

September 22, 1971
12:55 – 1:50 pm

Conversation No. 279-14
Cassette No. 1063
Executive Office Building

[President Nixon and H.R. Haldeman discuss liberal Senate candidates; a section of the discussion is removed. The conversation then turns to a new presidential appointee, Romana Acosta Banuelos, named by Nixon to be treasurer of the United States. Banuelos was the first Mexican-American woman to hold a senior government position.]

Haldeman: —Banuelos got a damn good party.

Nixon: Did she?

Haldeman: Yeah.

Nixon: That's fine.

Haldeman: Did you go?

Nixon: [Unintelligible].

Haldeman: The L.A. Times gave her a pretty big ride [unintelligible].

Nixon: They did! Well, thank God. [unintelligible]

Haldeman: They, ah . . . [unintelligible].

Nixon: I have a feeling that that helps with the Mexicans [voters]. I don't think it helps one damn bit with the Negroes.

Haldeman: Well, they think it's their divine right. The Mexicans haven't gotten enough of it to be able to think that.

Nixon: The Mexicans haven't gotten a damn thing, Bob! And I sort of think, well, I mean . . . [unintelligible]. There are four, is that good enough for you? [Unintelligible] But I – you're absolutely right – with a Negro [illegible], Negro admiral, Negro general, Negro . . . virtually every goddamned thing there is. And it hasn't helped one damn bit. Right?

Haldeman: Doesn't seem to.

Nixon: I don't think it hurts. It may keep from hurting us, but it sure doesn't help much.

Haldeman: Yeah. It blunts their attack a little.

Nixon: Yeah. You see Negro groups . . . [break in tape]. Well I'm glad she did it. She is – [unintelligible] with a Mexican accent, born in Mexico, therefore not a Spanish type. She isn't old [unintelligible], like Cesar Romero. Not an aristocrat. She's got all the marks we need for . . .

Haldeman: And a good American success story. Built her own little tamale stand up into a growing business.

Nixon: Damn right. Very good.

Haldeman: Her sons here are sheriffs.

Nixon: Are they?

Haldeman: Yeah. This is her second husband. But by her first husband she has two sons, both of whom are in the L.A. County sheriff's office.

Nixon: Great.

Haldeman: She's got a daughter. . . [unintelligible].

Nixon: [Unintelligible.]

Haldeman: That was the most dramatic example . . . [unintelligible]. We sort of pushed a button, and said come up with a Mexican woman, and in fact four days later [we ended up] with a Mexican woman. Who was chairman of the board of a bank, and runs around with scholarship foundations for Mexican kids. She's a hell of a story! And they run all of this in the paper, made it out like – yeah, she's a good Horatio Alger type.

[Conversation continues, irrelevant.]