JOSH: The love from the audience I find amazing, because Hrish and I - really Hrish - came up with the idea to do this podcast, and as of recording this today, we haven't released a full episode yet. We've just announced it, and the response has been insane. People are doing flips because we're going to discuss the show and they're maybe gonna get to hear their old favorites come on, and that love nearly two decades later has sort of knocked me out. It's incredible what this show means, not only to the people who made it, but to the people [cross talk] who watched it.

DULÉ: [cross talk] ...Who watched it. And to have this kind of life so long after the show has gone off the air. Watching it, it really touched me saying, 'Wow. God, look what you have done, look how far back that was'. And that started it. That started it for me out here. Before that show came along, I was known as a tap dancer. Like, I had done *She's All That* and all that kind of stuff. I was trying to really create that space of being an actor [cross talk] and this thing did it... [cross talk]

JOSH: [cross talk] You would dance a lot on set... [cross talk]

DULÉ: [cross talk] All the time, all the time...

JOSH: [cross talk] I remember, too, I would always be, like, 'We get it, you're more talented [DULÉ laughing] than we are, all right'.

DULÉ: Kathryn Joosten wasn't having it though, I could dance everywhere besides Charlie and Landingham's office. If she was inside [ALL laughing] there, she would be like, 'Dulé!'

JOSH: It wasn't out of respect for the Oval. [cross talk] She just got headaches easily.

DULÉ: [cross talk] No, it was just, like, 'Not in here. You can go in the Oval Office and do it'. No.

JOSH: Oh, I loved it. Let me ask you how long did it take you before, I remember, once I joined - you and I were, like, the mischief makers... [cross talk]

DULÉ: [cross talk] Mmm hmm.

JOSH: And I remember you would rope me into, like, 'Let's push the props guy into a closet and lock him in it'. [DULÉ laughing] 'You get behind Steve, I'll open the door'. I was, like, 'This is fantastic. I love this job. Look at this guy'. Was it a while before you started...

DULÉ: Before we started playing games like that? I mean, it wasn't the first season...

JOSH: I always like to give one [cross talk] season of good behavior...

DULÉ: [cross talk] Yeah, you know. Oh, a side note too, I mean, it's kind of a side note. But I remember after we premiered, I didn't know anything about ratings or anything like that, and I still can't understand the whole ratings thing...

JOSH: I don't really either.

DULÉ: But I remember after the show premiered and everyone was all happy and this and that. And we're out there, it was the evening time, night time really, and everyone's talking about the ratings, and I ask Brad, like, you know, 'What is it? What does that mean?' And I think, we got, like, maybe 17 million was the premiere, or something.

JOSH: This is back in the old days, when people watched television, [cross talk] when it was on.

DULÉ: [cross talk] Watched television, yes. There was no DVR at the time.

JOSH: So, there was some huge, huge numbers to be had.

DULÉ: And I said like, 'Ok, what does [cross talk] that mean?'

JOSH: [cross talk] Is that good?

DULÉ: He goes, 'It means you're going to be employed for a very long time'. [cross talk] [ALL laughing] I will, I will never forget that, never forget that.

JOSH: [cross talk] Music to your ears.

DULÉ: But what were we just talking about, what were we just talking about?

JOSH: Pranking.

DULÉ: Oh yeah, pranking.

JOSH: Mischief.

DULÉ: I can't remember which season we started doing the foul game, were you...
[cross talk]

JOSH: What's that?

DULÉ: Maybe, I don't think you were there for the foul game. You know, you have charges during a basketball game...

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: Uh huh.

DULÉ: So, what would we do is, if we were rehearsing or even if you're doing a scene, and we'd stand up next to someone, if you turn and bump into the person, that's a foul. [JOSH laughing] And you get five fouls each day, and if you fouled out, then you were out the game.

HRISHI: You'd try and take a charge?

DULÉ: Yeah, you would take a charge.

JOSH: Yup. [ALL laughing throughout]

DULÉ: Yeah, so we all would do it. It was, like, myself, I know, me and Allison especially, Brad. And we did it, one whole season we were doing it. It just got out of hand, where during the takes we would try and just be a little close, just so closer than somebody... [ALL still laughing]

JOSH: That's hilarious, I'm gonna try and bring that to Scandal, I think.

DULÉ: I'll never forget at the top of the next season, Tommy Schlamme was like, 'Enough, like, no more of the foul game, that's not happening'.

JOSH: Let's concentrate making the show.

DULÉ: It was a lot of fun, that was a lot of fun.

JOSH: I rode in on a wave of knocking people's scripts and sides out of their hands.

DULÉ: Yes, that was Malina's thing.

JOSH: That was my version of it. It's a more aggressive version of the foul game [cross talk] where you're just rehearsing a scene and you go, 'Whack'... [cross talk]

HRISHI: [cross talk] Yes.

DULÉ: [cross talk] 'Whack'...

JOSH: And just knock a script out of someone's hand.

DULÉ: Which I still do to people, by the way.

JOSH: That delights me.

DULÉ: Yes, I still do that. So, you can thank Josh Malina for that one.

JOSH: That's comedy gold.

DULÉ: And I remember when Josh Malina put a trash... which I still have the same car, by the way. [cross talk] I bought a car in 2004 from The West Wing and back then, it was

a new car. I only bought the car really, 'cause, you know, Rob had this fancy two-door Benz coupe, and I was, like, [JOSH laughing] 'I want a car like that eventually'. So, I think it was season four or something like that, I finally went and got the six series BMW. It's my sweet car, you know, I love it. This dude puts a trash can on top of my car. [JOSH laughing] You know what I mean? I think, also with, like...

JOSH: [cross talk] What?

HRISHI: A metal trash can?

DULÉ: No, it was a plastic one from the set... [cross talk]

JOSH: [cross talk] Wait a sec, I'm not a complete animal.

HRISHI: [cross talk] Ah, ok.

DULÉ: On top of my car, and then, like, wrote, 'Loser'. [ALL laughing]

JOSH: Oh yeah, that sounds right. In shaving cream.

DULÉ: In shaving cream. [DULÉ laughing while speaking]

JOSH: Yeah, yeah.

DULÉ: I came out and I was like, 'No, this dude is not doing this to my car'.

JOSH: That's my, 'Get to know me'. I had a sense that you were going to keep this car for 16 or 17 years... [DULÉ still laughing hard]

DULÉ: And the other thing which I didn't do, but I remember Josh did was after 9/11, security got really tight at the studios and Brad was leaving one night, and Josh took all this West Wing stuff from the set... [cross talk]

JOSH: [cross talk] It's a lot of expensive equipment.

DULÉ: [cross talk] ...And packed it in Brad's trunk, so Brad didn't know. So when he's pulling out, they pop the trunk to go look to see what's in there, [DULÉ laughing] and it's all, it's all this... [cross talk]

JOSH: [cross talk] Again, comedy gold.

DULÉ: [still laughing] All this like, 'This dude is a fool'.

JOSH: It is shocking I didn't get fired.

DULÉ: Yeah, it's like, 'Wow'. We had a lot of fun, I loved being on that show, I loved it, loved working with everybody. And I used to always say we could have made an hour-long version of the show and then did a half-hour single cam comedy of it. Because we would have so much fun rehearsing this stuff and just messing around with each other off-camera. It was a blast.

HRISHI: Was it hard to get through takes because you guys would joke around so much? Like, did you have to shoot a lot to get what ended up on screen?

DULÉ: We shot a lot anyway, just 'cause that was, that's just what the environment was. But there were times when the giggles would just happen and it just, especially in the Oval Office, 'cause you would just get delirious.

JOSH: Those were long days.

DULÉ: They were always long days. It was a beautiful set and it looked lovely, but when you have five or six people in the Oval Office and you got to keep covering, it became a long day. Hence where I start to come up with my trick.

JOSH: Oh, I was wondering if we were gonna get to this. [DULÉ laughing] I know exactly where you're going.

DULÉ: I always knew exactly how to position myself. If I only had one or two lines, I would guarantee you in the blocking, I was going to find a way to be in a shot by myself, away from everybody else. So, by the time we do the master, 'Ah, 'scuse me, I mean all I gotta say is, 'Yes, Mr President', and then, 'Thank you, Mr President'. So can we just do this pop on me real quick?' [All laughing] And then I would be out. [cross talk]

JOSH: [cross talk] [DULÉ laughing throughout] Unbelievable. I remember, and then I would be there for the last four hours going, 'Where the hell is Dulé? I can't believe he's home already'. And this is the evolution of an actor from, 'Praise the Lord, thank you for this job', to, 'I think I know a way to get out four hours early'.

DULÉ: It was called the Dulé Hill school of acting.

HRISHI: At what point did people start recognizing you as Charlie?

DULÉ: Fairly early on. I mean, I would say near the second half of the first season. Near the second half of the first season, they started to be like, 'Hey Charlie?' and people just started calling me Charlie everywhere.

JOSH: When was the first time you visited D.C. after the premiere? Because I'm told about the heady early days that I missed, it was like the Beatles were in town.

DULÉ: Oh man, it was crazy. It was... because we were enamored with D.C. and the real players, and they were enamored with us, it was a big love fest. I will never forget at the White House Correspondent's Dinner that we went to, President Clinton wanted to meet us separately, so we were in this back room. And when the President finally came in, you know, it's President Clinton walking in. It's like, oh my gosh. And he and Martin do this grand gesture to each other because they both were big fans of each other. And the fact of the real President and the fake President doing this big bow, and then they laughed and then they hugged each other, it was like, where am I?

HRISHI: Wow.

JOSH: But how much more would it have blown your mind if they had done the Laurence Fishburne handshake?

DULÉ: Oh man, see what I'm saying? [laughter and cross talk] I probably would have...

JOSH: [cross talk] That's just if I were rewriting it. That's what I would have had them do.

DULÉ: I probably would have ran through the hall, like, butt-ass naked or something like that, I probably would have.

JOSH: So, you met President Clinton?

DULÉ: Oh yeah, I met President Clinton many times. Just because... [cross talk]

JOSH: [cross talk] Wow, that's cool.

DULÉ: [cross talk] ...Of the show, you know. And give thanks to Kris Engskov and Doug Band, because they would give me access, and the President would allow me, all of us access. I mean, he would always invite us to the White House when we're there. And the staff was friendly with the cast, and there was always something going on when we would be there. My first trip though, was early on, and we did the first D.C. trip I was a part of, I wasn't too sure if I was gonna go, and then they wrote me into the scene. The scene I did was playing basketball on Pennsylvania Avenue, like, one o'clock in the morning; myself, Rob, Richard, Brad, Martin, and Juwan Howard.

JOSH: Somebody on Twitter actually wanted to know who are the real ballers?

DULÉ: Actually, Martin can play ball.

JOSH: What?

DULÉ: But he has that Kareem sky hook [cross talk], that's pretty hard to defend.

JOSH: [cross talk] Oh, no kidding, he's got the sweet touch.

DULÉ: I will never forget, we used to play basketball right there, I don't know if it's still there, but they had the basketball court. I guess they put it there for Michael Jordan when he did Space Jam, so we used to go over there and play basketball on the Warner Bros. lot. And I will never forget Martin and I were doing a one-on-one, 'cause we had some time and this dude beat me [laughter]. It was the most embarrassing thing ever... [cross talk]

JOSH: [cross talk] That's awesome, that's awesome. [ALL laughter throughout]

DULÉ: I really started to really question my life choices. I'm like how Dulé, are you gonna be a 20-something-year-old black dude, and you're gonna let this 50-year-old...

JOSH: That is hilarious.

DULÉ: You know what I mean?

JOSH: Oh my God.

DULÉ: I was, like, hold on a second [laughter]. I was, like, this is not going to happen, this is not going to happen. [cross talk]

JOSH: [cross talk] I would like to rent that video right now. [cross talk]

DULÉ: [cross talk] I am so glad there is no video. I could not believe that Martin Sheen beat me in a game of basketball. Now, mind you, I'm not the greatest basketball player, but still, I should always... [cross talk]

JOSH: [cross talk] You should've owned him. [cross talk]

DULÉ: [cross talk] ...Beat Martin Sheen. At least you should always beat Martin Sheen. I mean, come on.

JOSH: Oh my God, that's hilarious.

DULÉ: But no, playing basketball on Pennsylvania Avenue with Juwan, that was surreal. That was not too long after he was a part of fab five in... [cross talk]

HRISHI: [cross talk] Michigan.

DULÉ: ...Michigan.

JOSH: Right.

DULÉ: It's, like, wait a sec, now I'm here playing basketball, one o'clock in the morning on Pennsylvania Avenue, Juwan Howard's right there, and right there is the White House.

JOSH: You wouldn't get that on a cop show.

DULÉ: You wouldn't get that on a cop show, big up to John Spencer.

JOSH: That's fantastic.

DULÉ: So, you know, what's next?

[theme music]

HRISHI: Thank you so much for listening. If you'd like to discuss this episode with us or with other West Wing Weekly listeners, we've got a pretty lively comment section up on our website, thewestwingweekly.com, and also on our Facebook page facebook.com/thewestwingweekly. If you subscribe to the show on iTunes, you can leave us a review or a rating over there, that would be great. And until next time, you can catch Josh on ABC's *Scandal*.

JOSH: And of course, you can catch Hrishi on Song Exploder.

HRISHI: Thanks so much to Dulé Hill for talking to us. It was so awesome. Josh, I've never felt like this before.

JOSH: It doesn't go away.

[Outro Music]