

**Timothy Naftali**

Hi, I'm Tim Naftali. I'm Director-Designate of the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum. I'm here today, June 28, 2007, in Washington, D.C., with Congressman Charles Rangel of New York, Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. He's here to participate in the Richard Nixon Presidential Oral History Program. I'm delighted and honored to have you here today. Thank you, Congressman Rangel, for agreeing to do this.

**Charles Rangel**

Thank you, Tim.

Going back over three decades may be a stretch, but let's try it.

**Timothy Naftali**

All right, well let's start. You're elected. It's 1970. You come to Washington. Tell us something about the Congressional Black Caucus in 1970. Who are the key players in the Caucus and what are their concerns?

**Charles Rangel**

Well, I succeeded the late and the great Adam Clayton Powell, and while there were only nine African-Americans in the Congress, you can bet your life that for most of America there was only one black in the Congress, and that was Adam Powell. He was actually bigger than life. And he wasn't the representative of Harlem or the representative of the United States, he was the black representative for America because he had the unique ability to raise hell in civil rights, but to become a super American when dealing with developing countries and they wanted his view. To my surprise, after becoming a member of Congress, he worked very closely with the Eisenhower administration and a guy named Max Rabb, who later became one of my better friends, who shared with me the successes he had in working with Adam Clayton Powell. But Adam, of course, had difficulties and caused himself to be removed from Washington and from the Congress and spend time in [unintelligible]. And as a result of the vacancy and the threats against the party, I succeeded him. So when I came to Washington, having succeeded Adam Clayton Powell, the most senior member here was a guy named Congressman Charles Diggs from Detroit. And they had had meetings. They called themselves, I think, the Study Group. But whatever it was, the nine of them from time to time would see how they could coordinate their efforts in supporting legislation that dealt with the problems of the poor. And when I came on, Parren Mitchell, Ron Dellums, Walter Fauntroy, we talked about why not form a caucus. I had just left the state legislature and participated with then Assemblyman Percy Sutton in forming a legislative Black Caucus, and then Merv Dymally who was a state legislator in California, he had formed a Legislative Black Caucus. And so state legislative bodies were way ahead of us. Then we introduced the idea and it just took off with the 13 of us. And we decided one, we had to make certain that the American people knew we were not 13 super civil rights black leaders, that we were legislators and that we wanted to supplement all of the things that other people were doing and we did not want what one person would be doing to imply that this was the Congressional Black Caucus. So we were very, very selective in the issues in which we made certain that we had solidarity.

**Timothy Naftali**

You formed something like a shadow cabinet, didn't you?

**Charles Rangel**

Yes, we did. Everything that Nixon was doing, we had somebody that was saying that "these are the problems we had with it; these are the problems we want to discuss with Nixon." We wanted to emphasize that we were part of the legislative branch, the Federal Government, and that the President – as he had to be responsive to the House and the Senate, that he had to be responsible to the unique problems that we had.

**Timothy Naftali**

So what was your portfolio? What was your cabinet department?

**Charles Rangel**

Well, my campaign, my whole campaign, was trying to scream out to the world and to the country what heroin was doing to my district. I was absolutely amazed in seeing people in stupors in the street; the amount of drugs that was being sold; the corruption of the policemen. Well, I had been a Federal prosecutor and I had worked in the narcotic unit, and so I was just amazed how the breaking up of the organized crime units that were international, how it became a free enterprise system for anybody that wanted to get into the business. And again, local police corruption was almost accepted as a way of doing business. And those people who had not heard a voice on the Federal level rallied around me as though "why haven't people been talking about it because they were feeling this in the major cities?" And so I became the person to speak because I -- most of the problems that one black member had coming from a poor, urban district at that time, before the effects of the Voting Rights Act allowed our brothers to come in from the South. They had the same problem, so because of my experience and because of my campaign I was designated to be this part of it, so that when ultimately we were able to meet with the President it was no question that I would be representing for the Caucus, and indeed the nation, the plight of what drugs was happening. And I campaigned, too: I picketed the Turkey government for allowing opium to be growing; I went to the French Embassy; I took to the Floor; and the strange things happened with the big fight that it had going on, it still goes on to an extent between Turkey and Greece over Cyprus, I became adopted by the Greek Lobby because I was knocking the heck out of Turkey and they didn't care what it was about. So I got a groundswell of support from so many of the, of the supporters in saying, "You're darn right; they're drawing open and they're killing Rangel, they're killing the world." So I got a reputation for being outspoken. Later I was able to chair that international drug committee down here in Washington for a number of years.

**Timothy Naftali**

President Nixon calls you on the Turkey issue, doesn't he?

**Charles Rangel**

He does. That's an interesting story. At the meeting, the President with the Congressional Black Caucus -- first of all, he made the Congressional Black Caucus. He just ignored us. If he had seen us, it would just be another bunch of members of color, but he went out of his way to act like we didn't exist. And so I don't know whose idea it was, but we never, never let him forget and the public forget that he saw fit to ignore a plea of 13 members of the House of Representatives to see him.

**Timothy Naftali**

Now Diggs had been trying to see him throughout 1970, right? I mean this --

**Charles Rangel**

Now I wasn't here in 1970, but yes, the Study Group had been doing similar things because they had decided not to be a Congressional Black Caucus, which was a heck of a political decision to make at that time. But the formal Congressional Black Caucus immediately put in the request to meet with the President on the issues that had been assigned us, and I had been assigned the drug issues.

**Timothy Naftali**

And when he said no, you decided to boycott the State of the Union.

**Charles Rangel**

We did a lot of dramatic things to try to get his -- and we had the support. Republicans were telling him, "Please meet with those people; it's not going well for you." And yes, we said that if he couldn't meet with us, we could not stay there to listen to him. And really I think, we got just as much headlines in walking out as he did for talking to the House.

**Timothy Naftali**

And you're not sure -- how did the meeting happen? I mean you have the State of the Union in January. Meeting doesn't happen until March.

**Charles Rangel**

Oh, someone decided that the President was hemorrhaging by ignoring us. I mean this happens in life. The same way our President wants to ignore North Korea or ignore Iran. It reaches the point that ignoring them becomes the story and not sitting down seeing what you can work out. But it was abundantly clear, like with everyone else that has business coming in, that if you feel awkward, and he could not help himself in feeling awkward, that where you can find at least somebody that you understand what they're talking about and he honed in on me, and at the expense of so many of the others that were waiting to be heard kept asking me, "And so what do you think we can do about Turkey and do you think they're actually involved and if we banned them and after, you know it's a military government." And then he went on to France and says, "You know I'm trying hard to work with them." And so I knew that he was familiar with that issue and I left it that way. And it was

always what all the Presidents since then, "We've got to get back to you, we've got to work these things out, there's got to be follow up, you work with them." But a wonderful lady worked for me named Patricia Bradley, and she told me one day -- her office is right here -- that President Nixon was on the phone. And I said "Yes, I'll talk with him as soon as I'm finished talking with President Roosevelt." You know, I said, "Pat, I'm busy; please don't joke around." She says, "No, it's really President Nixon." I said, "him directly?" She said, "Yes, I talked with him, he's on the phone." So I picked up the phone and I said, "Mr. President?" "Yes, Congressman, I'm glad you're taking my call." I said, "Taking your call? "I couldn't believe that you were on the phone." I said, "I can't even imagine that my grandfather would believe that his grandson had got a call from the President of the United States." And he said something like, "Well, I don't believe that my father would believe I'm calling you." [laughter] But shortly after that, a guy named Stan Scott, who was Assistant Press Secretary to Nixon, a Republican, and a very well known newscaster, and he called me and he asked me -- no, that's not the way it went -- the President had said, that's what it was, the President had said, "And my father would be just as surprised that I was President and calling you." So when this press guy said, "That was a very warm exchange, and the President expressed it to me and he was moved. Would you mind if I talked with you and released it?" And I said, "Not at all." Well they screwed up the release, because in the papers the next day it was that I had said how impressed my grandfather would be that the President of the United States would call me, and the press said his father would be just as surprised, too, that he called me. But the President then went on to explain that he remembered the discussions that we had in his office, and that before he made it public that he told the Government of Turkey that if they continued to allow the opium to grow as well as they did that he would be cutting off all military assistance, and as a result of this they had agreed to stop completely the growing of opium. Notwithstanding at that time, there was a legitimate opium market for medical purposes, but the Nixon administration had insisted, tough as nails, to cut out everything. Adjustments was made for economic reasons, but it wiped out Turkey as the major opium grower.

**Timothy Naftali**

And the number of people, the number of addicts dropped in this country.

**Charles Rangel**

It did, but what happened was that we had been so successful in breaking down organized crime internationally that individual entrepreneurs were able to go from Turkey to Columbia to Bolivia to Peru. And it became an open market, because the organized crime people would police themselves in making certain that it wasn't that widespread. And so while there was a dip, it was a dramatic increase. And we're seeing a lot of increase as a result of Afghanistan, which is not on the agenda. But we do have a major narcotics problem in this country.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did you play any role in the establishment of methadone clinics in the District of Columbia?

**Charles Rangel**

No, I played a role in fighting methadone clinics in the city of New York, even though then-

Mayor Lindsay was a political supporter and friend of mine. I had said to transfer a person from one addictive drug to another addictive drug would seem to me that you're just making a different kind of drug zombie. What you're doing is legalizing an addictive drug. You're not talking about what makes a person go on drugs. What makes a person want to be rehabilitated? How do you get them back in school and into jobs? What you have decided -- and then where are you going to put the methadone clinic, which is the same argument that we used to get in legalizing heroin by being able to say, "If that's what they want, let them get it." And what you're doing is giving up on a group of people. It's saying "if you don't want to participate in life, we'll give you death on installment plan. We'll open a methadone clinic. We'll open up a heroin clinic, and all you need is the doc to say that you need it." And I would say, "You know, once the doctor says how much you need and you're an addict, then you go out to the illegal market and get what you need to become a drunk addict. And so what you're doing is just giving the basic doses, and the illegal people are going to get what's needed for people to get high."

**Timothy Naftali**

Did you work at all at this time with the Office of Economic Opportunity?

**Charles Rangel**

No, how would I do that? I went from being a prosecutor to a state legislator to a member of Congress. I've always been in legislative elective offices.

**Timothy Naftali**

I was thinking about, I was thinking about as you were thinking about programs to help deal with the problem of drugs, and whether the -- some of the Great Society programs that continued in the Nixon administration were at all useful in this problem.

**Charles Rangel**

I am telling you that they were not useful in terms of rehabilitation. I would go to graduations of people that have gone through this and they would tell me that this is the greatest place in the world. They always graduate from this clinic, because it was great in reducing the dosage for people, and once they got it down and once they were clean and they get back out there, without education, without job opportunity, with the depression, the lack of self esteem, they start right back. So in terms of cutting down crime and people not having to, to get the type of money it is to keep the high, yeah, this is great. But if you take a look, both [unintelligible] ex-addicts, if you take a look, there was a recidivism of people coming back to the same clinic, and I remember we had a general that was in charge of the drug enforcement and he wanted to come to my clinic. And the patients and the addicts were just such a religious, spiritual group, and he was so impressed with the success of the program. And one guy said, "You know, General, this is the best program that we got in Congressman Rangel's district; I always come here."

**Timothy Naftali**

What effect did the returning veterans from Vietnam have on the drug problem at home?

**Charles Rangel**

It was so sad. I just hope that we treat our Iraqi veterans better. You know, it's really rough when you don't have the ability to have the skills to get a job. It's even more difficult when you've been in the military and people look up to you as being a patriot, defending your country. And really, that uniform and a couple of medals, it makes you somebody. And then to try to get a job and to find out how quickly America forgot, how limited your military experience was, and how it could not be transferred to a job. How swiftly your family is able to say that you're a loser, how embarrassing you are to them. How easy it is to go into depression. And as you lose your friends and don't have the support of the military and find yourself alone, then someone says, "Well don't over drink, for God's sake, don't take drugs." And you hear them say, "Why, what am I going to lose? I have no family, I have no jobs, I used to be somebody, the VA can't help me, what the hell have I got to lose?" And then of course, the answer is you've got everything to lose. And the number of veterans that have drug problems, mental problems, jobless, homeless is just a disgrace that America can't grab them and pull them to their bosom and treat them like the heroes they are. And we've got to have much more than that at a tremendous expense as we reach out to Iraq.

**Timothy Naftali**

Before we shift to Watergate I have a question, because a lot of people who come to our library are so young that they have no idea of what that era was like. It was a very difficult era for our country. Tell them -- tell people what you remember of the tension in the country because of Vietnam. Begin in '71, '72, as you were a young legislator in Congress.

**Charles Rangel**

Well I tell them to take a good look as to what's happened in Iraq. I tell them to listen to the President say, "We are about to win, we almost won, it won't be long now, what we need is a surge and we need more troops." Take a look now and see who's fighting and who's dying, and even then we had a draft but the draft was so, so unfair because all you had to do was do what Bush did and what Cheney did and what all of them have done and say, "I want a deferment, I'm going to college." So the draft was the biggest boost for college people than anything in the world. And so you had the unfairness, but at the end of the day, ask who's fighting, who's being wounded, and who's dying. And it ends up as it is ending up here with these volunteers that, that those who have the least ability to negotiate their life with a decent job and a decent education end up on the battlefield. So I tell the youngsters, "Put Iraq on reverse, and you will see that the same arguments that President Bush is making with Vice President Cheney are the same arguments that President Nixon was making with Secretary Kissinger." And it reached the point, which is the cruelest thing of all, that when you made the political judgment that you've lost the war that you continue to send young people there to die until you decide to conclude it in your political fashion. And I'm telling you, I know that Bush has made the judgment that America has lost in Iraq. I know he understands that his Republican support in the House and the Senate is going to evaporate when the elections come up. And I have been saying this for years, but now when Senator Lugar says it -- who's the Senior Member on Foreign Affairs -- who's going to challenge that this is all over?

And the question now, and the sad question is, how many Americans are going to die until some creative "mission accomplished" comes up by the President and he moves out? That's the saddest thing. So these youngsters, they don't go to the funerals, it's not taught in school, but all I can say is that if they look from time to time and see the names and the pictures of those warriors and heroes that have died, imagine what happened in Vietnam. Think about what happened in my war, you know, with 50,000 killed, and they would ask, "Where is Korea and what was it all about?"

**Timothy Naftali**

How were you, how were you treated when you came home from Korea?

**Charles Rangel**

I was not treated badly. They didn't know I was gone. It wasn't like in Vietnam where you were part of the problem. They didn't know about the Korean War. It wasn't on television like Vietnam. And it was a heart breaker for me to believe that highly decorated Sergeant Charles Rangel was just as jobless in 1952 as he was in 1948. But what I had was encouraging for the GI Bill. And so the difference between the high school dropout 60 years ago on Lenox Avenue at 17 and the Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee on Lenox Avenue at 77 is the GI Bill.

**Timothy Naftali**

It's the summer of 1972. When did –

**Charles Rangel**

Let me tell you a story.

**Timothy Naftali**

All right, go ahead, please.

**Charles Rangel**

I'm in the State Legislature, and for some reason I get a chance to enjoy a good working relationship with Governor Nelson Rockefeller. So I'm working on the drug program, which he had a great interest in. He asked me to work with another member, a Republican member in the Senate on some legislation. And I said, "Well I'd like to do that, Governor, but you know I've got to campaign here." He said, "Who's running against you?" So I said, "A guy named Charles Johnson." He said, "What does he do?" I don't know what he does, he's a lawyer. So he calls up the Republican Chairman of my district, "Who's running against Assemblyman Rangel?" "I don't know." He says, "Well, I want him to get the Republican endorsement." So he says, "Well he has to meet with us." So I go to the club. I'm 35 years old, and, my God, they looked like they were older than water. I didn't even know where they had come from, because, you know, we didn't know any Republicans. And so they look at me and say, "You want to run as Republican?" I said, "I guess so." "Okay, what do you think, what do you think?" Bam, five minutes, they told me to sign the papers and I was running on the Republican ticket. So when I ran for the Congress, I had a Republican endorsement, and when I

got on the Impeachment Committee I had the Republican endorsement. And things were going fairly well for me, politically, until I'm on the committee and the Republican Party put a big billboard sign on 125th Street and Broadway: "Re-elect President Nixon, Re-elect Congressman Rangel, vote Republican, paid by the Committee to Re-elect the President." [laughter] I says, "Oh my God, no, this is an honor I can't continue to have."

**Timothy Naftali**

Oh my gosh. [laughter]

**Timothy Naftali**

So Donald Segretti was working on your behalf?

**Charles Rangel**

That's right. Well, their idea was that if they could get enough people voting for me on the Republican line then it cuts down the Republican votes for other candidates. It wasn't that they loved me.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tactical voting. Tell us: when did you get on the Judiciary Committee and how?

**Charles Rangel**

I really forgot, but I do know that it was the committee of civil rights, it was the committee to fight narcotics, it was the crime committee. It was -- what I really wanted was to get on the Ways and Means Committee, but this to me was such a far better assignment. It never entered my mind that we would have the impeachment of the President of the United States, never, never, never. And when that happened, all of us at that time became national figures because of the television of the Watergate hearings. You should know that it wasn't automatically decided that the Judiciary Committee was going to handle this, because there's nothing in the law that says that the Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives shall decide whether or not there is sufficient amount of evidence to warrant a vote on impeachment. So there was supposed to have been consideration of a select member committee for the purpose of impeachment appointed by Tip O'Neill, the Speaker. But Peter Rodino was a brand new Chairman, and he persuaded Tip O'Neill to allow the Judiciary Committee to have that responsibility. I should tell you this, too, because of the long drawn-out proceedings that took place in the Senate, which had nothing; they had no authority to do anything, but it was an investigation. And at the same time Jack Brooks was the head of a Committee, he was having his investigation showing nothing to do with Watergate but a lot of wrongdoing by the President and his involvement in this wrongdoing. But most people did not know that, notwithstanding the extensive Senator Ervin investigation on the Senate, the only thing they could do, which they did do, is to send it to the House to decide whether or not we thought that there was enough evidence out there to impeach and send it back then to the Senate to fulfill their constitutional responsibility to try the President on the indictment to see whether he was guilty of what we had charged. So we went into extensive hearings on TV every day. And I remember so clearly -- Tip O'Neill came and told us that, "You know, this thing is being drawn out and you guys

don't have constitutional jurisdiction; I allowed you to do it, but the American people are fed up --  
[break in audio]

**Charles Rangel**

-- and so --

**Timothy Naftali**

Okay, we're back to, it's Tip O'Neill's, he's impeaching.

**Charles Rangel**

Tip O'Neill's talking with, yeah, he says, "You know, there are going to be a lot of members that this is going to be the reason why they are elected or not elected, and I can't tell you people that you're in there with hearings and listening to tapes, so either you impeach the son of a bitch or get off his back, but we've got to do something in this House of Representatives." And as a result of that we hired John Doar, we had great counsel, and we started moving in a more professional fashion.

**Timothy Naftali**

What effect did the Saturday Night Massacre have on your, on your thinking about the impeachment?

**Charles Rangel**

Oh, everyone knew. Everyone knew that the President was guilty as hell. I said sometimes I had a bigger strain on me than Barbara Jordan who became an international, well known person because she was weighing the evidence as to whether or not the President's conduct warrants the heavy weight of it. Hell, I knew he was guilty and I had to go through all that anyway. There was just things and then different things that he had, and when we found the Attorney General saying that everybody is going to be fired, you know. It's very similar to what's happening now, and now just as popular with Gonzales -- you don't get along, you get out, but --

**Timothy Naftali**

But didn't that story of the visit to Ashcroft, the nighttime visit to Ashcroft when he was in the hospital..

**Charles Rangel**

You know, when people lose sense of what is right they think that power allows them to do these things. Yes, when you find that the Attorney General's saying that something is basically against the law and you come there to his sick bed and ask him to sign papers to give authority that it's unconstitutional. When you say that these people are political appointees, we can hire them and fire them and find out that political judgments are made. I mean what happens to an American that believes he can be picked up, no one knows, his parents, his wife, and his family, sent to a European

prison? What happens when you're in combat and you're afraid you're going to get shot, killed or captured, and then you remember what you were forced, or what you did do to prisoners and what the hell are they going to do to you, and you don't call it torture; you just talk about extenuating type of questioning? No, Nixon caused a lot of people not to be proud of the office of President of the United States. And what I don't understand and wish that I had some training on -- Nixon was a bigot. He was an anti-Semite. He was so insecure that he had his own pre-judgments of people based on who they were. And he was an amazing genius as related to foreign affairs, but at the end of the day he was a two-bit hood. He took his lack of trust in people and inverted into the power of the President, and that became his domestic and his foreign policy. He knew that as a result of the Civil Rights Movement that African Americans would be able to register and vote in the South. He knew that the white Democrats would rather not be with blacks in the part of the Democratic Party. And so when he talks about the silent majority, when he recruits several of the Democratic rednecks into the Nixon Republican Party, it was appealed to the worst that we had in this country. And really, everyone knew that he would go out of his way to cultivate the southern racists at the expense of blacks who were now able to make the Democratic Party. And that's what makes Lyndon Johnson, to me, the greatest President -- since I wasn't around when Lincoln was here -- that I can think of, because he knew that his decisions for the Voting Rights Act would change the Democratic Party as he knew it and as he enjoyed it and how he's willing to make that sacrifice for what was good for our nation, our country, and our Constitution. But Nixon on the other hand, as I share with you a tape that we heard, was a very common, insensitive individual, and this tape was embargoed and should have been released even though people may not know it exists and may not want to hear it. Peter Rodino was so concerned that inflammatory remarks concerning the President that were not related to the question of him violating his constitutional office, that when we were listening to these secret tapes that Butterfield revealed to us, which was a shocker, we would also get a transcript in case we had any problem with the audio. But where it appeared as though Rodino decided that there was material that was not relevant, then that would be excised and a black felt pen and there was no tape, it would go onto it. And so I had to keep changing -- every pages were just blacked out. And I turn the page; I turn the page and said, "This must have been a hell of a conversation, what was on it?" Well, the rules were -- he made this decision, but any member who wanted to hear the tape could go privately and hear it. But he did not believe that it should be published or that it should be out there. Well, my curiosity, of course, got the best of me, and I went back to hear this tape. It was something that would be with me for the rest of my life because it was such a human nature thing. It was the boss talking to three of his top aides, and you can see how happy they were to have this private time with the boss. It was Haldeman, Dean, and Ehrlichman and the boss was drunk. So the boss would start off with "I hear this Negro Thurgood Marshall has cancer and he's not going to be with us." "No, we didn't hear that, boss, no, we didn't." And they get out of his mind that this is good information. And he says, "Well, you know, we don't want people to think that if he does die that he's going to be replaced by another Negro." "No, boss, no, that's not the way they think." He said, "No, the Jews think that way too, you know." And they said, "Oh yes, the Jews think that way too." He says, "But you know, Kissinger's enough Jew for everybody." "Oh, ha ha ha." Big joke. He says, "You know, we ought to get some southern Democrats for these judgeships. My Presidential thing goes beyond eight years. And, you know, one of the problems is that we don't get enough Democrats. They think like us, white Democrats think like us, vote with us. And then the Democrats, they would have a dilemma because hey, they couldn't go against the Democrats and that would be an extension of my legacy." And then he went on to name some people that were black that he thought were incompetent that he would name them to the Supreme Court and have every black and everybody knocking him for having an incompetent -- what fun that

would be. And then he said, "And you know what group of people who really need some help? It's those Italians." He said, "You know, they don't have a chance to go to the same school we do so people think that they're crude." And so you can hear these people in the office, just tolerant, just listening to the guy rambling. He said, "And you know, people think they have odor but they eat this garlic and it's in their food, it comes out, you know, and that's -- " and he said, "But their real problem is no matter how competent they are, you really can't find one that one way or the other is not involved with organized crime." And so what I get out of this is that when an American's around somebody that's prejudiced, anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, anti-Catholic or racist, don't tolerate this type of things from happening because you can rest assured that Nixon is representative of a lot of people that had so many other groups of people on his list, and that the best way to make certain that they learn a lesson is to protect another group because it's just hard to imagine that he, as President of the United States, could hold such small, petty prejudices against groups of people in the United States that supported him for President or he was their President.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did you suspect this about him before you heard the tapes?

**Charles Rangel**

I, I didn't suspect anything. I knew that he knew politically it was expedient not to appear to cater to blacks. He had this black business program where a handful of blacks were able to make a lot of money, and that's the way he wanted to handle this, to separate himself from the problems of education, housing and job opportunity. So I knew that he was a well qualified guy to decide what was in his best interest politically, and that he had no problem with the silent majority and catering to those people who were white, former Democratic racists. What I did not know, what I did not know is how a President of the United States is really no different from any other person, have the same shortcomings. I had just thought that the off -- one of the worst things that ever happened to me in terms of recognizing how shallow a President can be was listening to those tapes. He was like any other hood that had a disrespect for people.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell me, tell us a little bit about the, your discussions with other members of the Judiciary Committee. How long did it take to get a majority and ultimately a super majority?

**Charles Rangel**

Oh my God, I don't have enough time to tell you. You had about five different groups that met regularly, and Peter Rodino and John Doar was like an orchestra leader, that different groups were playing different music and they had to come together and get on a common theme. You had Nixonites that really did not care what the President did, that they were going to support him. As a matter of fact, there was a young Italian fellow that I encouraged to go back there and listen to this tape. He was a new Republican, and his family would come every day, and I said, "Hey, go listen to those tapes, and boy, it's rough stuff the way he talks about Italians." He came back and agreed with me that it was a terrible thing what the President said and just went right on defending the President. And then you had others that pre-conceived the idea that the President should be impeached, and

said, "Listen, we think he's done enough, said enough, had enough information, send it over to the Senate to see whether or not there's enough there to throw him out of office." And then you had a group of conservative Democrats who were not certain, and moderate, conservative Democrats and moderate Republicans, and it was that group that really made the difference in coming together and saying as difficult as it was to shatter the myth that the office of the Presidency could be so stained, that the constitution demanded that, that they -- that we vote articles of impeachment. And I was in California when the smoking gun came, and then I knew that the whole committee, those that knew he was guilty, those that didn't want to believe the facts with this moderate group there that the articles of impeachment were voted on.

**Timothy Naftali**

What was the tip? -- you were a fellow prosecutor, what was the tipping point for you? What was it that you saw that said, "Okay, I know"?

**Charles Rangel**

Oh, I was one of those that believed it was just a matter of time before they would reach that conclusion, but the admission that the President actually knew what was going on -- when that came out it was the smoking gun. It directly involved the President, and it was all over to such an extent that even the President realized that it was all over for him. And it was really sad -- his farewell speech that was completely incoherent -- and didn't make a lot of sense, and then it ended saying that you won't see me any more, you know, won't have me to kick around anymore. It was a really sad thing, which it was a, a reminder that no matter who you see in the movies or in sports or Presidents or members of Congress or ministers or rabbis or imams, that God made people with these type of shortcomings. And it was a disappointment to me that a President, that any President of the United States, could have been as shallow as President Richard Nixon.

**Timothy Naftali**

What did you think of the pardon?

**Charles Rangel**

I was opposed to the pardon, but I thought that Gerald Ford was such a nice man as a member of Congress that I know that when he became President that there were a lot of people that did not know whether he would be qualified or not, and that when he decided to pardon President Nixon, it was the last nail in the coffin for how he would be remembered as President of the United States. And it appeared to be that he, he had accepted all of the wrongdoings of President Nixon and the office at the expense of how he would be pictured as one of the Presidents of the United States.

**Timothy Naftali**

Last question: What's the legacy of Watergate? What would you tell students? What was the legacy of Watergate?

**Charles Rangel**

That notwithstanding what the Republicans did to former President Clinton where they used this constitutional provision not to impeach but to gain political power or political support through embarrassing a President, that the genius of those people who drafted this constitution should be continuously respected as a part of a bigger issue, that they should constantly find themselves fighting to make certain that the separation of powers are protected. Not just with impeachment, but the whole idea of a Richard Cheney saying he's a member of the executive branch and a member of the legislative branch, just making comedy out of a document that says that in the United States of America when you are President and you've disappointed the American people, we are not going to assemble with arms and storm the White House and pull you out and lynch you, that we are going to go to the people that we have elected, and if the Senate feels secure with their six years we'll know where to go. We know to go to people who've got two years. And we're telling them, if you don't do something about this President, we're going to kick you out of office. What do you want us to do? We want you to investigate his behavior and leave him alone if we are wrong, but find out whether we're right or not. And darn it, if he has disgraced that office, we want the people who feel more secure to weigh the evidence and to find out whether he's guilty or not. And we charge you people with doing that. What a system.

**Tim Naftali**

You asked me if we were going to interview Senator Clinton. Did you know her in this period?

**Charles Rangel**

No, but when I went over to the Clinton White House there was a guy named Bernie Newman. He worked for John Doar, and he had hired Hillary Clinton. And he came to me and the First Lady was there. He said, "Come and say hello to one of your former employees." And she said, "Yeah, he used to be my boss." I was so embarrassed. I hardly knew any of the interns, and I certainly didn't know her. And I just tried to nod and get away from it but -- Maybe she looked differently, but it's no question that other people had remembered her.

**Timothy Naftali**

Congressman Rangel, thank you very much.

**Charles Rangel**

Thank you.