

The West Wing Weekly
6.14: "The Wake Up Call"
Guest: Lawrence Lessig

[Intro Music]

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

JOSH: And I'm Joshua Malina.

HRISHI: And today we're talking about "The Wake Up Call," from season 6. It's episode 14.

JOSH: It was written by friend-of-the-podcast Josh Singer. It was directed by possibly-hates-me Laura Innes.

HRISHI: True?

JOSH: Well, you know that story.

HRISHI: Remind me?

JOSH: When she gave me her whole spiel on going into a scene, how she wanted it to work, and I responded with, "So bottom line, happy face or sad face?"

HRISHI: Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh.

JOSH: And she was not amused.

HRISHI: Right, right, right.

JOSH: This episode first aired on February 9th, 2005.

HRISHI: In this episode, an Iranian fighter jet accidentally shoots down a British passenger plane, killing everyone on board, but C.J.'s reluctant to wake up the president, because he is dealing with his MS and he needs a lot of sleep and he stayed up really late the night before talking to Christopher Lloyd, playing real-life law professor Lawrence Lessig.

JOSH: Yes. That synopsis even I think, points to one of my problems with this episode. It sounds silly. [both laugh] "Killing everyone on board, but C.J. doesn't want to wake the president because he needs his sleep."

HRISHI: And the reason why Lawrence Lessig is at the White House is because he and Toby are working to try and help representatives of Belarus who are trying to craft a constitution for their country. And then there's this other stuff about a visit from Miss World.

JOSH: That's right. Oh dear.

HRISHI: Welp, let's get into this.

JOSH: Let's jump in. This one's a bit of a "meh" to me.

HRISHI: I did not care for this episode.

JOSH: All right! Strap in, people, it's gonna be one of those.

HRISHI: But here's something very exciting. The actual Lawrence Lessig spoke to us for this episode!

JOSH: Yes, and he agreed to do the interview as Christopher Lloyd. [Hrishi laughs]

HRISHI: Coming up later we talk to him about his experience with this episode, and got to talk about some pretty interesting stuff, including finance reform, elections, and his own presidential run from 2016.

JOSH: It was a good get.

HRISHI: But first, let's start at the beginning.

JOSH: Do, let's.

HRISHI: Actually before we get to the beginning, Josh, I was looking at my notes at one point, I was watching this episode and fell asleep while taking notes.

JOSH: Hm.

HRISHI: And I opened them up to continue, and I think I had fallen asleep while trying to write "Bhutan" because I found, y'know, a few notes, and then it ended with B-H-T-S-V-N-N. [Josh laughs]

JOSH: Are you sure you hadn't taken an Ambi-ahn?

[Laughter]

HRISHI: I think I fell asleep, my finger just slid off the keyboard as I dozed off. [Josh laughs] Alright, so – the president needs some sleep.

JOSH: That's – true!

HRISHI: Who among us doesn't? Apparently I also need sleep. Bhtsvnn.

JOSH: [laughs] That's right.

HRISHI: But the president gets distracted *immediately* when he hears Toby and Lawrence Lessig come in, and you can hear the joy in his voice that this is the unexpected late-night visitor. I don't exactly know *why* they have to stop by the White House at that hour.

JOSH: [laughs] Yeah, I didn't think about that. Toby's like, "So this is where we're going to be tomorrow."

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: OK.

HRISHI: Now that you've gone through twelve layers of security to walk in, you've seen the place, see you tomorrow.

JOSH: Right. That didn't occur to me.

HRISHI: But they walk in, and just the idea of their mission with the constitution for Belarus, it's just irresistible for the president. As much as he knows he needs to get some rest, it's like a

plate of cookies to me. It doesn't matter that you have to go to bed, you're going to dig in, and nothing and no one can stop you.

[West Wing Episode 6.14 excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Oh, I think we can spare five minutes to discuss the roots of democracy, that is if the professor has the time?

PROFESSOR LESSIG: It would be an honor, sir.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Yes. And I was actually charmed by that. I find that totally in keeping with President Bartlet, were he to have the chance to talk to an intellectual light such as Lawrence Lessig, I'm sure he would want to take the opportunity. So I completely bought that. And maybe the harder press from C.J. should have come here, like, "Hey, it's bedtime," rather than later waffling over whether to wake him in the middle of what seems to be an unfolding international crisis.

HRISHI: Yeah, I mean really, she stresses the importance of her job and what she needs to be able to do. At this point, she really could have been like – "Sorry to interrupt. No, Mr. President, you *have* to end this meeting. You don't have the time on your schedule right now."

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: I mean, even if he says, "No, no, no I really want to talk to him," you know he says nonsense, you got to put your foot down.

JOSH: Right. "You go get in your jammies."

HRISHI: [laughs] Which is really C.J. and the First Lady have this strange sort of fight between who ought to be mothering the president. There is a little bit of like, *really*, really, the guy needs to just be a grownup.

JOSH: Yeah, I think so. Or – resign. I mean, I was thinking that on a real level, either you're going to be the president – in which case a crisis such as this calls for being woken up, no matter the hour – or you're not up to the job!

HRISHI: Yep. C.J. has a tough row to hoe this episode.

JOSH: Yes, indeed. People are doing end runs around her, rather–

HRISHI: The First Lady is.

JOSH: Yeah, doing end runs around her, going to Kate, going to Toby... Abigail really got on my nerves in this episode in a way that I don't think she has in the past.

HRISHI: You know, a lot of people got on my nerves in this episode.

JOSH: Mine as well.

HRISHI: Dr. Bartlet, being one of them, and, just to jump to the end – I actually don't understand the resolution of what happens. So at one point, towards the end, C.J. goes to see the First Lady, to sort of be like - well, look, here's the deal. In it she says,

[West Wing Episode 6.14 excerpt]

C.J.: *Ma'am, I made a mistake this morning.*

ABBEY: *He needed to sleep.*

C.J.: *Yes, I agree with you. The mistake was not making the decision on my own.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: I didn't get her throughline, I really didn't get— I didn't think that C.J. had the moment she deserves in this episode, where she kind of puts her foot down and says, "I have a job to do. This call is mine to make; I understand you have concerns for your husband, I have concerns for the presidency, and this is my job." It could have really built to something.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: And then not only that, but subsequent to whatever it was that exactly was going on between C.J. and Abigail and then C.J. and Bartlet, then it just ends essentially with the Bartlets squabbling in the other room, and C.J. just closing the door. [chuckles] "I don't want to listen to that." [Crosstalk] It just kind of devolves into sort of childish sniping at each other.

HRISHI: [Crosstalk] Yeah.

HRISHI: I think in some ways I guess it's a win for C.J. in that we're left with the idea that she has a job, a professional job, and a professional responsibility, one to the country and to the presidency, and in that capacity she needs the president around. And she's going to have to wake him up, and get his attention when she needs it, and that's going to be her concern. Everything else about the president's disease and managing that disease is a personal thing, and it's gonna be up to him and the First Lady and his physicians, you know like, all that stuff is not within her realm. And so she closes the door at the end of the episode, and that is the visual metaphor of her drawing a line.

JOSH: Yeah. There could have been more dramatic, more interesting, stronger ways to frame these issues. If the president is annoyed at C.J. for not waking him up, and there's this whole sort of discussion of whether it would have made any difference.

[West Wing Episode 6.14 excerpt]

C.J.: *From the moment that Iranian pilot pulled the trigger, Prime Minister Grady was writing speeches. All the King's horses and all the King's men weren't going to keep her from opening her mouth. So no...*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: In reality, I think C.J. agrees with him, she felt that she that she *should* wake him up, but she was being affected by the First Lady's desire for him not to. This would have been another way to go, that it would have been another thing, I'm not saying she would have done my idea... The *president* objected to being woken up. And C.J. was saying, "I have to do my job. I can't be in the situation where I'm setting foreign policy, or I'm in the middle of decisions that you should be making." That would have been more dramatic and interesting – in the end it's just President Bartlet being infantilized by everybody. They're all just sort of trying to handle him, and pussyfoot around how to let him do his job and still get sleep. It just kind of felt like a mess. As a viewer watching it, I felt the whole time, it's *obvious*; they should have woken him

up. And it's not up to the Chief of Staff to decide whether the president could have any effect on the unfolding situation, which is absolutely clouded in terms of facts coming in. We don't really know what the hell is going on.

HRISHI: Mhmm.

JOSH: So the idea that the country should have nobody at the rudder at that time seems ridiculous. Is that right, "at the rudder?" Is that how you guide the ship of state?

HRISHI: Sure!

JOSH: Ok.

HRISHI: Just a little boat.

JOSH: Jews and boating. I don't know, it felt like "at the rudder."

HRISHI: Actually, for a quick digression, one thing I wanted to mention was the plaque on the president's desk.

JOSH: Hm.

HRISHI: Which we'd seen earlier, we saw it in *Faith Based Initiative*, but we get a little moment with it in this episode. He has a plaque on his desk that says, "Oh Lord, your sea is so great, and my boat is so small." Which is an homage to John F. Kennedy, who had a plaque on his desk that said basically the same thing – "O Lord, thy sea is so great and my boat is so small." It was given to him by a Vice Admiral of the Navy – it's a nice detail, I think, for the Resolute desk, and a nice way to tie in President Bartlet to another Catholic president.

JOSH: That's why I think I went with a rudder – I'm thinking like a little dinghy, [crosstalk] plastic...

HRISHI: [crosstalk] Yeah! Exactly! That is the Breton fisherman prayer. It's an excerpt from that. So yeah, you're thinking the right imagery. We'll put up a link to the JFK library website, where you can see JFK's plaque. But the scene that you're talking about, where the president yells at C.J., saying,

[West Wing Episode 6.14 excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Do you know how many hours I have sat with the Iranians? With the French? With Prime Minister Grady? I've put in my time, I've built relationships with these people, so that I can know when they're headed for the deep end, and I can rein them in, which is exactly what I would have done if I were awake this morning!

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And C.J. says, I don't think that's true, and I think you know it. There's nothing you could have done, basically like the Prime Minister of England was gonna be who she's gonna be, and you couldn't do anything about it, so this really feels like it's about something else, which I think it was. And I think part of the reason why it feels mushy is because the whole episode is about his MS, but they just nibble around the edges of it, more than anything. But that scene reminded me of this confrontation between the president and Leo way back in

Season 1, in “Mr. Willis of Ohio.” Leo’s telling the president about his divorce, or separation from his wife, and the president’s like, “You’re just now telling me?” and he says,

[West Wing Episode 1.06 excerpt]

LEO: Honestly, I know how you feel about Jenny, I thought you’d think that somehow you were responsible for it, and you’d turn that guilt into an inappropriate anger toward me which frankly I can live without right now. I can’t imagine what made me think all that.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And I kind of feel that lays the groundwork in the president’s character for this scene here. What he’s really feeling is guilt about the whole thing, about his lack of self-care, and lack of MS management, and all the stuff that’s put him in this position, and ultimately, C.J.’s right, because whatever, he’s powerless to some extent, to have stopped this, but he still feels bad about it. And without any other recourse he’s turning into anger and yelling at C.J..

JOSH: I don’t think it’s a slam dunk, though, that there’s nothing he could have done. It’s antithetical to the central theme of *The West Wing* to be so sure that one person’s speaking to the correct person, at the right time, in the right room, with the right words... couldn’t possibly have had the desired effect. You know, as it works out, we see the timing, they finally woke him up whatever time it is, it’s seven something or eight something and he’s storming into the Oval to get on the phone with Graty, and oops – there she is on CNN giving a live comment. And why are we to believe that there is zero chance had he spoken to her, that she might not have made the statement, or she might have had something a little bit more temperate to say.

HRISHI: Well I think at that hour, they didn’t have enough information. They didn’t know what happened. All she knows, at that time, is that an Iranian fighter jet shot down a British commercial plane, killing innocent civilians, many of whom were British citizens. She’s got a strident temperament. So those two things in combination – I don’t know that he could have said anything that’s gonna stop her from getting on TV, and denouncing Iran.

JOSH: Well, I think he would have opened with what you said, which is that the information isn’t in yet.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Don’t call it a monstrous act. Don’t call it an attack on the UK and the United States yet. You know, there is an argument to be made.

HRISHI: Yeah. But, I think we know that, despite that, it might not have worked. And there’s a chance that it probably wouldn’t have worked. We should talk a little bit about what actually was going on, which is that in the episode, the US has been sending spy planes to do surveillance on Iran.

JOSH: On the nuclear capacity of Iran.

HRISHI: Mm-hm. And we find out that it’s because of that that Iran mistakenly identified the commercial plane for a US spy plane, and shot it down. And one thing that’s kind of strange in this whole situation is that there’s no explicit remorse or regret or anything for causing that situation to even exist, right? It’s seen as a blunder on the Iranian Air Force’s sake which is absolutely it is, but there’s no accountability...

JOSH: No. There's one brief comment I think from Lord John...

[West Wing 6.14 Episode excerpt]

LORD JOHN: So it's your fault.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Right. Yeah.

JOSH: And he gets no response, although there's a salient point there – perhaps to explore. And it's also that – the whole thing – is interesting to me – I mean, there's an implication, or maybe it's made explicit by Kate Harper that there's a sort of dance they do which is that we're spying on them, they know it, they occasionally take shots at us, and we can avoid them.

[West Wing Episode 6.14 excerpt]

C.J.: So the Iranians taking potshots at our spy planes – technically, that's fair game.

KATE: Also we don't let 'em hit us.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Yep! There's also a mention of Iran air flight 655 which is something that really happened in 1988, where a passenger flight was shot down by the US Navy, and it's something that the US has never apologized for. I mean, this whole thing kinda hinges on who's gonna back down, the Ayatollah or the Prime Minister; who's gonna apologize for that, but yeah, there's this real incident that gets mentioned in the episode, and as is pointed out, the US never apologized for that.

JOSH: But that doesn't draw much of a response either.

HRISHI: No, it doesn't. Also, to go to a slightly different point, that comment comes from "Chet." And the whole Chet thing really pisses me off. It's so annoying, of all of the characters, on all of the characters' behalf, and like, so disrespectful. For anyone who doesn't remember, Chet is their diplomatic counterpart, their connection to Iran. And the reason why they call him Chet is because...

JOSH: They can't bother to learn his name.

HRISHI: Right.

[West Wing Episode 6.14 excerpt]

C.J.: Do you find it odd, calling a high-ranking Iranian official "Chet?"

KATE: Well, it's easier to say than Asefi Hossein Kamal Bin Hamid.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And yet she's just said it, and... do you need to say all five names when you're referring to him? How about just referring to him by his last name? Like... what the [expletive deleted]? Have you seen this thing on Twitter that's been going around where people have been sharing stories of people getting their name wrong?

JOSH: Yes, actually, I love it.

HRISHI: It's this extremely long, thread I guess, where people are quoting other people's stories and then telling their own. There's one that I saw from Soledad O'Brien. The format of this thing, it's a kind of meme that's going around, it starts with like, 'What's your name?' and people respond and tell an interaction they've had. So here's Soledad O'Brien:

HRISHI: "What's your name?" "Soledad." "What?" "Sol-a-dad." "What?" "Soledad, like the prison." "What?" "(Sigh.)" "So – Susan? Can I call you Susan?"

[Josh laughs]

HRISHI: Which is basically what Chet is going through.

JOSH: We're gonna call you Chet.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: In fairness, Lord John Marbury calls Leo "Gerald."

HRISHI: [Laughs] I guess that's true!

JOSH: There's a lot of it going around.

HRISHI: Yeah. At the end of the interaction between the president and Marbury, he's like, "Diplomacy!" How about the first step of diplomacy - learning the guy's *name*. Oh no, you've even learned the name, in fact, taking a second to learn how to say it.

JOSH: But while we're on that, that quote:

[West Wing 6.14 Episode excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Diplomacy, John, the job of statesmen.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: There's nothing deep in that, that's just actually the case. It's like saying, "Firefighting, John, the job of firemen." [both laugh] It's was supposed to land, like a meaningful moment, and I was thinking "Now, that's just the definition of what diplomacy is."

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: By the way there's one more - Annabeth has trouble with Miss Bhutan's name. She doesn't know it, she asks it, then she goes to refer to her a second time and doesn't know it. [laughs]

HRISHI: But at least she asks her. At least she asks her what it is, and then she says it. You know, she wants to get it right. I mean, I have a difficult name. So, you know, clearly, I am sensitive to this issue because it's something I deal with all the time. "What is it? What's your name? Oh, can I just call you Ritchie?" Whatever. I've dealt with every single permutation you could possibly imagine of someone mangling your name or trying to like, whatever. I'm used to it.

JOSH: What's difficult about Hrishikesh "Chet" Hirway? [Hrishi laughs] It's not that difficult.

HRISHI: But I have no problem with people *asking* me and having a hard time struggling through it, working through it, and trying the best they can. It's all you can ask for from someone. It's not a name that people maybe have encountered. And I think Annabeth actually is a good counterexample for the "Chet" usage of the world.

JOSH: Ok.

HRISHI: While we're on the subject of names, can we talk a little bit about – possibly, this is a controversial statement, but – one of the worst characters I've decided on *The West Wing* – Lord John Marbury.

[West Wing Episode 6.14 excerpt]

LORD JOHN: I'm Lord John Marbury, the hereditary Earl of Sherlbourne, the great-great grandson of the former Viceroy.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Yeah, I was not, I wasn't loving him this episode either. And he has his moments, there are times when I've liked him, but it was a hefty dose of LJM.

HRISHI: I have barely ever liked him. This is my confession. I have always found his lecherousness to be off-putting, and his general pomposity and then being told by everybody that he's so charming, and not finding him charming makes his lack of charmingness even... less charming? But in this episode, this is Marbury gone off the deep end. He's just a creep in this episode.

JOSH: Yeah, a creep and an [expletive delete]. Get off of my couch with your socks and spouting poetry and just drooling on everyone.

HRISHI: Thank God for Kate Harper, who is at least the first person besides Leo, to seemingly be able to recognize and not be amused or charmed by Marbury. At one point, Leo says:

[West Wing Episode 6.14 excerpt]

LEO: I really can't believe that we still let him in the building.

KATE: Tell me about it!

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: This guy is the worst!

JOSH: I was waiting for her to give him the Vulcan Death Grip, just watch him crumple to the floor.

HRISHI: That would have been awesome. I would have enjoyed it more. But besides the whole grotesque-like, oh, all these distractions that you have around, all this just horribly sexist, inappropriate, gross stuff that he says. I had another, different kind of WTF moment with him when he says to Leo:

[West Wing Episode 6.14 excerpt]

LORD JOHN: I trust you've heard our news? Oh, terrible tragedy. But if it means our paths may cross again, well there is indeed some small consolation in that.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: I get to see you!

HRISHI: This guy is a sociopath!

JOSH: Yeah, that was a really odd moment for me too. In fact, I had to watch that a couple times to figure out whether – is he like *pretending* to care in the first moment, does this just seem like a normal thing to say...

HRISHI: Yep.

JOSH: Like the worst Hallmark card ever. It would be like a sympathy card, where you're like, 'I'm sorry your grandpa died, but looking forward to seeing you Sunday!'

HRISHI: 'At least his funeral will be a chance for us to catch up!'

JOSH: Oof.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: I'll give you another line I didn't like.

HRISHI: Yeah, hit me.

JOSH: Early on in the episode, I guess after that brief briefing – can you have a long briefing? – [Hrishi laughs] Anyway...

HRISHI: You can park in the driveway, and you drive on the parkway!

JOSH: [laughs] They talk in the sit room, and then C.J. very seriously says, "I want updates every half hour." And I thought, how about, "I want updates every time there's something new to tell me?" [chuckles]

HRISHI: Every time there is an update.

JOSH: Right. I want updates. How about just, "I want updates." [chuckles]

HRISHI: Mmhm, mmhm.

JOSH: Every half hour. I can see Kate peeking in, saying, "Hey, it's been a half hour, nothing new." "OK, thanks. Talk to you in half an hour." No matter when the next thing happens.

HRISHI: Exactly. Oh, Josh! I want to get back to what you were saying about the horndog quality of everyone in the White House, because there is one moment that made me laugh *really* really hard in this episode, but it requires a level of turning up the volume that I highly encourage everyone to do this.

JOSH: I'm excited.

HRISHI: At one point, Toby is talking to the delegation from Belarus, and he's telling them about how their constitution needs to look towards the future, beyond just the noble virtues in their current president. Anyway, he gets interrupted by the arrival of Miss World. And she's still

offscreen, the camera's still on Toby, but we hear this audible male hetero murmur of [laughing] reaction, and as she appears and Annabeth announces "Oh, your 12:30 is here," [more laughter] there are just some voices, but my *favorite* voice is one guy from Belarus whose voice we hear saying, "So pretty."

[West Wing Episode 6.14 excerpt]

So pretty!

[end excerpt]

[Both laugh]

JOSH: I didn't pick up on that.

HRISHI: He basically says "Aoogah!"

[JOSH laughs]

HRISHI: But what I love about it slash hate about it is 1) such a dumb thing to say, just "So pretty!" out loud, and 2) if you were to say that, out loud, would this man really say it in English? Like if he's having some kind of lizard-brain reaction, is he going to bother translating?

JOSH: [laughs] Yeah, no, I suspect not. I'm excited to go back and listen to it.

HRISHI: Oh, it's really great.

JOSH: You know, I myself have a minor medical condition – my heart has a faint hetero murmur.

[HRISHI laughs]

JOSH: It's faint, but it can be heard.

HRISHI: You turn up the volume, and turns out it's saying, "So pretty, so pretty!" [more laughter]

JOSH: This is a weird episode! I mean, let's piggyback onto other weird, kind of cheesy, lame generalizations, it's like every male in the building is a horndog, it's a secondary subplot. I know this is going to annoy some people if you point this kind of stuff out, but like this is their idea of a palpable C plot that Miss World is visiting and one at a time, people come in and they're like, "aoogah!" [Both laugh] They can barely stay on their feet and their eyes are falling out of their head, and this journalist seems like he's onto something about President Bartlet but--

HRISHI: Quick!

JOSH: Let's give him Miss Bhutan! It's sorta like, it's one step away from like a *Friends* plot.

HRISHI: [laughs] Yeah.

JOSH: And she shoes up in her tiara and sash to discuss policy with the Chief of Staff. Is that a thing? Do you travel everywhere, is that like your ID?

HRISHI: You know, I was wondering about that. I thought that maybe there's a thing where when you win one of these beauty pageants, there are a lot of sort of contractual things that you agree to, and I imagine that some of them might be like how you have to present yourself in

formal situations, like you actually do have to wear the sash and the tiara when you make television appearances. Sort of like wearing your dress whites if you're in the Navy and you have to go on some kind of state visit, or something like that.

JOSH: Fair enough; perhaps so.

HRISHI: That there are protocols she has to follow.

JOSH: It leads to a rough moment later. There are just weird moments in this episode, everything's kind of just half a step off, when she is continuing her discussion with, I think, is his name Gordon? The journalist who had been pressing for the ticktock. And she's kind of showing him how you wear the tiara. It's just a brief moment as the camera's panning, and he's kind of [crosstalk] "Oh! So you wear it on your head?"

HRISHI: [crosstalk] Yep. Dancing around with it. [laughs]

HRISHI: Miss World, Lyonpo Palden Wangchuk, was played by an actress named Claudia Lynx and here's a funny piece of trivia, Josh. She's actually Iranian.

JOSH: How about that.

HRISHI: Yeah. She was born in Tehran.

JOSH: Oh, irony!

HRISHI: Uh, no, it's pronounced "Iranian."

JOSH: Ah. I was going to work my way to that.

HRISHI: Sorry!

JOSH: I was getting there. [Hrishi chuckles] But you beat me. No, no, no, no, no, you beat me. You had me on speed.

HRISHI: All right.

JOSH: Oh, irony. [snickers]

HRISHI: I imagine if irony just meant having qualities of something like it was from Iran. [Josh chuckles] The whole Miss World subplot is based on this idea that the winner of Miss World comes in to present a cause, and it's, you know, a worthy cause, and they get some face time, and Leo instituted it, and in this episode, Miss World proves to be this very useful tool of distraction for the reporter, it's just so weird. But the thing that the actual issue she comes in to discuss, it's just strange, because there's absolutely no respect for any part of this. They cut to Toby at one point, and he says:

[West Wing Episode 6.14 excerpt]

TOBY: No! I think large-scale study of gene expression is a very noble cause.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: With zero conviction – he just couldn't be phoning it in harder. But you know, she's there to talk about, as Annabeth tells us later, microarray-based gene expression studies. It's not like some [expletive deleted] – if some Big Block of Cheese Day issues end up getting taken

seriously, then like, why not this? But then we even find out later that Leo's like "I love this time of year" like the whole thing...

JOSH [crosstalk]: Hubba hubba! [laughs]

HRISHI: The whole tradition was based on a feeling of like, "Hey, this is a great way to get beautiful women inside our office."

JOSH: [crosstalk] No she's obviously a woman of keen intellect, with an important issue to discuss. And she's treated just as, as you said, men are all complete horndogs. And then they use her, it's like an espionage move, they use her as like a honeypot...

HRISHI: [crosstalk] Exactly!

JOSH: [crosstalk] ...to trap a troublesome journalist.

HRISHI: Right!

JOSH: Could they give any worse treatment to this woman?

HRISHI: Right! And at first, it's like, "You're not honoring the spirit of Leo's intentions," but then it turns out they are!

JOSH: Completely! [Laughs]

HRISHI: [Sighs] Yeah, that was frustrating. Maybe my favorite part of this episode, though, is--

JOSH: Yes.

HRISHI: You know, along with Ed and Larry stopping in just to ogle Miss World, we get Margaret. Margaret comes by. She's the third in our rule of three, and she's got nothing, she's got no excuse. At least the other two guys hand some bogus file over to Toby, but Margaret's just there, and I think my *favorite* outcome of this episode is the possibility that Margaret is pansexual.

JOSH: [laughs] Ooh, interesting.

HRISHI: And, you know, she's into it, she's into her.

JOSH: Hm. Maybe. I'm not sure I got that vibe from Margaret's visit.

HRISHI: What did you think, did you think it was just anthropological fascination?

JOSH: Yeah! Let's look at this beautiful woman. Let's see what a Miss World looks like up close. But maybe I'm wrong, maybe there were subtle undertones. Again, all I've got is a faint hetero murmur, [Both laugh] so all this stuff is over my head.

HRISHI: You look at it your way, I choose to look at it as a possible Wangchuk-Hooper connection.

JOSH: Nice.

HRISHI: This is what I choose to believe. That's my personal interpretation. Do you know what I think is the most unbelievable, continuously unbelievable part of *The West Wing* is? The real

fantasy at the heart of the show? Is how no one actually looks underslept. C.J. gets three hours of sleep, and then comes in and she's the beautiful Allison Janney.

JOSH: Have you gotten a good look at Will? [Both laugh] By the way, it's also dawning on me now with shame and mortification, that maybe Laura Innes directed this episode, returned to the show, because I wasn't in it.

[HRISHI cracks up]

JOSH: That seems actually plausible.

HRISHI: No – it's a *West Wing* episode, we're back in the White House. Part of my frustration with this episode, the first time that I watched, was just my impatience to get back to the campaign story. We've only got a few of them so far, but I already can't get enough of those episodes. So when we come back to the White House for this stuff, I kind of feel like, I little bit feel like I've moved on in my heart, like I appreciate the Season 6 evolution into this new kind of territory, this new kind of story, this new kind of way of working these new characters. And when we go to the White House again, it feels more like the stuff in Season 5 that didn't work as well. You know, it feels more like a redux of things that came during the Sorkin years but, you know, like a cover band.

JOSH: There's a freshness and an energy to the campaign trail now, and sort of a vitiated home base at the White House.

HRISHI: Yeah, I'm into the spinoff, and I kinda just want to watch that show. Again, it might feel blasphemous for people who were like "No. More Bartlet administration," ad infinitum, but I can't wait to get back to that sort of new version of *The West Wing*.

JOSH: That said, I hold out hope that things back in the original show could get back on course. This just sorta felt like a misstep on some levels. The plot didn't quite click, and there were some misfires.

HRISHI: Yeah. One of the things that was interesting, I thought, that wasn't made explicit, was the difference between how C.J. runs the Chief of Staff's office versus the way that Leo runs the Chief of Staff's office. She talks a little to him about how hard it is to get the president to listen to her. But I thought certainly some things had changed – the MS has advanced in a way that it wasn't when Leo was in charge. But I think there was also this sense that like if the president weren't available, Leo would just step in, and act on his behalf, in a way that C.J. is not willing or comfortable doing yet. And so when the First Lady is like "You need to leave him alone, you need to give him space to recover and get back to 100%," C.J.'s like "I can't. I just always need him." And I think Leo didn't have that same issue, because he'd just go into the Sit Room without him, and he'd make the call – he'd say "Go ahead and do this" you know, for better or for worse in terms of who's actually in charge, but it avoided this confrontation, I think, with Abbey.

JOSH: Yeah, I think that's a very good point – Leo has a history with Bartlet that gave him more of a foundation to make those kinds of decisions.

HRISHI: Yeah. And if he hadn't, maybe this dynamic would have been something that everybody would have been more used to, if he had been less of an extension of executive power himself.

JOSH: Speaking of executive power, it's time perhaps now to get to the drafting of the constitution for Belarus...

HRISHI: [crosstalk] Yeah!

JOSH: [crosstalk] ...subplot, which I think of everything in the episode works the best and I do find really interesting, and I like and was surprised that they would, rather than frame this plot around a new character, that they would actually have an actor play a real person, Lawrence Lessig, who was involved in the drafting of the Georgian constitution. And I didn't even catch it the first time around, but when I re-watched, I realized when we're first introduced to Lawrence Lessig and Toby, when they walk in, they have a little couplet, I think of dialogue about Shevardnadze and his having done kind of a bait-and-switch?

[West Wing Episode 6.14 excerpt]

TOBY: Shevardnadze just pulled the section on executive power?

PROFESSOR LESSIG: Replaced it with his own, the old constitutional bait-and-switch.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Which the first time flew over my head, when I viewed it again, subsequent to having spoken to Lawrence Lessig, I realized it's a reference to the actual story that inspired this subplot.

HRISHI: Right! The use of actual events and real politicians and real people in this episode is pretty different! I mean, we've had real politicians name-checked before. And yet there are these liberties that are taken with the character, and it's gotta be weird, and I'm excited to get into our conversation with Lawrence Lessig about all that stuff. But I agree with you, this is my favorite part of the episode, and I think in fact my favorite moment from the whole episode is at the end of this subplot, when Toby sort of confronts Lessig to suggest to him that this is a futile exercise.

[West Wing Episode 6.14 excerpt]

TOBY: These guys have to walk out of this building on Friday with a set of laws to take back home to Minsk.

PROFESSOR LESSIG: Not a set of laws, a sense of the rule of law.

[End excerpt]

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: We're trying to instill ten million gigawatts.

[Back to the Future excerpt]

DOC BROWN: 1.21 gigawatts!

[end excerpt]

[laughter]

JOSH: It's an interesting thing, did you expect Toby to be such a vocal proponent of parliamentary democracy?

HRISHI: I thought it was a really great take, I thought it made a lot of sense for Toby. I mean, it shows that he is keenly aware of how many exceptional precedents were set for presidents by the singular example of George Washington. Like for example, just one small example – the very important standard of term limits came from Washington being like “I'm not a king and after eight years I'm gonna step down.” Until we got to FDR that was just the way we did things.

JOSH: How it was done.

HRISHI: But then because of FDR's third term, we actually have to write that in, and say, ‘Hey look, we can't have an infinite number of terms successively,’ and I think Toby is fairly right to talk about how potentially dangerous the American model is, because you can't count on potential user error in the future.

JOSH: That is true. Well, I mean that it's still something our country itself struggles with.

HRISHI: Oh my God, I mean...

JOSH: We're having a very well-publicized potential crisis about emergency powers, and you know that's all about the executive branch and whether it's going to be checked by Congress, and so it's a very relevant subplot, and discussion to have.

HRISHI: Absolutely. There's an enormous amount of Trump-ai-yi-yi in this episode, especially when they're talking about the response to Iran and their potential for nuclear capability. But yeah, the Lawrence Lessig constitutional stuff just felt exciting, certainly completely relevant like, timelessly relevant, because you're talking about the principles of governance and definitely my favorite part of the episode.

JOSH: Mine as well. I would like to have dug in deeper, you know, I'm not going to complain, but we walk in and the Lawrence Lessig character is beginning to explain, or apparently is on a second or third iteration of explaining how the electoral college works. They're not deep into it. We vote for electors, who presumably then go on to vote for the candidate we expect them to, it's like – oh, they haven't dug quite in yet. The level of questions also coming from the... “Belarushans?”

HRISHI: I thought “Belarusians.”

JOSH: The Belarusians! They come to this meeting and they're like, wait, the Commander-In-Chief can't declare war? It's like, yep, that's right – did you do *any* reading ahead of time for this?

HRISHI: But I do love the moment where Lawrence Lessig breaks down who's in the room for Toby.

[West Wing Episode 6.14 excerpt]

TOBY: You think you teach democratic values to these eight guys you're gonna reverse fifty years of brutal dictatorship?

LAWRENCE: Mr. Helakal was known as the only honest legislator in the government. Mr. Lipecki, is the most respected judge in the country. Mr. Zubatov, well, Mr. Zubatov is the editor-

in-chief of Sovetskaya Belorussiya. His articles helped bring down the last dictator. How many guys do you think it takes?

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Oh, yeah, that's a great run.

HRISHI: Yeah. And I think between the questions, the sort of one-on-one questions about the constitution, and the "so pretty" moments in the episode, there is this sense, intentional or not, that it seems like these guys are kinda – lightweights, or something like that? But then that falls away as soon as Lessig says, "Look, do you know who these people are? Do you know how important it is just to tell them about these principles?"

JOSH: Yeah, "Look at the lineup." I like that moment too, because there is a little bit implicit in Toby's hardline pitch for parliamentary democracy, a sort of...

HRISHI: Distrust?

JOSH: A distrust of Belarus as a former Soviet socialist republic. It's like we do democracy, and there have been three others that have done it well, with an executive, but you guys are really prone to that dictator stuff and you know, it's kind of not even – before the mission's even begun, he's sort of undermining or shortchanging them for the ability to even put into motion some sort of system with checks and balances, rather than something that's just going to snowball right back into authoritarianism.

HRISHI: Yeah, I actually think it's kind of Czechs and Slovakias.

JOSH: Ooh.

HRISHI: The irony is that Toby is right, [laughs] Toby's right. The democracy in Belarus is kind of a joke. It is basically a totalitarian government. Josh?

JOSH: Is it time?

HRISHI: My griping is over. I have gotten it off my chest. I think it's time to move on to more joyous things.

JOSH: Yes, including?

HRISHI: Taking a break, and then talking to Professor Lawrence Lessig.

JOSH: Let's do it.

[ad break]

HRISHI: Joining us now is Lawrence Lessig, professor of law at Harvard Law School, and formerly the co-director for the Center for the Study of Constitutionalism in Eastern Europe at the University of Chicago Law School. And he's portrayed in this episode of *The West Wing* by Christopher Lloyd. Professor Lessig, thanks so much for joining us.

PROFESSOR LESSIG: Thanks for having me.

JOSH: Thanks for being willing to play yourself in this call. [Hrishi and Professor Lessig laugh]

PROFESSOR LESSIG: Well, I understand Chris Lloyd was not available, so I get it. I'm the second one. [laughter]

HRISHI: Professor, could you recount for us how you first heard this episode was happening? How did this whole thing first enter your life?

PROFESSOR LESSIG: Well, it's not a surprising story. So I have the privilege of teaching incredibly talented people, not all of whom become lawyers, so Josh Singer was my student at the Harvard Law School and in the context of constitutional law I told this story, which is roughly the story that the episode portrayed, and it's the story of the project of drafting a constitution for the republic of Georgia, and the same dynamic is described in the episode, of the president ripping out the presidential section and inserting his own presidential section of the constitution. So when Josh graduated and decided he didn't want to be a lawyer, he wanted to be a writer, he became a writer for *The West Wing* early on, and he asked if he could portray the story, and I told him of course he could. I never expected he was going to portray it with *me* as a character, I certainly didn't expect that if there was a character like me it *would* be me, but all of that was the surprise he delivered to me when he told me that he had actually done it. He surprised me with the script, which he asked me to review before it actually went into production.

JOSH: Was there any discussion of your playing the role?

PROFESSOR LESSIG: No. I was never interested in the role.

HRISHI: But the age difference is significant. Christopher Lloyd is over 20 years older than you.

PROFESSOR LESSIG: I have to say I like the story better coming from somebody like him than from myself, but that's maybe the anxiety of all the experience [Hrishi laughs] in Georgia.

HRISHI: But is it strange? They didn't base the character on you – it is supposed to *be* you, he has your name, and yet here he is on the show, significantly older than you are. I mean, at the time he was playing you, he was older than you are now!

PROFESSOR LESSIG: I guess that's right. It's hard to believe anyone's older than I am, but... [Hrishi laughs]

HRISHI: I was wondering if we could step back, actually, for a second – could you tell us about how the events with Georgia and their constitution actually came about? How did you end up helping them draft their constitution?

PROFESSOR LESSIG: Well, so, early in I think it was '93, around Christmas, I went to Budapest to meet a bunch of people who were thinking about constitutionalism in the post-Soviet period. And I met two Georgians, who were struggling with how Georgia could draft a new constitution. And that led to an invitation to come to Georgia, and I came to Georgia and met Shevardnadze who's an incredibly uninteresting president, and *he* made the decision to appoint a group of Georgians to travel to the University of Chicago and to actually get locked in a room and draft a constitution. There were two people – one writing the text in Georgian and one writing the text in English as we sat in these rooms and engaged in this process of drafting a constitution. And so that took – I think it was like two weeks, and it was an incredible process – I mean, we were very careful not to be playing the role of drafters ourselves, more the way the episode portrayed it, more like just forcing them to wrestle through the issues and to work out what makes sense. And at the end it was a really wonderful little constitution, and so they took it

back, and as the episode describes, Shevardnadze hated the presidential powers section because we didn't give him enough power.

JOSH: Mhmm.

PROFESSOR LESSIG: He just removed that section and inserted a section which was incredibly powerful, gave the president incredible powers. So when that constitution was introduced on the floor of the Georgian parliament, one of the people who was in Chicago stood up and said, "Wait a minute, this isn't the Chicago draft," and the leader who was introducing the bill said, "What do you mean, the Chicago draft? There's no Chicago draft, there was no drafting in Chicago. We don't know what you're talking about." So there was this incredibly Soviet moment where they were completely denying that the event even happened, [crosstalk] in order to cover up the fact that Shevardnadze had changed it.

HRISHI: [crosstalk] Wow.

PROFESSOR LESSIG: And so, you know, five years ago I went back to Georgia and it was this incredible experience of people, you know, beginning to know the story and really keen to hear exactly what happened and there's this mythical Chicago draft that people are looking for because they think it's their lost constitution and they could save Georgia if they could only find it.

HRISHI: I read something that you had said about this incident that at the time you invoked Star Trek's Prime Directive, that you weren't really there to interfere too much. So at a certain point did you just feel like you have to leave it up to them, and they're gonna do what they're gonna do?

PROFESSOR LESSIG: That was subconsciously the decision from the very beginning. The University of Chicago's framework for the work in Eastern Europe was consistently about just gathering the data and facilitating conversation but never participating in like recommending particular choices over others. But the very act of ordering the conversation, by saying "you should first think about this, then think about that, then think about that" – inevitably has an effect on what ultimately gets produced. So it was impossible to have *no* effect, you know, the Prime Directive as close as we could get to it, but it was certainly the objective not to weigh in directly.

JOSH: What was the time frame? How long a process is constitutional drafting?

PROFESSOR LESSIG: That was a very quick drafting process – but we did a lot of work in advance. So we prepared kind of policy documents that sort of said, "Here's one set of issues that we're gonna need to think about, these are another set of issues, another set of issues." And it actually brought the leading legal people and political people from Georgia, so it was really high powered group, and they worked incredibly hard. You know, we would start by 8:30 in the morning and they would be drinking heavily until 2 in the morning, so it was [Josh laughs] an intense experience for everybody. And then they handed it to Shevardnadze, and then Shevardnadze did what Shevardnadze did.

HRISHI: Hmm.

JOSH: Had they anticipated that he would do that?

PROFESSOR LESSIG: No. Everybody that I talked to afterwards thought that it was completely inappropriate. I think that this whole period was filled with people who had these dreams of the radical transformation of post-Soviet society. Like you would become a completely different type of people – and many people, in this society, had this period where they were hoping thing that they would embrace transformation and then they were disappointed, you know, all across the region – certainly in Russia in particular, but all across the region. And Georgia – Georgia has gone through an enormous transformation. And I would say there was this incredibly interesting Secretary of State who I was talking to before I talked to Schevardnadze, and he was incredibly wise, and he said to me, “Can you tell me the most important moment in American history?” And I remember fumbling, I didn’t know what he was talking about, so I threw out 1776, there’s 1787, like all the obvious ones. And he said, “Wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong.” He said, “March 4, 1801.” And of course, I couldn’t even recognize what that was. But that was the moment when there was a peaceful transfer of power from one party to another party. And he said, “Until a democracy does that at least once, it’s not a democracy.”

HRISHI: It’s funny in the case of Belarus itself, which is the fictional version in *The West Wing*, their president has been president the whole time – they just keep extending the number of years and number of terms that he can serve. And so there’s *never* been a transfer of power.

PROFESSOR LESSIG: Yeah. That’s the norm, of course, the stands. It’s interesting that the event that really transitioned Georgia was that there’s a billionaire – who was Georgian but he made his money in Russia – who came back to Georgia and funded something called the Georgian Dream Party, which was going to be a reform party, and he said, “I want to be Prime Minister just long enough to effect reform to a real democracy, and then I’m gonna step aside.” And of course everybody was skeptical that he would do that, they thought that he would just leverage his power to become the permanent ruler of Georgia. But in fact, he did that, and it really was an enormously important transition intervention, that I think ultimately might be looked back upon as the thing that made it possible for Georgia to be different from all these other places.

JOSH: Hm.

HRISHI: Well, in the episode, Christopher Lloyd as you says that what he’s trying to really give them is not a set of laws but a sense of the rule of law. And do you feel like in the case of Georgia, that you were able to do that?

PROFESSOR LESSIG: You know, that was such a wise understanding that Singer added to the story. I don’t think that I recognized that dynamic, but I think that that dynamic was exactly what we contributed. You know, if anything, allowing them to watch bright people with big egos engage with each other in terms of respect about fundamental issues and struggle to the right kind of answer, understanding the law is a certain process of respectful engagement. Is the essential thing to make the rule of law possible? And by contrast with the current situation in America, you know you see a way of expressing power that’s completely opposite from this internal sense. And I think that ultimately that was such a wise way to understand what happened at Georgia and certainly a wise lesson for people going forward.

HRISHI: That example from Georgia, of someone voluntarily stepping aside after they had affected the systematic change that they wanted to see, it reminds me of your own presidential candidacy. Is it fair to say that you were inspired in part by that example?

PROFESSOR LESSIG: Yes. Totally. My sense was what he was trying to do was to give people a way to rally around the idea of change, without that being confused with particular changes that you wanted. You had to give people a sense that “we need a new system.”

HRISHI: I think that there’s something *West Wing*-y about your presidential candidacy, and maybe if you wouldn’t mind, we could talk a little bit about that. You announced that you would be interested in running, you had an exploratory committee, and your plan was specifically focused on campaign finance reform. And that was really your goal. And your promise was that if you were elected, you would make those changes happen to systems such that big money couldn’t rule elections in the way they do now, and then you would step aside and let your vice president take over as president from there in.

PROFESSOR LESSIG: Yeah, that’s right. I mean, money and politics was the thing that got me into this fight. But it was a more fundamental set of changes about basically just getting us representative democracy again. And I basically said, “Look, my job will be to be elected, and to get this passed, and once this is passed, I will step aside, and let a regular politician come in and run the new government.” Substantively, I still believe there’s a lot to that idea, again for reasons that were evinced in Georgia. Strategically, it was such a stupid move, because you could never get anybody to talk about the reform, they were all so obsessed with the idea of, “Well, who’s the vice president gonna be?” or “How do we know you’re really going to resign?” And the press, which of course has an attention span of a mosquito, was never able to unpack it in a way that made it compelling. So it was like a stupid move from the very get-go, but there were a bunch of people who were excited by it. I had raised more than half the field, if you include the Republicans, at that point.

HRISHI: Yeah.

PROFESSOR LESSIG: So there were a lot of people excited by the idea of reform, and I think there still are, but we don’t yet have candidates willing to make it like a central thing they’re going to push and excite people on the basis of that.

HRISHI: Do you feel like, in this campaign cycle, you can see effects from your run, having moved the issue forward, at least? There are a lot of Democratic candidates who are saying, “We will not take any PAC money – all of the money that’s raised is going to be coming from real people.” And I think that is at least partly a response to the idea that this tiny fraction of percentage of Americans control the strings of who gets to run. Do you feel like there’s been any progress, do you feel any hope towards the ideal you were trying to run for?

PROFESSOR LESSIG: Yeah, I don’t attribute it to me, but I think there’s an enormous progress in recognizing how central this problem is. You know, there was polling done in the middle of 2016 that was trying to understand the anger towards government, and it found Americans more angry at their government than any time in the history of polling. And the number one causes were exactly these kinds of causes – the sense that Congress works for special interests, they don’t work for the people, they care about their donors, they care about the lobbyists, they don’t care about their constituents. But what was most striking in that poll was that there was no difference between Republicans and Democrats – like all of them at 80% or higher numbers had this view. And I think that when you have that very deep, broad understanding among the people that eventually the leaders figure it out, and they begin talking about it. But obviously I’m never going to be satisfied until we get the reform we need. So when people talk about not taking PAC money – Ok, for a presidential candidate, that says something, but it’s not saying a

lot. What they need to say is that we're going to publicly fund elections. That's what they need to say. And if they're not saying stuff like that, then they're not serious about it.

HRISHI: Do you think campaign finance reform needs to be addressed before you can address the idea of the electoral college?

PROFESSOR LESSIG: I think the democracy reforms around money and politics are more fundamental. So I obviously think that the electoral college reform is *also* critically important. It's an issue I've gotten very closely involved in, I'm in the middle of six lawsuits now that are trying to force change in the electoral college. Because the way the electoral college works, candidates for president only care about the swing states, because they're the only states that decide the election. The swing states – in 2016 there were 14 of them, they got 99% of campaign spending. Those swing states are not representative of America – they're older, they're whiter, they have kind of mid-20th century industry. So this perversion – caused by the fact that states allocate their electors in something called “winner take all,” the winner of the state gets everything – is a completely unnecessary distortion in the process of electing a president. There's nothing in the constitution that says that they have to do winner take all. It's completely a state choice. And the four suits that we're involved with in California and Massachusetts and Texas and South Carolina, basically say that “one person one vote” should entail that you should have a proportional vote for the president, so if you get 40% of the vote, you should get 40% of the electors. And if you did that, then every state would be in play.

HRISHI: Right. Well, in terms of having one person's vote heard, back to the show for a second, when you were on set, were there any moments where you wanted to weigh in and say, you know, to Christopher Lloyd, “I wouldn't say it like that.” Or even hearing some of the dialogue, thinking, “Well, that's not actually right.” Did you have any temptation to jump in and give some input?

PROFESSOR LESSIG: No, the exact opposite. I thought, boy, if we had approached it like this, [chuckles] it would have been much better in Georgia. [Hrishi laughs] No, I was astonished. There's such talent and skill and insight and depth that go into a show like that, especially. My experience was just standing in awe, not just of the writers or you know the director, but the actors in particular, and the subtlety and the intensity was just something to admire, so it was a really important moment to recalibrate my sense of that.

JOSH: Were you a *West Wing* viewer prior to your involvement?

PROFESSOR LESSIG: Obsessively. Yeah, yeah, absolutely.

JOSH: Has anybody ever stopped you in the street and praised you for your work in the *Back to the Future* movies? [Hrishi and Professor Lessig laugh]

PROFESSOR LESSIG: They don't make that leap, but it is astonishing the number of people who raise this story, about this episode. I mean, it's constantly, wherever I go people [crosstalk] have seen it and...

JOSH: [crosstalk] Really?

PROFESSOR LESSIG: I think that at least half the time that I speak, somebody will come up and say something about it.

HRISHI: Well thanks so much for taking the time to talk to us about your experience – this has really been an incredible treat and an honor for us to get to have you on the podcast.

PROFESSOR LESSIG: Well, for me too – it's been great to speak to both of you.

HRISHI: And that's it for this episode. Thanks so much for listening – if you disagreed with all of our gripes, fair enough – you can let us know at thewestwingweekly.com or on Twitter or on Facebook. Or if you agreed with them, you can let us know there too.

JOSH: Thank you to Nick Song, Margaret Miller, and Zach McNeas for their work on the show.

HRISHI: Thanks so much to Lawrence Lessig for joining us. You can follow Lawrence Lessig on Twitter @Lessig. He's a brilliant person, and you'll be better off for doing so.

JOSH: Thank you to Radiotopia for allowing us to be one of its fabulous, cutting-edge...

HRISHI: One of the states in the Radiotopia republic.

JOSH: Right. Thank you for having us, thank you for helping us draft our constitution. You can find out about the other Radiotopia podcasts at Radiotopia.fm.

JOSH: Ok.

HRISHI: Ok.

PROFESSOR LESSIG: What's next?

[Outro Music]