

The West Wing Weekly  
7.07: "The Debate" Part II  
Guests: Ronald Klain and Beth Myers

[Intro Music]

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

HRISHI: And I'm Hrishikesh Hirway and today we're talking about the debate. It's Episode 7 from Season 7.

JOSH: It was written by Lawrence O'Donnell; it was directed by Alex Graves and it first aired on television on November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2005.

HRISHI: Before we get into this week's discussion of the debate, we want to clarify one thing from last week's episode. We realized as we were talking that the version of the episode on Netflix is missing about 8 minutes of content but it's also missing on iTunes and some other digital distribution platforms. So, after we wrapped up with Lawrence last week, we actually talked about it a little more. Here is a little bit of that:

[The West Wing Weekly, 7.07: "The Debate Part I" excerpt]

*LAWRENCE: Well so here is the likely source: they might have had to do this cutting for syndication because this show did go into syndication in different places.*

*HRISHI: Ohh, yes.*

*LAWRENCE: It didn't go into syndication in a big way but it went into syndication enough that somebody had to cut that for syndication and then probably it's that same department for Bravo, right? And possibly for you know European and others and so then it's from that source that they are in effect syndicating it again to Netflix and this would be the only episode that suffered because all the rest of them are you know the regular length.*

*HRISHI: Right, I think you're, I think you're absolutely right that must be it.*

*LAWRENCE: So, let's uh mount the complaint to Warner Brothers and tell them they've got to create a digital version for history and preferably the one with my mother in it if they could just [laughter] just use the East Coast.*

*HRISHI: [laughter]*

*LAWRENCE: We should probably guide them more likely toward Warner Brothers 'cause when you think about it why the hell would Netflix bother?*

*HRISHI: Exactly. Yeah. No, they they don't make those kinds of decisions.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: So that could be the solution to the mystery and hopefully we can find a way to get Warner Brothers to get the DVD version to digital platforms instead of the syndicated version. We should have made that clear in the last episode. Our apologies, and our apologies to Netflix for any angry tweets they might have gotten undeservedly.

This is our second of two episodes covering the debate. Now for this week our coverage today is gonna be about what actually was discussed by the two candidates in the episode and to help us along with that we have two very special guests who have a lot of history working on debates themselves. We have, returning to the podcast, Ronald "Papa Smurf" Klain, you already know him well. He was Chief of Staff to Vice President Joe Biden; he was

Chief of Staff to Vice President Al Gore. He has a long and storied career that also includes preparing every single Democratic presidential candidate since 1992. We also are joined by Beth Myers. Beth was a Senior Adviser on Mitt Romney's 2012 campaign for President and she was the campaign manager on his 2008 Presidential Race. And before that, she was Chief of Staff for all four years of the Romney Governorship in Massachusetts. Beth, thank you so much for joining us. You are not a super-familiar *West Wing* watcher as you told us because you had kids at the time and this was not something you were attuned to?

BETH: And there was no TiVo. So, you had to watch it live or you were stuck.

JOSH: Dark ages. The dark ages.

HRISHI: So, this was your first time watching this episode?

BETH: Actually, you know I think I might have watched that episode in doing debate prep because it looked familiar when I was watching it.

HRISHI: No kidding?

BETH: Yeah.

HRISHI: And Ron, have you seen the episode before?

RON: Yes. I saw it before and I you know I've watched it through the years from time to time I've even watched both the West Coast and the East Coast live versions [cross talk] to see the differences between the two.

BETH: [cross talk] [laughter]

BETH: Oh, very cool.

JOSH: Do you have a preference? We know that the one we've all watched is the West Coast. Is there a qualitative difference?

RON: Well you know there is a big debate about CAFTA in one of the two and it really doesn't appear in the other one of the two. So, you get like a whole extra issue in one of the two episodes.

HRISHI: Well one thing that we've discovered is that the version on Netflix and the version in iTunes and really any kind of post-syndication airing of *The West Wing* is missing several minutes of the episode. The original episode aired for 52 minutes, the version that lived on afterwards outside of the DVD version is only 44 minutes. So, a bunch of stuff actually got cut for a lot of people. I myself have never seen the full-length version of the debate. But we're gonna muddle through it with what information we do have, the 44 minutes that we've got. First of all, what did you think about just the optics of the debate itself before we get in to the content, how did this look to you? The set, the podium, the Forrest Sawyer of it all? Did this feel like a credible set-up for this episode?

BETH: Sure. I thought it did. I mean I had a little bit of PTSD when they were in the green rooms coming out. That is probably one of the most tense moments, when you're really alone with the candidate in the green room before they walk out and you got it right, usually it's one or two aides and a spouse and you walk out. Now what I didn't think was credible was that there would be somebody walking with the candidate talking about the rules. I would have killed somebody who did that.

HRISHI: [laughter]

BETH: Because you know you don't want that in their head as they're walking on the debate stage but the stage looked right, the feeling was right, the tension was right.

JOSH: Both candidates admit to being terrified.

[West Wing Episode 7.07 excerpt]

*ARNOLD VINICK: You have no idea what this feels like. Terrified doesn't begin to describe it.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Is that usually the case?

BETH: I can only speak for Governor Romney and I would say yes.

JOSH: [laughter] That's candid.

RON: Yeah, but I'd I'd say look I thought first of all the set is stunningly realistic. The podiums I think either were borrowed from the debate commission or exact mock-ups of the commission, the podiums that have been used in the last several debates and the general election the blue backdrop. The only thing that was really changed was the commission logos a little different, a little faked up but I mean it really does look like what people see when they turn on their TVs in late September and early October every four years and see two candidates standing at podiums doing what the candidates did in this debate.

HRISHI: The reason why I'm curious about the realism for it is because, Ron, you've told us in the past that creating a simulacrum of what they are going to walk on to on the night of the debate is an important part of prep as well and that that you would actually create sort of replicas of what the set up was gonna be for them you know at whatever place you were practicing.

RON: Yeah, I mean actually if people want to take a look at this and all the photos that Obama people have put out through the years there's a picture of of President Obama practicing for his debate with Governor Romney on a set that looks identical to the set that this episode's in with John Kerry who was our stand-in playing Governor Romney and Barack Obama behind his podium and myself sitting at the desk where Forrest Sawyer sits at in this episode and Pete Souza's released this photo. It's one of...he says it's one of his favorite hundred photos of the Obama presidency for some reason and you know people can go online and look at it and it will look exactly like what they see in this episode.

HRISHI: Hm. Beth, who was the stand-in for the debate prep for President Obama?

BETH: Senator Rob Portman.

HRISHI: Hm.

BETH: And we too did the mock-ups of the stages and again you get these things exactly right. You measure them out because the geography of the stage is really important to the candidates and when they go on the stage you want them to be familiar with how far apart they are from the other candidate, how far away they are from the audience and what I thought was interesting in this section was when they grabbed other microphones and they both used the territory of the stage to their advantages which is not something that you generally do in a podium debate. That's usually an issue in the town hall.

HRISHI: Before we move off from it, I just want to ask, what was your thinking behind having Senator Portman as the stand-in? That's a sort of casting problem that you have to solve yourself so what was it that you were looking for from your stand-in in that situation?

BETH: Someone who was as smart as President Obama who was steeped in the issues. Who was willing to give the, I mean Ron can attest to that, whoever does this it's a time-consuming job and Senator Portman was very generous with his time and willing to commit to give an A+ performance as the president. I mean it's not an easy thing to be the stand-in, there's a lot of pressure on you.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: And do you tell a stand-in "go for it"? Is it absolutely "go for the jugular" is there ever any hold back a bit?

BETH: We do all sorts of directing. We had probably four or five versions of President Obama and actually we had even more versions of Vice President Biden but we definitely had different directing tactics.

HRISHI: Hm. So, the episode begins like you said with this discussion a bit about the rules, you know sort of catching them up on the format, the sort of standard format of a certain amount of time to make your statement and then rebuttal and response. And I think there is some feeling in the episode that the rules are going to be to one candidate's advantage over another. Do you find that that's the case? Are there certain candidates for whom structured debate rules work better than for others? Is it an advantage for everybody? Or is it a disadvantage for everybody?

RON: You know, in fact, now, really since 2008 in general election debates we don't really have the kind of structured rules that Vinick and Santos are presented with. In fact, you know I found interesting about the debate is the debate that transpires without rules looks a lot like what a real presidential debate looks like. Because now what we do in these presidential debates is each candidate on each topic does get to make a brief statement but then they have a free exchange period. And so while the rules shredding that's done when this episode is filmed in 2005 is kind of shredding the rules that existed in 2004 and people watch this debate today it actually looks not like a rules-shredded debate but in fact a lot like the Obama-Romney debate in 2012 or the Clinton-Trump debate in 2016 in terms of rules and structure. The second thing I'd say is that I think trying to guess at this level of debating at this level of presidential politics, you're down to the final two people, two people who have beaten a lot of people to get there, two people who are pretty skilled people to be standing on that stage. I think trying to figure out which rules benefit your candidate or don't benefit your candidate were almost always a fool's errand. I think that you know the candidate that's better prepared knows his or her case and knows what they want to say usually does well. I remember in 2004 the Bush campaign, President Bush came in and made a big deal out of the fact that they pushed hard to have timing lights. 'Cause they were convinced that Senator Kerry, who was the Democratic nominee, would go over and the timing lights would expose him and this would be a disaster for Senator Kerry. And then in the end what happened on the debate night was, it was pretty easy to teach John Kerry to not go over to like, stop before the light turned red, but President Bush gave a lot of short answers and he would finish and the light would still be green and he'd be standing there and everyone would be waiting for him to say something. And so...

HRISHI: Hm.

RON: ...this canard that they had put in there, this rule they'd put in there to try to hurt Kerry and help Bush, wound up helping Kerry and hurting Bush. So, you know, I'm not a big believer that like you can suss out the rules in a way that really at this level of proficiency that really clearly benefits your candidate.

BETH: Yeah, I agree with that. And look, when you have presidential candidates on in the general election, you have experienced debaters. You know by the time Mitt Romney was on the stage with President Obama, I've counted them, he had done 45 primary debates.

HRISHI: Hm.

BETH: So, like, there's no one else who'd, you know these people have done something that is pretty unique. They've gotten on the stage that many times. That being said, you know, they big show with the final two is very different from the primary debates. But Ron is absolutely right, the rules are made to be as flexible as possible now. The candidates want to get their message to the American people, they want the moderator to be as much of a cypher as possible and just as invisible as possible. And that was less so in the 2004 debate, which this was modeled after.

HRISHI: Hm. So, one of the things that Josh and I discussed about what we were hoping to get out of this episode poses kind of an existential question a little bit. You know, one of the things we were curious about was one at large who each of you thought maybe won the debate? And then also at a more granular level who might have won certain points or questions. But before we get to that, I just wanted to ask you each what you thought about the, even the idea of a debate having a winner and a loser. Is that an incorrect way of thinking about it? And from the inside, are you really more concerned with just getting you know your own candidate's message out rather than trying to have some kind of imaginary scoreboard where things are being tabulated?

BETH: Look, I think debates sometimes have winners sometimes they don't and I think everyone knows when someone has won a debate. I mean we went in to the first debate in Denver it was much more of an existential debate for the Romney campaign than it was for the Obama campaign. We had had a bad September and we needed to have a really good debate performance to stay actively in the hunt and so look, we were very motivated to do it so our candidate went on very aggressive. We had the belief that whoever went on offense more was generally the winner and we took advantage of a debate that was on the economy where we felt was our strong territory. In this debate, you know I kind of thought it was a bit of a draw. I thought they both had good points. If I had to call a winner, I would have said Santos but I think the Vinick people probably heard what they wanted to hear and the Santos people heard what they wanted to hear. Both of them gave good answers for their supporters. They both had personality, they both were smart and so that was my opinion of it.

RON: I agree largely with Beth on the win/lose thing. I mean not every debate has a winner, but in every debate, someone's trying to win and you know debates, particularly now, I mean this has changed over the 25 years I've been doing this, debates are really pugilistic exercises. And you know a boxing match, you mean sometimes the boxing match kind of ends in a draw but often one candidate punches the other candidate out or just punches the other candidate out enough that they win on points and so I do think these are competitive exercises that often yield a winner. And to me I think I agree 100% with something Beth said which is the winner is usually the candidate that's on offense. I often tell candidates that either you drive or the other person drives. It doesn't have two drivers. And so, I think for that reason I think in this debate Santos kind of won. I think Santos did more of the driving than

Vinick did. Santos pushed the debate more to his topics than Vinick did. And then I think in even some of Vinick's best moments, weren't really gonna be huge politically-scoring moments. I think his like his longest oration is the speech about tax cuts in Africa.

[West Wing Episode 7.07 excerpt]

*VINICK: Some African tax rates are the highest in the world. In Tanzania the 30% rate kicks in at 475 dollars of income.*

[end excerpt]

RON: I'm just not sure how many votes you're picking up with like African tax policy as like your message. So, I thought Santos was more on offense, I thought Santos tended to drive more and some of the things Vinick said I thought just involved, due respect to my good friend Lawrence, some of the words put in Vinick's mouth were like a Democrat's idea of what a Republican should say...

BETH: [laughter]

RON: ...as opposed to what really...

HRISHI: Ah

RON: ...a Republican would actually say. I'm pretty sure Beth would walk on stage and hit on the head with a stick any candidate who said Headstart just doesn't work. I just don't...

JOSH: [laughter]

RON: ...I don't see a Republican...

BETH: Absolutely.

RON: ...actually saying that on national television. So, I think Santos had a little bit of an advantage there too.

JOSH: Just speaking to the point of offense, this may seem trivial, but I'm always sort of intrigued by the dance that occurs. Do you think it's a a micro-win for Santos when he's the first to approach and did the handshake, he walks over to Vinick? Is that kind of thing discussed? How are you gonna first greet each other? And Santos kind of seems stronger as he strides over and says 'Hello' to Vinick.

BETH: It seemed to me like that was written in to the script as something that people might talk about. But yeah, I mean like that's an alpha move, so, yeah, maybe you'd look at that way? And definitely is, you know, something that might have been perceived. I mean I think I he, particularly in the beginning of the debate, he seemed much more in control. Even though it was it was Vinick's idea to scrap the rules, even as he was doing that Santos seemed to have a much better control of that whole situation.

HRISHI: Given that offense is the mode that you both recommend for a candidate, is there ever a situation where not appearing as an alpha is actually to a candidate's advantage? Or is that something that all candidates need to project?

RON: Well I, I mean one thing I'd say on that is you know you have to be the aggressive candidate but you can't be the overly aggressive candidate. So, I think you know there's alpha, then there's too much alpha, right? And so, a famous example of that is back in 2000 when the candidates were ha-, Gore was debating Bush and they had a town hall debate. The candidates could roam the stage, Gore kinda got right on top of Bush and tried to do an

alpha move where he really stood over Bush and Bush just sat on the stool, turned back, kinda gave him a little look, kinda said hello, and went back to his answer. And Gore looked like a jerk. So, I think you gotta find that right balance between how much alpha is compelling and leadership and how much is just you know this person's an unpleasant jerky kinda person.

HRISHI: Hm hm.

JOSH: Trump did a lot of skulking and looming behind Hillary Clinton in their debates.

RON: Yeah.

BETH: Yeah, Ron has a lot of experience, I'm sure there is a lot of difference between a debate with two men and a debate with a man and a woman on how those dynamics work.

RON: Gender obviously matters. And we live in a very gender oriented and aware society and certainly Secretary Clinton had challenges and a line to walk that male candidates didn't have to do. I thought she did a superb job of dealing with it but, you know, the stalking thing is a good example which is I think, during the debates we really took the view uh that is was important for her to kind of as the first woman ever nominated to be president, to kind of not complain and not you know and and stand up and stand tough. And since then she wrote in her book that she regretted that she didn't turn around and call Trump out explicitly for stalking her and so on and so forth. So, look, gender matters, gender's different, the Santos/Vinick debate is obviously a debate between two men, there's a race issue. Obviously, one's a Latino and one is white but obviously there's no gender issue in the Santos/Vinick debate.

HRISHI: Well, that's a great place to start in terms of our, our first issue in the debate. Again, with the caveat that most of us have watched the version on Netflix or on iTunes where um, and not the version on the DVD, which is missing eight minutes. But the first question that comes from Forrest Sawyer is on illegal immigration and the Mexican border.

[West Wing Episode 7.07 excerpt]

*FORREST SAWYER: How would you secure the Mexican border?*

*VINICK: Enforcement first, that's my policy. I would double the border patrol, not just increase it, double it.*

*SANTOS: Why not triple it Senator?*

*VINICK: Are you proposing tripling the ....*

*SANTOS: No, because we already did. Since 1990 we have tripled, not doubled, we've tripled the border patrol on the Mexican border and you don't need me to tell you that it hasn't solved the problem.*

*VINICK: If we had more...*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Who do you think was right? Beth, can we start with you?

BETH: Yeah, I mean, look, immigration is always a tough issue and I think it's tough for everybody because there's a lot of passion there. I thought that Santos did a really good job on humanizing it and bringing it home and bringing it personal and that's a debate tactic and a debate skill. And he took control of that issue really quickly and got it off of strict policy and

made it more about as a human rights issue and a human issue. Vinick then did what Republicans generally do and tried to turn it back in to a law enforcement issue. And an economic issue so you know they definitely had different tactics on handling the immigration issue and I give Santos the win on that.

HRISHI: How 'bout you Ron?

RON: Yeah, I mean well so this is where watching the full-length version matters. I don't want to get too *West Wing* nerdy here, but [laughter from others] what's cut out from the shorter version is a loop where Vinick just blows—whiffs—a huge opportunity. So, it plays out the way you said but then at some point in time Vinick then comes after Santos for flip-flopping on CAFTA, the Central America Free Trade Agreement, where Santos had voted for it in the Ways and Means Committee and then voted against it on the floor and he winds up facing the John Kerry thing, "Oh I was for it before I was against it..."

HRISHI: Right.

RON: Kind of problem.

JOSH: Right.

RON: And what's interesting is, after Santos has said basically "Look you can't solve illegal immigration with border patrol, you need to solve it with economics." And then he proceeds to explain why he was against a trade agreement that would have helped Mexico economically like Vinick should have then lowered the boom on him on like "Now wait a second, you said this was economic and now you are against this trade deal" it's like "what is actually your economic plan here to like resolve the immigration problem?" And and so in the full-length version I think it's a little more even 'cause like they get in this CAFTA cul de sac and Santos kinda struggles a bit in the CAFTA cul de sac and Vinick doesn't quite nail him as much as he should, but it plays out a little more evenly.

HRISHI: How brutal is it for you to to stand on the side-lines while this is happening? I mean do you just need, are you just trying to telepathically send thoughts in to the candidate's mind so they can say the thing that you want them to say?

RON: [laughs]

JOSH: And where physically are you while the debate is happening for one of your candidates?

HRISHI: Yeah, what's the prime spot to send telepathy to a candidate?

BETH: Of the 48 presidential debates I was in the audience for one of them and nearly came out of my skin. [laughter] So I'm always in the green room fidgeting. I don't know about Ron.

RON: I have never been inside the hall for a single Presidential debate though I've attended every single Presidential debate held in the country [Beth laughs] since 1992. I am always in the green room [Josh laughs] fidgeting, and I will say this: I would really do anything if I never had to watch the debate.

HRISHI: [laughs]

BETH: Totally agree.

RON: I don't mind the prep; I don't mind anything. Once they go on stage, I have a fantasy of just like, leaving the hall and getting on an airplane and flying home and not seeing it. It's just you feel the stress, you hope you gave good advice, you hope it works and there's literally



nothing you can do. It's just such a completely gut-wrenching powerless moment that I had just, I hate it, I hate it more than anything in the world.

HRISHI and JOSH: [laughs]

BETH: I agree it is...it is not a place you want to be if you're an advisor and if you've spent so many hours talking about these issues and going over the nuances of them but when it goes well you feel really good. When it's going less well, you are, you are just like, "Come on, come on, we...you know...we've done that, we've said that, we've talked about this, remember, remember this little point, you gotta go there, you know, you can do it!"

JOSH: Has either of you ever had a moment where you felt in retrospect that you had misadvised a candidate about a particular issue or something that might come up?

RON: Yeah, I mean look, in 2012 as Beth alluded to, you know the very first debate between Obama and Romney in Denver, become known in the Obama campaign as the "debacle in Denver." Governor Romney really kicked President Obama's ass and you know part of that was I don't think the President was on top of his game that night. But a lot of it was we we had a really bad strategy. We kinda went in there with the thing I tell people never ever to do on a debate, just like, "Oh go in there, be nice, get through it." You walk off the stage and let's hope nothing goes wrong and you know if you don't go in to a debate with a plan to win a debate then you're going in to a debate with a plan to lose the debate.

HRISHI: Hm.

RON: And we went in to that debate with a really passive approach, a view that basically people liked Obama, we didn't want him to be too aggressive, 'cause we don't want to put his likeability at risk. And uh you know he went in to a you know a knife fight with like you know a rubber hose. You know like, no knife and so you know that was just a really bad strategy on our part, and a really great strategy on Beth's part and Governor Romney's part and I felt awful about it right afterwards.

BETH: You're very generous on that, I mean two weeks later I had a similar experience with the Benghazi interlude. I felt like we had not briefed Mitt entirely thoroughly on the exact wording that the president had used in The Rose Garden, and you know while I have deep issues with the way that the moderator interjected herself, I had bigger issues with myself and our team's briefing of Governor Romney on that issue. So, again, the thing that you regret is when something bad happens on stage and you know you know we didn't quite do this right.

HRISHI: It feels like you prepare for what might be the best-case scenario and you know you're rarely gonna ever get the best-case scenario, if ever, so then it's just a matter of managing you know your level of disappointment, even if it's a win or otherwise. Has there ever been a debate where it actually exceeded your expectations? It went better than you thought it could have gone?

BETH: Well, I would say Denver. For us, Ron, you can talk about debate number three in 2012 I think you must have been very pleased with that.

RON: I mean look we had the third debate in 2012 was the foreign policy debate and we had very high expectations for how the sitting President of the United States was going to do in a foreign policy debate but still you know we had issues and I thought President Obama did really, really well that night and it's always good, you never like to lose the first one, but it's always good to win the last one. And I think you know we felt good about that and I also

think the other one that really exceeded expectations was, for me, was the first debate in 2016 with Clinton and Trump.

HRISHI: Mm hm.

RON: Where you just really didn't know what was going to happen with Trump, you didn't know how well she was gonna do. The race had really tightened a lot, there was a lot of pressure on her and I thought she did exceptionally well that night and really got a clear win and kind of the race started to separate in her favor at that point in time. You know as Beth said, when it goes well it's the most amazing feeling in the world. When it goes poorly it feels horrible, but mostly the 90 minutes they are out there just feels like you're on pins and needles, just dying for it to be over.

HRISHI: Hm.

BETH: Just dying for it to be over. You are looking at the clock and you cannot believe how slowly it is going.

JOSH and HRISHI: [laughter]

HRISHI: Okay, let's let's go to the next question in the debate: It's really about tax policy but the thing I wanted to focus on was this line that Vinick gives where he says:

[West Wing Episode 7.07 excerpt]

*VINICK: I'm gonna cut Congress' allowance. And then I'm gonna force them to get control of spending, because if they don't, if they send me a budget that's not balanced, I will use this pen to veto it. (Applause.)*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And it's one of those moments to me that felt realistic to me because it felt a little bit overly manufactured.

JOSH: He had that pen ready.

HRISHI: He had that pen ready, exactly, and those always make me cringe a little bit in debates and yet there's never an end to them.

BETH: Yeah, well, look, in order for them to work, you've gotta have a candidate who is masterful at delivering lines like Ronald Reagan.

[1980 Presidential Debate excerpt]

*RONALD REAGAN: There you go again. When I opposed Medicare there was another piece of legislation meeting the same problem before the Congress. I happened to favor the other piece of legislation and thought that it would be better for the senior citizens and provide better care than the one that was finally passed. I was not opposing the principle of providing care for them, I was opposing one piece of legislation as versus another.*

[end excerpt]

BETH: I mean 99 percent of the candidates who would try to deliver that line would have failed and most canned lines are cringe-worthy.

HRISHI: Hm.

BETH: I try to stay away from them, but candidates love them. They love to have them in their back pocket. I think it's a security blanket.

RON: Yeah, I agree with that I mean I also think I mean honestly anyone who wrote that line should have been fired...

BETH: [laughter]

RON: ...as the debate prep advisor. 'Cause it's so corny and so obvious and I think to me the disappointing thing in that exchange is that Santos doesn't have some comeback for that or some way to kind of shove it back at him. You know I agree you see that but I think you see that less often than you think.

BETH: Yeah.

RON: And rarely that insanely awkwardly. I mean I just think overall this is part of why I think Santos won the night. I think that Vinick has a style throughout the debate that's like what we call in the business like, "Sunday show style." He has this way of kinda talking about things in a way that's kinda really good for like *Meet the Press* or *This Week* or something like that, but just doesn't seem strong on a debate stage and when you get strong he gets kinda fake-y and weird like in the "I'm gonna veto the budget" moment.

HRISHI: That's interesting. My issues with Vinick and the debate were more on style than anything else but you know leading up to it both in terms of the beginning of this episode but also the episodes prior in this season. We were really set up to think that Vinick was gonna just dominate. That he was he was the front runner to win the debate by a long shot, by a wide margin. So then when this is what we got I was a little bit surprised because of how canned it felt. I thought, "By what metric are they judging that he's so good at debates?"

RON: Yeah, I also think when you think about the arc in the season headed in to this debate, I mean it is the classic situation where Vinick is the more experienced candidate, the more seasoned candidate. It's all set up for Santos to win, right, it's a little bit like Kennedy/Nixon or a little like Obama/McCain or Bill Clinton against George Bush in '92. Where, for one of these younger, dynamic candidates to stand on the stage with the more experienced, more seasoned person, like he wins by being able to hold his own with Vinick. You know, and so if Matt Santos can stand up there and toe to toe with Vinick on these issues, and even if it's a draw that's kind of a win for Santos just as it was for Kennedy against Nixon or a younger Bill Clinton against a George Bush.

JOSH: The blessing of lowered expectations.

RON: Nah, just like an evening out of stature.

HRISHI: There is a style thing that Vinick does that I like in this section where he says:

[West Wing Episode 7.07 excerpt]

*VINICK: You know Congressman Santos is running a very brave campaign. I have to give him that. Really, I have to give you credit for that. He's actually promising a tax increase – which is a brave thing to do because the American people don't want it. And it's the wrong thing to do because the American people don't want it.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And that sort of repetition felt like a nice move. That was one where I was like "oh this is a person who knows how to present a speech."

BETH: See I thought that felt canned too.

HRISHI: I was like "oh this is a this is something that was pre-written" but this one I bought.

BETH: Oh yeah. To me, again, I had a, that was another cringe moment for me.

HRISHI: Oh.

RON: I agree with that. I thought it was kind of very cringe-worthy. And also, kinda not what you'd say. Like, I think what you would say would be like, "It's the wrong thing to do 'cause it's gonna wreck the economy, it's the wrong thing to do because it's gonna cost jobs, it's the wrong thing" you know like you wouldn't stand there and say "it's the wrong thing to do 'cause like people don't want it" it just made Vinick seem very political and I thought it was, again, kind of a big missed opportunity for him.

HRISHI: Interesting. And now we are going to take a quick break.

[Ad break]

HRISHI: Then we uh we get in to education and it leads to Vinick's line that Headstart doesn't work.

BETH: Yeah.

HRISHI: Ron, you said that you imagined that Beth would hit her candidate on the head if they were to say that. Can you break that down for us?

BETH: Yeah, look, it's like a, "Binders full of women" moment. You do not want to be saying something that can be turned in to a meme.

[2012 Presidential Debate excerpt]

*MITT ROMNEY: I went to a number of women's groups and said can you help us find folks and they brought us whole binders full of women.*

*[end excerpt]*

BETH: The line, "Headstart doesn't work," is definitely one of those lines. You just don't want those words coming out of your candidate's mouth.

JOSH: Even though he goes on to explain that he is referring to the academic fade, as it were, that by the 4th or 5th grade students that were in the program and weren't were at roughly to same place?

BETH: When you're explaining you're losing. So, you know, you don't ever wanna have a line that can be pulled out like that and played again and again and again in a sound bite. If I was a reporter doing debate wrap-up, that's the line I would pull out of the debate.

HRISHI: Why is that so toxic for Vinick? Is that not what his base would agree with anyway?

BETH: There's a lot of things you know that I'm sure he could, ways he could have gotten his point across without taking on a program that involves children and giving them a leg up in life and it's just all the wrong optics and all the wrong imagery and all the wrong policy.

HRISHI: Hm. Also, the two of you know each other, clearly, I mean you knew each other from the debates, but you know each other outside of that as well?

BETH: Yes, we do.

HRISHI: It's so interesting to listen to the two of you just sort of talk this stuff out and you know 2012 is some years away but you were facing off against each other. I'm so curious about your relationship, the two of you.

BETH: Well, I'll start off. We are both warriors. We both go in to our jobs working for campaigns and candidates who are going to fight the hardest we can ever fight and we will do everything we can for our candidates. But when the election is held and there is a winner we're also both Americans and when President Obama won against Governor Romney I was really really sad but Harvard University has a wrap up and at that event I made it a point to tell everybody in the Obama campaign congratulations and that my candidate and myself would do anything to further President Obama's agenda in making America a better place for Americans.

RON: Yeah and look I mean I have enjoyed getting to know Beth over the years, I teach a class of sometimes of undergraduates at Georgetown on the history of presidential debates and I had Beth come in and speak. I teach a class at Harvard Law School some years about law and lawyering in presidential debates. I had Beth come in and speak and you know her wisdom and experience and perspective is unmatched and I will tell you that students both college students and law students reacted unbelievably powerfully and you know it kept us being what I what they are and most of my students are Democrats and they really enjoy hearing from Beth and learning from Beth and I do too.

BETH: Yeah, in Ron's classes I am definitely outnumbered in my, with Democrats versus Republicans it's a pretty safe bet.

HRISHI: Hm.

BETH: But Ron is always the consummate host in making sure that we are talking about issues that in trying to find common ground and again I think it's really important that we all remember that that's what we're doing.

JOSH: You guys are displaying a refreshing civility of which there is a marked absence these days in politics.

HRISHI: I know I feel like I'm in *The West Wing*.

BETH: [laughter]

HRISHI: Another possible moment of common ground is in the next issue in the debate which is that of healthcare. Congressman Santos says that his ideal plan, which is not what he's actually proposed, would be Medicare for all which of course feels close to the aspirations of the ACA or Obamacare which of course was also heavily indebted to then Governor Romney's healthcare plan in Massachusetts. This part of the episode, this question, I'm curious to find out if this is an area where the two of you agree more or not?

BETH: Well I actually don't think Obamacare, this'll take me back years but, you know I was with Governor Romney when we put together our plan for Massachusetts and it was specifically tailored for the very unique situation in Massachusetts and it worked well in our state. It was always Governor Romney's position that it wouldn't work well in other states and we disagreed strongly that Massachusetts healthcare would work if applied to the whole country and that's why Governor Romney opposed Obamacare so strongly.

RON: I thought this was one of the weirdest debate moments because Santos, 20 seconds in to his answer, gives up his healthcare policy for a brand-new healthcare policy...

HRISHI: [laughs]

RON: ...presumably like three weeks before the election. As Beth knows, healthcare is always one of the most contentious issues in presidential politics.

BETH: Yeah.

RON: You spend a loooooong time thinking about your healthcare answers and your healthcare positioning and how we're gonna defend our position. How are we gonna attack your position? And so, on and so forth, and the idea that like you'd stand there on the stage like three weeks before the election and announce a new healthcare plan...

BETH: Totally.

RON: ...seems reckless beyond belief. And it's kinda interesting to me that Vinick kinda lets that go and immediately then kinda digs in on the merits of Santos' public option. But like Santos is just basically admitting, "I've been running for president for a year and telling people I wanna do THIS on healthcare, and now three weeks before the election I'm telling you I wanna do something completely different on healthcare and it's the most important issue in your life and I've changed my position on national television live..."

HRISHI: Hm.

RON: ...that seems like a very bad place to be in a presidential debate.

JOSH: And that was potentially an enormous gaffe that Vinick should've brought the hammer down on?

RON: I think so because like if you're not really sure where you are on healthcare, and you have like a secret plan that you're gonna uncork in the debate...

BETH: [laughs]

RON: ...then like maybe you've got secret plans on other things, like like you know like who knows what it is? And it just I don't know it seemed - I know it's supposed to seem like courageous and honest and straightforward but like people don't like to see people spring a surprise on them about healthcare.

HRISHI: Hm.

JOSH: You guys are tough. This is *The West Wing*.

HRISHI: [laughs]

BETH: But it's a tough issue and Ron's absolutely right. I mean the one issue that you have thought over and over and over again is about healthcare because it's one it's incredibly complicated; two there's a ton of money that is involved with it flowing through the government. And so, you know it matters not only for people on a personal basis but for the economy. And you just can't wing it. You just cannot like throw a jump ball up in the middle of the debate like that. It's a pretty unrealistic moment, but it's good fantasy television.

HRISHI: Hm.

BETH: 'Cause he seemed really authentic and real but actually it's probably one of the most unreal parts of the debate.

JOSH: Interesting.

HRISHI: Well, it's followed immediately by another moment that is made for TV it feels like where they just leave the podium, ah the podia, where they uh...

JOSH: [laughs]

BETH: Oh, I love that you used the plural correctly!

HRISHI: Ha ha. They turn it into a town hall-style debate, even though I mean I guess they've already thrown out the rules so why not?, but it feels like given all of the preparation that's been done and given how terrified they've both admitted that they are, to suddenly add another level of ad-libbing and just uh grab the mic and try and use it handheld, that felt that I don't know if like I just imagined their staff going crazy at that moment.

BETH: Well, I'm gonna look back, you know Santos had to have a lot of confidence with his ability to use the stage well. And I you know I look back to where President Obama had that same confidence in the town hall debate with Senator McCain in 2008. He just oozed confidence and even though this debate this *West Wing* show predates the Obama debates, that's what this brought to my mind.

HRISHI: Hm.

BETH: Is a young guy who had a lot of confidence in his ability to control the stage and the territory of the stage and to work with the audience. I mean he actually did shout outs to the audience at one point.

HRISHI: Right.

RON: Yeah, I know Eli Attie and others have said that Santos is kind of based in some ways on Obama even pre-Obama but I agree with Beth, this is the most Obama-like aspect of Santos' performance in this debate where he he is engaging the audience directly. He is using his youth and his physicality and his energy to show vitality you know and I think the difference between him and Jed Bartlet in terms of political performance styles most dramatic in the kind of roaming the stage, engaging the audience, you know kind of young thing that if you think about the Bartlet/Ritchie debate, for when he runs for re-election, you just can't really imagine Jed Bartlet like doing this.

BETH: Yeah, and and it's hard to do by the way. So, it is a risky move and that's why I say it shows confidence.

HRISHI: Given that you have so many variables to close in on for a specific debate, did you really keep the debate prep focused on just whatever the format was of the one that you have coming up next? Was there ever a pre-season moment where you'd kind of mix the town hall-style debate prep with the uh more traditional-style debate prep? You know so they would get a little bit of everything that was coming at them? I'm just wondering if there's a world in which Santos and Vinick had actually had a little bit of town hall-style prep even though that's not what this was set up as?

RON: I don't think so and I'll add one other thing which is that in the real world the stage would not have been lit in a way that would have allowed Santos...

BETH: Yes.

RON: ...and Vinick to do what they did, right? The cameras wouldn't have been in the right positions, Santos would have been walking wildly off camera...

BETH & HRISHI: [laughter]

RON: ...as he went. So, I mean you know when there's a fixed podium debate the camera positions are aimed at the podiums, right? And there isn't a guy with a handheld walking around filming these people 'cause they're supposed to be standing at their podiums. For a TV show this is a very un-TV outcome for a TV show.

HRISHI: Hm.

BETH: But, ah, you know to your question, we did these things serially so we were doing the podium, we did podium practice, then we did town hall practice, then we did podium practice. But keep in mind; these guys have both had primaries. So, they have been in any number of debate sessions, they've been in town halls, they've interacted, they have their confidence or lack of confidence in how they can deal with audiences that are close up.

HRISHI: Right.

BETH: And they discover where their strengths are and Santos obviously felt very good about his strength in doing what he did.

HRISHI: Mm hm.

BETH: And then to Vinick's credit he grabbed the mic and did the same thing.

JOSH: Not to be outdone.

HRISHI: The next question was about the pharmaceutical industry. And we talked a little bit about, Ron, about your thoughts on not really winning any votes with Vinick's answer there, but what did you think about the section overall?

RON: Well look, it ends with the closest thing for what Beth's perspective will be the Candy Crowley moment, when Forrest Sawyer tells the candidates to shut up about attacking each other's motives if they can't produce proof that the candidates are corrupt right?

BETH: Yeah, it was another that you know you wouldn't really want a candidate to have, a Republican candidate to have to be defending big-pharma either. And again, even though he goes on to explain why he was defending big-pharma, but it was not a great sound bite.

HRISHI: Hm. Beth, do you agree with what Ron said earlier that this really sounds more like what a Democrat would want a Republican to say?

BETH: You know I hadn't thought about it in those terms, and it's also hard to think about this historically because think back to where we were at that time, Republicans were John McCain, George Bush, and Mitt Romney who were a lot different than Republicans are today.

HRISHI: What???

BETH: [laughs] But yeah, I think that there were some lines put in Vinick's mouth that no Republican would ever say.

HRISHI: Hm.

BETH: Well actually no candidate would ever say.

HRISHI: And defending big-pharma you feel like might be one of those.

BETH: Well look I I could make an argument, I think his argument, he goes on to make a good argument that the American pharmaceutical industry has given, well that was his word, has "given" to the world, has developed drugs that have saved lives, countless lives. But the way he phrased it, "Given to the world," you know leaving himself open to the softball with Santos.

[West Wing Episode 7.07 excerpt]

SANTOS: ...some very important drugs.



VINICK: *Nothing like the miraculous drugs that the American pharmaceutical industry has given to the entire world.*

SANTOS: *Given to the world? I guess you haven't seen their price list lately.*

AUDIENCE: *[laughter]*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: They kind of uh circle back to this kind of approach with the airline industry too. Vinick is again kind of defending an industry-at-large in some ways or like the most successful companies from an industry when they start talking about pension responsibilities and the avoidance of such by the executives and it really feels like Vinick really has this line of just like, "I am for business" and I don't know if it's just my own proclivities but to me it does feel like a losing tactic.

BETH: That did feel like a cul de sac that you couldn't get out of. And you know in debate prep that's the kind of thing where when you see your candidate going down those weird pathways, you're holding your head in your hands. You don't want to go down that way.

HRISHI: Hm.

RON: I do think this is a little bit of sticking words in a Republican's mouth that no Republican would really say out loud. Vinick on every instance defends these industry things as opposed to counter-attacking on Santos and kind of saying "Look oh well like if you like Aeroflot like as your model like..."

BETH: *[laughter]*

RON: ...you know like maybe you should go fly on Aeroflot. Like I prefer to fly on United and American or whatever. I mean I just think there are ways where you could put Santos on the defensive and instead Vinick takes the bait on all these things in this part of the debate on defending big pharma and defending the big airline companies. On defending people getting rid of pension plans, you know that just again I think just allowed Santos to kinda hit homerun after homerun here.

HRISHI: Hm.

BETH: And then the next issue and you brought it up already Ron it's like the, "Don't raise taxes on Africans" I mean like if a candidate ever said that in a debate you would be going like, "What?"

JOSH: What are they talking about?

BETH: What brain cells did that; we never ever ever went over that issue.

HRISHI: *[laughs]*

BETH: And why are you spending your precious, precious moments talking about this? And then I would have immediately turned around and said in the green room, "Who talked to him about this?"

JOSH: *[laughs]*

RON: Yeah.

HRISHI: Alright I wanna go to this moment about the word 'liberal' uh between

RON: Yeah.

HRISHI: Vinick and Santos.

[West Wing Episode 7.07 excerpt]

*VINICK: Now, an unthinking Liberal will describe the airline bankruptcies as the evil capitalist screwing the worker again.*

*SANTOS: I didn't say that Senator and I don't think you should put words in my mouth.*

*VINICK: No, no, I know you didn't say it, you're not an unthinking Liberal. Are you?*

*AUDIENCE: [laughter]*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: It feels like again like a something he might have had in his pocket and maybe like he was going for a big hit, but even before Santos' response that felt like I don't know it didn't seem to work for me. What did you think of that?

BETH: It was so un-Presidential.

RON: Also, it violates some basic rules that you always tell every candidate. The first is you know and lawyers know this you know, "Don't ask a question you don't know the answer to." And don't hand the microphone back to your opponent and Santos obviously in this case takes this opportunity that Vinick supplies him by saying, "Oh you're not an unthinking Liberal, are you?" to like you know give his iconic *West Wing* moment here. And so, it's just a really bad move by Vinick as Beth says to be tart and un-Presidential and then and particularly to end it with a question where you are gonna let Santos just kind of have batting practice.

JOSH: Have the floor.

BETH: Just go.

RON: His like you know iconic *West Wing* moment here.

[West Wing Episode 7.07 excerpt]

*VINICK: Progressives*

*SANTOS: It's true. Republicans have tried to turn 'Liberal' in to a bad word. Well, Liberals ended slavery in this country.*

*AUDIENCE: [applause]*

[end excerpt]

BETH: Yeah look when you're doing debate prep one of the things is that the candidates generally understand is, "Try not to serve up the softball." And again, it's tough sometimes that happens but this was Vinick just showing- it was it was a real rookie move.

JOSH: An amateurish play.

BETH: Yeah. Real rookie move.

HRISHI: This is great. We are getting a college course on our own.

BETH: [laughs]

RON: Just one more thing on this which is again last thing to criticize Vinick here, he lets Santos deliver this “Liberals’ Dream” of a defense of liberalism and then says nothing. Like he just kinda lets it go! Like he doesn’t say, “Oh and you Liberals raise taxes.” He just like lets Santos kinda lay out the history of modern progressivism and then just like, “Okay, fine.”

BETH: “Alright, that’s it.”

JOSH: He stays down on the mat. He doesn’t get back up.

RON: Yeah it’s like, “Oh you got me. I guess I’m gotten”

BETH: [laughs]

RON: Ah, seems like an odd way to end it.

HRISHI: Huh. Are any of you familiar with Chris Rock’s bit about bullet control?

*[“Bigger and Blacker” excerpt]*

*CHRIS ROCK: You don’t need no gun control! You know what you need? We need some bullet control!*

*AUDIENCE: [laughter]*

*CHRIS ROCK: We need to control the bullets that’s what I think! All bullets should cost \$5,000! \$5,000 dollars for a bullet. You know why? Cause if a bullet cost \$5,000 dollars there’d be no more innocent bystanders.*

*[end excerpt]*

RON: Well, in a more serious aspect of this, again here we see Lawrence’s find hand because in fact the Santos proposal was a Moynihan proposal. This goes back to Lawrence’s day as a Senate staffer. Senator Moynihan, long before Chris Rock made jokes about it, really his whole proposal was instead of gun control was a very high tax on bullets and so this is s a very old school Moynihan Finance Committee proposal from Lawrence’s staffer days that comes through Santos’ policy program here.

BETH: I was a Moynihan fan, I knew I actually when I was reading this I was like, “Well this is kind of interesting.” So, if it came from Moynihan that doesn’t surprise me.

HRISHI: You know right now President Trump; he just had a conversation with Senator Chris Murphy about background checks indicating maybe that there’s some common ground maybe to be reached about gun control currently. Do you think that this is a realistic policy that could be introduced right now? Beth, do you think that you could see a Republican backing something like this that you know proposing control over the supply of ammunition?

BETH: Uh look I’m I think Toomey-Manchin is a great first step you know I think if you’re playing in the real politic world that this is not the next step to go to but it’s interesting.

HRISHI: Hm.

BETH: And you know let’s see what happens with Toomey-Manchin and then one step at a time.

HRISHI: Ron, what do you think of it in a modern context, bullet control?

RON: Well look I think, sadly, I think it’s very very hard to sell because you know I think it’s been hard enough to get a ban on assault weapons, it’s been hard enough to get background checks. Policies that effect people who want to buy a gun are hard enough to

sell. Policies that effect people who already *own* guns are gonna be even harder. And I think it's been a smart policy, it's been a smart play on all the way for the 30 years since Senator Moynihan first proposed it, I personally support it, but I do think it would be very hard sledding politically.

HRISHI: Is there a moment from the episode that you want to talk about? They talk about drilling in ANWR?

BETH: Yeah, to me that sort of got you really two philosophical differences. The guy who had more faith in in government solutions versus the guy who believed only in free market solutions. Which felt very dated to me but felt very real for that moment, in clarifying.

HRISHI: What about it feels dated?

BETH: Look, you know the Republicans at that time were the free traders and anti-deficit and that's not really the way we are anymore. So, the free market stuff feels like it's not quite at the forefront of the Republican agenda anymore.

HRISHI: Hm.

BETH: But that seemed like classic Reaganism to me.

HRISHI: Yeah.

BETH: That and in his closing where he spelled out a classic establishment Reagan era Republican point-of-view and he spelled it out very clearly and Vinick spelled out his view that government could be used to better peoples' lives.

JOSH: Or Santos rather.

BETH: Santos rather yes thank you.

HRISHI: There are a couple of stylistic questions I wanted to ask you about. At points during the debate both candidates refer to the other by their first name.

BETH: Yeah, I noticed that too.

HRISHI: Yeah, is that a move?

JOSH: Santos says Arnie as if it's a threat.

[West Wing Episode 7.07 excerpt]

*SANTOS: Look Arnie, I understand that the oil companies have given a lot of money to your campaign.*

*VINICK: Oh, wait so I'm their puppet huh?*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: It's funny, when Santos says it to Vinick, to me it feels like he is giving a familiarity that automatically makes him appear Vinick's even though he is his junior and he doesn't have as much experience. It puts them on a level playing field. Later Vinick calls him Matt and for some reason it doesn't feel like he is addressing a peer, it almost sounds like he's talking about a kid. I don't know I'm curious about how those two moments struck you and really if you would instruct a candidate to do something like that? If it's to their advantage or disadvantage to use their opponent's first name? I mean I hear a lot you know, "Don't refer to them at all." They'll say "my opponent" you know instead of actually addressing them directly.

BETH: I've been in debates where there's been an agreement, "Let's call each other by the first name." but clearly at this level it would have been very weird for instance if President Obama had called Mitt "Mitt" and Mitt had called him "Barack." That would have just felt weird I mean it's Mr. President and Governor. And yes, you know we've talked about that. There is definitely we are reinforcing the fact that this guy is the president. So, we didn't call him Mr. President very often. But that's what we would have called him. So, to use first names is a very I mean that is a debate strategy for sure.

RON: Yeah and I'd say my one experience with this was in 2016 where we made a really conscious choice that Secretary Clinton would call Donald Trump "Donald" and indeed if you watch those debates he calls her Secretary Clinton and she calls him "Donald" and you know that was a choice we made for a couple reasons first, calling him Mr. Trump made her sound like she was like his butler or something like that.

BETH: [laughs]

JOSH: On *The Apprentice*.

RON: Yeah, you know? And secondly there was a lot of chatter around that he hated the name Donald. That like it irritated him and got him under his skin. It irritated him to be called that.

HRISHI: Huh.

RON: So, she called him "Donald" in all three debates and you know that was definitely part of the plan.

HRISHI: And do you think that calling her Secretary Clinton was a stratagem on their part too?

RON: No, cause then he veered off and called her Crooked Hillary a few times and uh

HRISHI: Right.

RON: I think he was like trying to be kinda like I think he went through these things where sometimes he was trying to be polite and civil and you know and like dignified and then he just lost it and started calling her Hillary and Crooked Hillary and the whole thing.

HRISHI: Hm. Before I let you go would either of you pick one moment that if you were going to show something on the highlight reel from presidential debates was there one moment that you thought would be the one that would be most memorable?

RON: For me it is kind of Santos' famous, "What the Liberals brought to you." moment that you know I think is his finest moment in the debate and where he seems strong and in command and you know passionate. It's a little bit of Liberal wish fulfilment to see a Liberal stand on a stage and defend the word "Liberal." And I think the second thing I'd point to is I do think Santos' closing statement where he comes back to personally, talks about his journey, it's a really good closing statement.

[West Wing Episode 7.07 excerpt]

*SANTOS: Talk about what it was like for Matt Santos to go from where he was baptized 45 years ago in San Antonio to where he is standing tonight. Ask yourselves what it takes to do that, and then ask yourselves if you're ready to give Matt Santos the Presidency of the United States.*

[end excerpt]

RON: I think that that one would be one I would clip and show to people time and again.

HRISHI: But if you do show it to them, please tell them not to refer to themselves in the third person. That's the part...

BETH: [laughter]

RON: I hear ya. I do hear ya.

BETH: You know I it's funny because I would say that Vinick's best moment was his closing statement too. Where he really pulled it all together and did articulate why he was in this race, what he was doing...

[West Wing Episode 7.07 excerpt]

*VINICK: We all want a government we can believe in. We all want a government that doesn't make false promises. A government that doesn't over reach. That doesn't take on more than it can handle. An efficient, effective, honest government. That's what The Founding Fathers created, that's what they wanted for us.*

[end excerpt]

BETH: It's funny I had it in my notes on the side that Santos did an extremely good job in personalizing and you really did see the difference between the candidates. You saw one who was able to relate much better and the second one who really much more of ideologue. Somebody gave a lot of thought in writing those closing remarks because I think they were both very good at summing up the races of both of them.

HRISHI: Thank you so much to both of you. We loved having you as guests and we learned so much. If people want to follow either of you on Twitter you can find Beth Myers at @bethmyers201 you can find Ron Klain at @RonaldKlain you can find us at @WestWingWeekly and you can leave a comment for us about your thoughts on this episode at thewestwingweekly.com plenty of opportunities for your own debate over there. Thanks to Nick Song, Margaret Miller, and Zach McNees for helping us make this episode.

JOSH: And thanks to Radiotopia and PRX for including us in their exclusive collection of forward-thinking podcasts about which you can find out more at radiotopia.fm

HRISHI: Ok.

JOSH: Ok.

BETH and RON: What's next?

[Outro Music]