

**Exit Interview of Stephen Aiello, Office of Ethnic Affairs**

**Location:** Aiello's office in the East Wing of the White House

**Interviewer:** Emily Soapes of the Presidential Papers Staff

**Date:** December 9, 1980

**Transcribers:** Lyn Kirkland and Winnie Hoover

**Soapes:** I particularly wanted to talk to you—I know you haven't been here that long—January of this year you came in, right?

**Aiello:** Right. That's correct.

**Soapes:** Because it is such an important area that you deal with. Now, in this administration there has not been anyone who specially dealt with ethnic affairs, other than the Hispanic Affairs were dealt with by Mr. Estaban Torres.

**Aiello:** Well, not exactly. My present deputy, Victoria Mongiardo, had been working in Anne Wexler's office (Office of Public Outreach).

**Soapes:** Yeah, that is what I wondered. Are there other offices that took up that role?

**Aiello:** Right—with ethnic and Catholic constituencies prior to the establishment of this office. If you will, what the President did in establishing this office was to formalize and institutionalize a practice that had been going on since the inception of this administration, but he raised it to the level of senior staff and gave it the visibility the other offices have had, and, of course, both in perception and in reality to the communities out there, made it a very viable, visible, accessible place to the White House for those groups.

**Soapes:** Yes, so it was important not only as a symbol but for what the substance was.

**Aiello:** That's right—for the substance.

**Soapes:** So, the functions of the office had been carried on by possibly Midge Costanza's office to begin with, and then Anne Wexler's when she came?

**Aiello:** It was kind of a hodge-podge approach—an ad hoc approach to it. What had really happened was that with the work that Vicky (Victoria Mongiardo) had been doing in Anne Wexler's office, it became evident that the constituency really demanded, because of their concerns and their numbers, the establishment of their own office in order to deal effectively with so many people and such a large group. Particularly, if you are going to work with the philosophy which I believe this administration has embraced, and that is an ecumenical philosophy, of reaching out to the various groups in a coalition

approach rather than in a special interest, parochial approach—and I believe that’s why the formal establishment with a full time staff.

**Soapes:** And having a Special Advisor for Hispanic Affairs and a Special Advisor for Ethnic Affairs, does that tend to create coalitions rather than dividing into special interests? What has been your experience on that?

**Aiello:** My experience has been that we have worked more closely with coalition issues than parochial, particular issues. Let me be very specific.

**Soapes:** Please do!

**Aiello:** When I first came here, since that has been my working philosophy for over twenty years of my professional life, I met with my colleagues representing blacks, Hispanics, and Jewish affairs and found a very receptive ear on working on those issues where coalitions could be formed so that with Ed Torres we’ve worked very closely in the area of education and neighborhoods—bilingual, multi-cultural education, vocational and career education, foreign languages. In fact, both of my colleagues, all three of my colleagues, have been interested in those aspects of what I have been interested in—and in cultural studies in the broadest sense of the word. The neighborhood and community kind of outreach programs that the President found to be of such vital importance and interest to his administration with the formulation of the President’s Commission on Neighborhoods, are a vital concern to the so-called ethnic community. But, of course, it transcends that and, when we worked, we worked together with blacks, Jewish, and Hispanic groups.

**Soapes:** And will this be done through Jack Watson’s office (Cabinet Secretary and Intergovernmental Affairs) in his previous capacity?

**Aiello:** We basically worked through the Chief of Staff, both Hamilton Jordan and Jack, but most of our operational daily work was with the secretaries who were involved in those areas, particularly Geno Baroni, the Assistant Secretary in charge of Neighborhoods and Voluntary Associations. We had a ceremony here at the White House with over a hundred of the neighborhood community groups, national groups, and it was a rainbow of the American mosaic. Another example in the area of civil rights—as you may know, a good many white Ethnic Americans felt for a period of time that they were the excluded people in the Democratic coalition—that affirmative action programs and public preferential programs excluded them. Many of them, like Italian-Americans, Polish-Americans, Eastern Europeans, could point to a history of systematic discrimination in this country, particularly in the largest corporations in this country, the white collar work, and this perception has been causing misconceptions of affirmative action into group conflicts and antagonisms.

One of the other things I tried to do with Louie Martin (Black Liaison) and Ed Torres (Hispanic Liaison) was to bring groups in together to try to work out, first of all, understandings of how these programs developed and also, through the federal

bureaucracies, to do something that I had talked about, that there should be a sensitizing also to the ethnic groups so that the same way that one thinks of what would be the effects of my action on minority groups. If I do this, then what will be the effects? I want the same sensitivity on the part of the federal bureaucracy and federal agencies to ethnic groups because I believe that the way you start to enhance coalitions, that's the way you start to get acceptance of programs that are so necessary and that's the way you cut back and diminish inter-group conflict and what I would like to call, program conflict that so many times is put together by bureaucrats at all levels without understanding they have the "have nots" and "have littles" competing against each other. So, those kinds of examples where we've built coalitions, the whole question of the families, this administration, with its concerns and emphasis, cut across all racial and ethnic lines.

We have worked very closely with our colleagues. Just this weekend, I was one of the keynote speakers and chairperson of the White House mini-conference on the elderly—and we included the ethnic elderly in two of the regional conferences. And, of course, what you find, what any thinking person would understand, is that there are many more things that all the elderly have in common, whether they are black, Hispanic, so called white-ethnic, or Jewish, whatever other group, than divide them. So I have tried, and I have received very good support and reinforcement from my colleagues here, stressing the commonalities that people have rather than their differences. Now, I want to say one thing, differences are vital and very important. It has taken this nation a long time to understand that part of our strength is in our diversity.

**Soapes:** Yes. I wanted to ask you about the functions of the special interest groups.

**Aiello:** When we talk about the differences rather than look upon the negative aspects of differences dividing peoples, we should see how those differences have added to the "mosaic". And that's the best word I can think of—I know the President uses it—the mosaic that makes up American society. But then we have to take it one step further. Public policy then should begin to be sensitive, aware of and reactive to that mosaic. In a nutshell, that has been the philosophy of this office and I have to say that I've found from the President, through my colleagues through most of the federal bureaucracy, a willingness to understand and be educated in these areas.

**Soapes:** Then, in respect to bureaucracy, you spoke of HUD [Housing and Urban Development]. Was that the principle department you worked with?

**Aiello:** Well, we worked basically with-- our office worked closely with HUD, with the Department of Education, with the State Department under Frank Diminico, because that was an important, with Commerce, with Labor, with the US Commission for Civil Rights. I think those were the six major departments and, of course, Human Services, the seven that we worked with.

Why I want to single out the Department of State for a moment is that many of the groups that comprised my constituency, particularly the Eastern European groups-- although Greek-Americans and Italian-Americans also were very interested—but Eastern

European groups were very, very concerned and continually concerned, about the entire Human Rights concept upon which the President based his foreign policy. As you know, they were extremely supportive of President Carter's foreign policy; they were extremely supportive of the President's stand in the current Madrid Conference that is going on right now.

More than 40 percent of the delegation that we have sent over is comprised of members of the Eastern European community who are human rights activists and the community, of course, right now, today, while we are speaking, is very, very concerned about the situation in Poland and what's going on there. Now also, of course, our Greek-American constituency has, since I've been in office and since the President has been in office, expressed great concern over the entire Cyprus issue and the Aegean issue.

One of the accomplishments of this administration has been the re-entry of Greece into NATO which is not only something that the Greek-American community is very excited about, and welcomes, but also for our own national security and the NATO alliance is where it is on our southern flank. And again, just in foreign policy, we are today facing the disaster that has occurred in Italy with the earthquake and what's going on there.

So foreign policy and the human rights aspect of foreign policy are very, very important to the constituencies I serve as well as the Catholic constituency which transcends so much of the ethnic lines. I would say over 75 to 80 percent of the identifiable constituent groups that this office is to serve are Catholic. And as you well know, too, there are very, very strong concerns about human rights in places like El Salvador and Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic and other areas, Northern Ireland and what's going on there. So it has been a fascinating office and, if you realize that so-called ethnic Americans comprise about 55 percent of the American population, you can see that we share many, many of the concerns that all Americans share.

**Soapes:** Is it a case that in any event you find divisions among the ethnic groups? You are an Italian-American; therefore, you can't understand how a Polish-American feels. Is that a barrier? I mean, it's like saying: "I am white. I can't understand how a black feels."

**Aiello:** To a very small degree when I first came in and, I would have to say, to a lesser degree now. My background training has been to work with diverse groups, having been involved in community, educational and social affairs in the city of New York which has 155 different identifiable racial and ethnic groups. I became, through self education and then through formal education and through participation, aware of many of the concerns and desires and hopes of the groups that this office represented. I tried then to be as open as possible, and to have my staff reflect somewhat—a very limited staff—some of the concerns of these groups. So I have a Ukrainian-American, a Greek-American, and an Italian-American on the staff—and all three, by the way, had been here at the White House and had been working in this general area with Vicky Mongiardo and Anne Wexler.

I retained my three people and am very happy I did because they are excellent. There was some question as to how sensitive can this person be; how well does he understand the East European mentality in dealing with human rights. How well does he understand the Balkan states and the Catholic states and Catholic Nations feelings?

I think that I'm not overstating it when I say that I have been extremely warmly received. I have received support from all of those constituent groups because we try to be understanding and accessible. I'll be specific. We set up meetings in the Department of State for almost all of our groups with various officials from the Secretary on down to policy-making officials, so that there would be direct access dealing with some of their foreign policy concerns. There were numerous meetings here at the White House and in the federal bureaucracy with various groups within my realm of expertise to discuss issues they were concerned with, with the Department of Education.

It is an extremely complex area, ethnic politics, and ethnicity in this country. Only very, very recently are we starting to understand it. This, the Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups, represents a five years study and probably the first definitive work on trying to come to grips with the pluralistic nature of American society. I am very proud to say I had something to do with developing this project, sponsoring this project. I know that this is a first work and a beginning work—although it is an excellent work—on trying to understand this unique immigrant culture that only America has.

By the way, there are over—I believe—a hundred and twenty different ethnic groups and that include white Anglo-Saxon Protestants and that includes many of our Asian-Pacific groups. Like it or not, that's what America is. I think when people misunderstand, when they think --as Nathan Glazer has made a 180 degree turn from "Beyond the Melting Pot" to "Back to the Melting Pot"--I think the misconception and where I disagree with Professor Glazer is that there are, and there must be, a number of universal American cultural values.

**Soapes:** A common core.

**Aiello:** Right—which are institutionalized in our society by a common language, supposedly by our educational institutions, as well as other institutions which have some bearing on the socialization process. Those values, by the way, are values which were developed within a pluralistic society. It is not a static thing; our society is a very dynamic society based our religious beliefs and our constitutional beliefs. There are certain "quote, unquote," if you will, absolute values. We believe in the abstract theory of freedom; we believe an individual should be able to develop his or her full potential when given the opportunity in this country. We believe in our Bill of Rights. But within that, also, we have these various sub cultural groups which add to the strength of our nation, if we understand what we're talking about. That's what I tried to do in nine months, ten months. Let me say something: I certainly hope their offices continue under President-elect Ronald Reagan. With the exception of the campaign, this office was open on a non-partisan, bi-partisan basis to persons from the ethnic community. And I would like to see the work continue, because I believe it is vital to be continued.

**Soapes:** It is a social issue instead of a political issue?

**Aiello:** Much more so. That's right. It's not going to go away.

**Soapes:** A number of people I have talked to in various offices--it's been a point they've made in some form--this function has to continue in another administration. I don't know what form it will take. Well, now, I gather from what I've learned that when this administration began—they did not really want to compartmentalize having various advisors for specific interests, but that this changed. We saw Anne Wexler come on, we saw Sarah Weddington come on, we saw Estaban Torres come on, saw Louis Martin come on. Have you had discussions with enough people in the administration that you can see a change in philosophy or maybe a realization that the only way things were going to get done was through this kind of structure?

**Aiello:** I think—I really haven't had that much discussion with people within the administration, but I think what happened was that the president was ahead of his time, the way he has been on a few issues which the American people are going to realize in ten or fifteen years. I believe the next logical step to what's been done here is to actually have an Office of American Ethnic or cultural groups combined with enough staff to make it work effectively and building issues based on those coalitions. I believe that's what the president had first envisioned when he said no special interest groups per se. But I believe it was premature, that we work on the development of our own country. I believe that what happened was there was enough of an outcry, particularly on the part of very vocal organized groups that felt that they did not have the access or the visibility or the recognition that was necessary to continue programs, that that began to break down. Therefore, experts who know about the groups and could relate to the groups were brought in. I believe that in a way that was a very practical, pragmatic response, and also in some way, an educated response to a reality that existed then. It is going to be my hope that, seeing that, perhaps in a few years we can get back to what the President had envisioned when he began, but we aren't ready yet.

**Soapes:** Because we read a great deal today about various groups that, if you're not with me on gun control--or abortion--it doesn't matter if you are with me on everything else.

**Aiello:** Yeah! And I think that's dangerous.

**Soapes:** Yeah! A disturbing thing in our society. That would be good. But you do foresee this as a coalition-building time of these various groups?

**Aiello:** I do and I see some of the work, which has been started here that has had a national impact, helping us to take that further step because that's what America really is—and that's where we really have to get to. When our forefathers, who may have foreseen this, or may not have foreseen this—"e pluribus Unum"-- from many, one—they were not talking about homogenizing or cutting down. All you have to read is our early

history, but it takes for a relatively young nation and an incredible experiment with participatory democracy to attain such numbers.

I know we have all kinds of detractors and all kinds of problems, and I will be one of the first people to point out those problems, but we have made incredible progress along that road, and I see another developmental step in bringing in these groups without the loss of their identity or without the loss of some very specific concerns. If we talk about low-income housing—well, the country is waking up to realize that means not only blacks and Hispanics, but a lot of whites too. There are more poor whites in this country than there is anybody else—and that is not to deride people, but I think sometimes, and I will give the social planner the benefit of the doubt—through lack of understanding or overzealousness, some of our social policies isolated people and built in this conflict. When you say “poor,” most of the people in this country identify poor as being non-white. When you say “remediation” in public education, most people identify that as being non-white. Well, that is not the reality of the case.

So, what we have to look at, if the principles upon which we have based a good many of our programs are sound--and I believe they are, and my philosophy is one which is tempered by social justice-- (I feel we are our brothers’ keepers, let me make that clear right from the very beginning)—then we are going to have to learn how to change some language and some perceptions and that’s where the coalition-building comes in. If bilingual education means education for children who are non-English-speaking dominant, then there are at least 75 identifiable groups who fall into that category. That the largest groups happen to be Hispanic or Spanish-speaking does not preclude the other 74 groups. What the bilingual community has been learning is that they must be talking about everyone. When resources come down you work out formulas based on an equitable distribution dealing with the reality of the numbers. But, for too many Americans in this country, bilingual education either means we are going to be a bilingual nation with two official languages, which has never been the concept, or two, it only benefits Hispanics. Therefore, “Who else is benefiting and we’re paying for it?” “We” meaning non-Hispanics—and the patronage aspect of it.

So, there have been a lot of problems with that. When people think about ethnic minority’s studies, they think it’s only a certain group. Well, our whole country is ethnic studies. Our entire American history is an immigrant history—going back to Native Americans. That’s the kind of thing. I wish I had four more years.

**Soapes:** I’m sure you must. Can you talk about some specific examples in the eleven months that you’ve been here of building coalitions, of things that you can point to that at least you got started? And then I’d like for you to talk about, if you had four more years, what would you do? But let’s cover the last eleven months now.

**Aiello:** Very quickly, in the domestic area, in the entire field of education—

**Soapes:** Which is your field!

**Aiello:** Which is my field. We built coalitions, particularly around the areas of bilingual, multi-cultural education, adult education, and community outreach education for the Saturday-- so-called Saturday--schools, and foreign languages and international studies. Those coalitions were built, not only within the groups that I represent, because each of those groups is a large group, going from Italian-Americans who have over 20 million, to Polish-Americans who have about 19 million, then it cuts down to Asian-Americans, who are about 6 million, Greek-Americans about 3 million, East Europeans or Slavic-Americans—if you take them as a group and take out Polish Americans—you are talking about 20 or 25 million people. In each of those groups there are divisions--

**Soapes:** Sure.

**Aiello:** Based on economics, culture, perception, and politics. We had to build those coalitions first, and then reach out as ethnic groups to other groups. We were able to work with our black, Hispanic, Jewish and, of course, our women's and Catholic groups in those areas in education, community development, small businessmen's associations, neighborhood revitalization and outreach—a total approach on a coalition basis because this affects all Americans who live in cities or communities.

We did that and I have to credit the work of Geno Baroni over at HUD for being so receptive and having that kind of philosophy. In the area of human services again, this was one where I think we made some progress, particularly as it talked about the human needs and manpower development for service programs. Some of the CETA [Compressive Employment and Training Act] programs, and this was one where we have to say you have a range of folks who need these services, but we have to look at the range. There are the have-nots, and there are the have-littles, and there are the others and we must draw them all in or we have group conflict. I think we made some headway with Secretary Harris (Patricia Roberts Harris, chief of Health and Human Services, split off from HEW) although I would have liked to have done more in that area.

Specifically, also, in the area of building coalitions based on specific issues such as the economy and energy and the environment, I think we were somewhat successful in getting the President's message across as to what he was trying to do, although the economy was and remains a very troublesome area. And, again, contrary to popular thought, when someone talks of the adult unemployed, a great many white ethnics who are blue collar workers have faced unemployment in the construction, oil, steel, industries. This was something, where, again, we built coalitions in this office, based on pockets of unemployment, wherever they were, and what kind of programs had to be developed to reach out there. In the entire area of foreign policy, as I said, the President's position on human rights was almost universally supported by these constituency groups and certainly I know by the other specialist assistance.

The Middle East remains a problem and it remains a problem also of perception. Some of the groups I represent are Arab-Americans. Although the vast majority of people who work for us have supported Camp David (peace accords), and what Camp David stood for, there are, of course, some real concerns in the Middle East or Arab-American



community as to whether they are getting a fair deal with the State Department and others when we look at Middle Eastern affairs. That is something I'm going to continue to work with. When I left New York, my former mentor, now heads a group called "Professors for Peace in the Middle East," Dr. Seymour Lachman. Dr. Lachman is an Orthodox Jew. And we are going to expand that committee—Jewish and Arab-American representatives, both here and in the Middle East, to try to work together. I'm very proud about that.

And, of course, in the areas of family, neighborhoods, the elderly and education, as I've stated, I think we have been somewhat successful in forming these coalitions and in sensitizing the various federal bureaucracies that we are here and that we have needs and concerns too.

**Soapes:** And is that a really important first step and it seems like it would be—

**Aiello:** I think it is a vital first step because, by and large, there had been a "sin of commission", if you will, a kind of insensitivity to these groups that I represent and some of their needs. There was a pittance of three million dollars a year for Ethnic Studies and some of the bilingual money. There were very few areas that you could point to show outreaches. So that is beginning to change and come about.

The US Commission for Civil rights held its first consultation a year ago this December in Chicago for two days on the concerns and aspirations and the agenda of Euro-Americans in the 1980s. It was a historic first step. My office participated even before its formal creation. I participated, and that is being followed up with the proceedings that are being published and with a study that the Commission will undertake dealing with discrimination based on national origin in industries—which is a first step and makes Euro-Americans feel that they also are a part of what is happening with blacks, Hispanics, and others when it come to this kind of area of discrimination or non-participation. I think those are the specific things I could point to in coalition building and some of the things I see as accomplishments.

**Soapes:** Is there any one that you are most proud of?

**Aiello:** I would say yes, that I believe we have developed, within this country and within the federal government, an awareness and a growing sensitivity to ethnic Americans. Recognition--what I call the three "Rs"—*Recognition*, that you do have this large group ranging from 75 to 100 million people who are 75 to 80 percent Catholic; *Respect* that they are Americans who share the same concerns and desires and ideals while having specific concerns—respect also that these groups have contributed in a very positive way since the inception of this country and continue to do so; and *Rewards*—that may seem crass--but rewards meaning that they should also fully participate in the benefits of government which they helped to pay for and support. I would say that this is what I feel best about.

**Soapes:** And then I really interrupted you as you were getting ready to start talking about if you had four more years what would be your hopes?

**Aiello:** My hopes for four more years would be to continue to do what we started and also to build closer coalitions with other racial, ethnic, and minority groups on these issues and hopefully take it to that step that we talked about, where we begin to see this real mosaic rather than the particular, individual self-interest, balkanized kind of approach of special interests politics. That would have been my goal for the next four years.

**Soapes:** The sort of thing that is attainable in a short span of time like that?

**Aiello:** I think the beginnings of that are attainable because of the work that has been done by a number of people in communities by forming coalitions at the grass roots level.

**Soapes:** At the grass roots level?

**Aiello:** Right, I always believe that's where you start building. Policies can come from on high but the foundation has to come from the community. And I believe that this office operated in that manner and would have continued to operate in that manner and it is my hope that the office continues, but continues with the kind of person or persons who could enhance this kind of ecumenical philosophy.

**Soapes:** What forms of communication has the office used while you've been here and would continue to use were you to stay?

**Aiello:** Well, we have a newsletter. In fact, we will get out our last edition - that would be two. I was planning—

**Soapes:** That's bittersweet.

**Aiello:** It certainly is. We started with a computer file of zero people.

**Soapes:** Yeah, where do you find your people?

**Aiello:** We have built that up to over five thousand in the eleven months. From formal organizations, fraternal organizations, ethnic organizations, civil rights organizations to the informal networks that I believe in, community, block associations, groups, and individuals. It's very hard—personal contact, word of mouth, inviting people in. We built that up to 5000 names on a computer in the nine months we actually had to work because we were involved in the campaign also to some extent.

**Soapes:** Yes, of course.

**Aiello:** That was one. A more direct way was in making the White House accessible to thousands upon thousands of people who had not been here before to attend the major briefings that were held here and I think there were more briefings with presidential participation than ever before in the history of this country. Our folks were included in

those—briefings on the economy, energy, environment, foreign policy. We also had three major conferences this office sponsored in the nine months and close to ten mini-conferences here at the White House.

With the major conferences all having presidential participation and the mini-conferences, either one of the four principals participated in a social greeting way or actually in a substantial way as well, as senior staff and secretaries involved in them. I also did a great deal of traveling. So did members of my staff. We accepted invitations to conferences, to meetings, to festivals, and to things that were going on in the community because I believe in a two way street. I believe in not only opening the White House and having people come here--which they love--but going out to the communities and going out to people. I have traveled over twenty states, seventy cities, dealing with the work of this office. That's beside the campaign work. And we tried also in our outreach to make people aware by telephone, by letter, of things that we thought would be of particular interest to them so that specifically when we learned of the move to solidify the Greek re-entry into NATO, fifty phone calls were made from this office to national Greek-American leaders before it broke in the press. We've had those kinds of networks. When we knew of the president's statement on the Polish situation and that the grant, the loan grant, would be the largest ever in history. I think it is 600-odd million dollars that went out there, we went to our Polish network and let them know before that.

And the networks worked that way. The field would inform us in this office of concerns, of events, of things to watch out for, things they were grateful about—so we developed that kind of network—and I hope to continue that network even in a different capacity.

**Soapes:** Were you able to consult with the President frequently? Was the work of this office the sort of thing that, when you came, you were given a certain mandate and expected to become semi-autonomous? Many of the special advisors to the President—I've been really surprised—that I've talked to, say they never call him and they rarely see him. Of course, the man is really busy and he has a lot of advisors. What has been your experience?

**Aiello:** I have seen the president officially only three times. I've seen him unofficially a number of times. I shouldn't say that; I should say officially about eight times.

**Soapes:** Including these conferences you're talking about?

**Aiello:** Including the conferences where he participated directly in our issues. I would say it was a very flexible set of guidelines that I was given when I came here. What I did was to develop the priorities for this office and the mission for this office and sent that to the President and to senior staff. In a very real way, we were getting very, very broad policy guidelines and we added the flesh to that skeleton. So, if you want to say we were semi-autonomous in developing our goals and aims as it fit into the general philosophy, I would say that probably is the best description.

**Soapes:** That's good to know—how anyone did go about such a large task. You mentioned the campaign that you had worked with it very closely. When you were out

campaigning, what things could you point to, what things did you point to, to the various groups that are your constituents, and say: “This is what Jimmy Carter has done for you?”

**Aiello:** The number one on the hit parade was the formal establishment of this office.

**Soapes:** I thought that might be it. Okay.

**Aiello:** It was a major accomplishment for ethnics in the Carter administration because it gave them direct access to the federal government at the highest level, the inclusion in the Democratic platform—

**Soapes:** Let me turn this tape over; I think it’s about to end.

[Beginning of b side of tape]

**Aiello:** The inclusion in the Democratic platform of a plank dealing with ethnic Americans, which was the most comprehensive statement included in any platform in the history of this country which reinforced and accepted as part of public policy the pluralism which makes up our nation and the need to have public policy reflect that pluralism and be sensitive to it. That was quoted constantly. And then the accomplishments, particularly in the areas we talked about. To reiterate quickly, in foreign policy the human rights accomplishments and what has been done there and specifically the continuation under this administration of the relations for the Baltic nations. This is something that has been asked for 28 years, and that is to choose the succession to the charge d’affaires of Estonia, Latvia, and of Lithuania. It was the president who granted that. It has been asked for, for 28 years. I had the privilege of announcing it in Chicago where grown men wept for twenty minutes, for twenty-five minutes. It was one of the most emotional experiences I’ve had. The lady I’m dating now would take issue with this—but one of the most emotional experiences I’ve had in a helluva long time.

And, of course, the other things we spoke about in foreign policy that I won’t go over and the fields we’ve talked about: education, neighborhoods, and communities—and that is what has been done. We would reach out to small businesses, and small businessmen’s loans through the cooperative banks, and through the President’s rural concerns with developing industry and business—which cuts across ethnic and racial lines. The White House Conference on Families, Conference on the Elderly, the President’s Commission on Foreign Policy, his concern for the values that so many ethnics hold dear—the value of hard work, the value of being able to get ahead based on your own ability, the importance of stability in an ever-changing world.

Some of these are abstract concepts too—the President’s own decency and religious values which those in the ethnic community hold dear. And, then, there are these specific programs, the program approaches which we’ve spoken about, these were all accomplishments of the Carter administration and perhaps the top accomplishment: he, more than any other president, has made this White House accessible to ethnic

Americans. He has appointed more ethnic Americans to high level positions than any other president. If you speak to a good many ethnic Americans, they give him the credit for that and then say, "that's certainly not enough." You have Polish-Americans in the administration; of course, you have Zbigniew Brzezinski and Jerry Jasinowski. You can't find anybody else as good as they were. You talk about Italian-Americans, there were ten. But he did, it was a breakthrough, it was a beginning and that would be pointed to. The number of ethnic Americans appointed to presidential advisory councils, to commissions, to boards, and to positions such as this--- a breakthrough for an American president. That would be my talk to ethnic groups.

**Soapes:** All, as you pointed out, very important things.

**Aiello:** All very important.

**Soapes:** Yeah. I'm glad you answered the creation of this office as being one of them.

**Aiello:** That has been number one.

**Soapes:** You said that you would be working with this group you mention in New York City. Are you going back to New York City? Is that where we should try to find you?

**Aiello:** I don't know where I'm going right now. I'm exploring various possibilities. I'm giving myself a chance, after working for twenty years, to see where I would like to continue some of my energies for the next few years, but certainly one of them is with the Democratic Party and with the rebuilding of the party, particularly at the local levels.

**Soapes:** Yeah, and this coalition that you have---just say the coalition fell apart. The FDR [Franklin Delano Roosevelt] Coalition is falling apart.

**Aiello:** We're going to have to run that coalition and we're going to have to reach out to people and we're going to have to maintain our principles and values which make us Democrats. We're going to have to be a little more inclusive than we've been in the past twenty years. We're going to have to change some of our language and we're going to have to talk about where we've failed. We are going to have to relook at things and see what could be done better than has been done. Certainly I'm going to keep a direct relationship with the many, many new friends and acquaintances that I've built up in those communities because they are going to be the leaders in those communities. They already are---some of them are coming up. Most, if not many, adhere to the same philosophy that we've been speaking about. So I'm going to maintain contact regardless of what I do.

**Soapes:** Is there an alumni association or some place where your address is always on file? I doubt you're going to be a hard person to find, but if we're sitting in Atlanta, Georgia, you might not be as visible as you are now.

**Aiello:** I know that when I leave here I'll leave an address and, if that changes, somehow I'll try to get it back to you. I understand that you may be setting up something for Ray Jenkins and Jody—a newsletter or something.

**Soapes:** You know I heard various people say they hope that could be some sort of an alumni group-White House staff alumni group. But I hadn't realized that they were really, really talking about it.

**Aiello:** I know they were talking about it.

**Soapes:** That is really good news.

**Aiello:** I think that's great news. The other part of that would be if you and your group and association would just leave me where I can drop a line and I would be happy say something.

**Soapes:** At the moment, we don't know where the records are going and today is the ninth of December. It's something the President has to decide. We know they're going to Georgia and it looks like they're going to Atlanta at the moment.

**Aiello:** Is that where he'll have his library?

**Soapes:** We don't know. Again, that's a decision he's got to make.

**Aiello:** Well I'm sure that we will know even if we don't know before we leave here. [Soapes shakes her head no]. Oh, you're saying we have to know before we leave here.

**Soapes:** We'll have to know where the records are going to put it on the contract, the shipping contract. I tell you what; I'll give a call to your office before the end of the administration and leave an address for this.

**Aiello:** That's great. Where I can drop a line if I'm skiing in Switzerland for the next six months? (Laughs)

**Soapes:** (laughs) Yes, where we can all go and be right there on the spot because we couldn't wait any longer. Thank you so much. As you say, it is a very large issue because it is what America is—various ethnic groups and it sounds like you tackled it, certainly in your White House capacity and will continue to be working in this area. Thank you for talking.

**Aiello:** My pleasure. (End of Tape)