

social skills that will allow them to be more employable. They've got a terrific placement rate after this 1-year program. If there are ways that we can potentially duplicate some of those programs, then we're going to do so.

So part of what we want to do is to find tools that will give people more opportunity. But the most important thing I can do is to lift the economy overall, and that's what my strategy is focused on.

Q. But what about the criticism that this isn't targeted enough?

The President. All right, last question. Suzanne [Suzanne Malveaux, Cable News Network].

Situation in Iran

Q. Thank you. Back to Iran, putting a human face on this—over the weekend, we saw a shocking video of this woman, Neda, who had been shot in the chest—

The President. Right. I mentioned her already.

Q. —and bled to death. Have you seen this video?

The President. I have.

Q. What is your reaction?

The President. It's heartbreaking. It's heartbreaking, and I think that anybody who sees it knows that there's something fundamentally unjust about that.

Q. We also have people on the ground who have been seeing that the streets are quieter now and that is because they feel that they're paralyzed by fear, fear of people gone missing, fear of violence, that perhaps this is a movement that's gone underground or perhaps is dying. Do you have any concern over that?

The President. Yes. I have concern about how peaceful demonstrators and people who want their votes counted may be stifled from express-

ing those concerns. I think, as I said before, there are certain international norms of freedom of speech, freedom of expression—

Q. Then why won't you allow the photos from the guards?

The President. Hold on a second, Helen [Helen Thomas, Hearst Newspapers]. That's a different question. [Laughter] And I think it's important for us to make sure that we let the Iranian people know that we are watching what's happening, that they are not alone in this process. Ultimately, though, what's going to be most important is what happens in Iran. And we've all been struck by the courage of people. And I mentioned this, I think, in a statement that I made a couple of days ago. Some of you who had been covering my campaigns know this is one of my favorite expressions, was Dr. King's expression that "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice." We have to believe that ultimately justice will prevail.

Q. May I ask a question about Afghanistan? No questions about Iraq or Afghanistan, sir?

The President. All right. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 12:30 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Neda Agha-Soltan, an Iranian citizen who was fatally shot on June 20 in Tehran, Iran, during a Presidential election protest demonstration; cancer patient Laura Klitzka, her husband Pete, and their children Taylor and Logan; President Michelle Bachelet Jeria of Chile; and President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil. Reporters referred to President Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran; President Alvaro Uribe Velez of Colombia; and Christina D. Romer, Chair, Council of Economic Advisers. The Office of the Press Secretary also released Persian and Arabic language transcripts of the President's opening remarks.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Michelle Bachelet Jeria of Chile and an Exchange With Reporters June 23, 2009

President Obama. Well, I want to thank President Bachelet for taking the time to visit with me today. We had a chance to get to know each

other at the Summit of the Americas, and we've spoken on the phone repeatedly. I find her one of the most compelling leaders that we have,

not just in the hemisphere but around the world. And I congratulate her and her entire team for managing the Chilean economy and the political process in Chile in such an excellent fashion, and I think she's doing an outstanding job.

Obviously, the friendship between the United States and Chile is strong. We have very strong commercial ties, in part because of the free trade agreement that exists between Chile and the United States. One of the things that we've discussed here is how we can continually deepen that relationship. So we are announcing cooperative projects on clean energy. There is enormous interest both in the United States and in Chile in how we can develop solar power and wind power and biofuels and a whole host of other clean energy strategies that will make the people of both countries more prosperous and less dependent on imported energy needs. So we are going to be starting a cooperative project in Chile on this issue.

In addition, we think that there is tremendous possibilities for cooperation on science and technology and—so a specific project that we've discussed is a cancer research center that can help us make progress on that deadly disease.

More broadly, I look to President Bachelet for good advice and good counsel in terms of how the United States can continue to build a strong relationship with all of Latin America. And I think the good progress that we began to make at the Summit of the Americas can be built on with some very concrete steps in the months and years to come. We consider Chile to be one of our most important partners in that process. And so I expect that in the months to come we'll be working very closely together.

The last point I would make is—and I mentioned this, actually, at my press conference with the White House correspondents—I think Chile is to be congratulated on having managed their economy and their fiscal surpluses during good times in such a way that they are now—have now been able to manage the bad times in a good way. And I think that it's an example for all of us that good fiscal pol-

icy, good economic policy, ultimately, allows for prosperity through good times and bad times.

And I think that as we move forward in some of the global discussions around how to respond to the deep recession that the world is going through, that we look to countries like Chile to underscore the fact that no matter how big or small the country is, good economic policies can help grow the economy throughout the world.

So we're very grateful to you for your visit, we're glad that you're going to be here for a couple of days, and I look forward to returning the favor by visiting Chile sometime soon.

President Bachelet. Thank you very much, President Obama. As you say, we have had a wonderful conversation and it is because we feel that we are so close to the way President Obama's administration is understanding the world, its challenges, and how to build relations with—[inaudible]—with the countries of Latin America.

Of course, he is an idol in our country. I mean, everybody was so enthusiastic about this meeting. And so—and that is because of real reasons, because we understand that the way you are developing your leadership is one who inspire us and makes us feel very comfortable and very confident too.

And we have congratulated President Obama because of all its foreign policy, all of its efforts to not only nationally but also internationally have a good response to the economic crisis. We have been exchanging point of view on how we can also be part of the solution in the Latin American region to cope with—to respond to this economic crisis, how to assure that the countries of Latin America can have the capitals—the flows of capital that they need in order to recover the economy, and be able to tackle challenges like poverty, like health problems, and educational problems, and so on.

And of course, he already mentioned that we have been signing today, earlier today, this cooperation and a memoranda through energy, and we are really enthusiastic about clean energy as we share the idea that the crisis should be responded—also trying to tackle

with climate change issues. And green—clean energy will be a very important, I would say, a support in this direction. Chile has great conditions for solar energy and some others, so we are really enthusiastic about these common efforts.

We will continue, also, with other initiatives like Chile-California plan, like equal opportunities plan where lots of Chileans have come into United States to make master degrees, post-graduate studies to help with Chile's development. And also, Chile is willing to be a very good partner of the United States in this cooperation within the region so we can have a closer relation with the United States and all the Latin American countries.

And, well, we're also working on health in cancer, but also, we have been working with the people—with the CDC regarding the human flu, and I think it will be very important also for the United States, because when—in autumn, there will be another—probably another wave of human flu. Whatever is learned from Chile, we have good, good diagnostic capacities, good registration capacity, will be upheld for future treatments here in the United States, for vaccine use and so on.

President Obama. And since the President is a doctor, you can take her word for it. That's very helpful.

All right, guys. Thank you, guys. Thank you very much.

Q. Just two questions, Mr. President—

White House Press Office Assistant Benjamin N. Finkenbinder. Thank you, guys. This way—

President Obama. All right. You know what? Actually, Ben, I'm going to make an exception.

Q. From the Chilean press, please?

The President. We'll get one question from the Chilean press. How's that?

Chile-U.S. Relations/U.S. Foreign Policy

Q. Wonderful.

The President. Go ahead.

Q. Mr. President, yes, I'd like to ask you, I realize that your agenda is moving forward. But, inevitably, I'd like to ask you, President Bachelet, in a previous trip to United States, made echo of an old joke: "There's never been a coup

d'état in the United States, because there's no American embassy." The point being that almost—

President Bachelet. That was a joke from an American guy. [Laughter] I just said it was a good joke.

President Obama. Yes, it is. [Laughter]

Q. The point being that almost no Latin American nation has been free from CIA—bloody CIA intervention, Chile being a prime example, President Bachelet being one of its victims. Is it time for a historical apology?

President Obama. Well, look, I think you answered your own question right at the beginning, which is, I'm interested in going forward, not looking backward. I think that the United States has been an enormous force for good in the world. I think there have been times where we've made mistakes. But I think that what is important is looking at what our policies are today and what my administration intends to do in cooperating with the region.

And I was very clear in Trinidad and Tobago at the Summit of the Americas that we are interested in a partnership in which we are focused on, how can we improve the day-to-day living standards of ordinary people? And that that focus on human development is one that transcends boundaries, should transcend ideologies. I don't have a litmus test in terms of, you know, whether a government is center-right, center-left, this or that. My approach is, if the United States is working together with a country to promote the well-being, the health, the education, the economic opportunities of people in both countries, then we're going to have a good relationship. And I'm confident that we are moving in that direction, and I think that Chile is going to be an excellent partner in that process.

As President Bachelet mentioned—you know, I think this—the flu situation is a good example of what the 21st century is going to look like. There are no borders on the flu. This is not an American problem or a Mexican problem or a Chilean problem; this is a world problem. And given that the flu season is happening now in the Southern Hemisphere, if we get good information and we're both assisting countries in the Southern Hemisphere, but also

learning from the data that is being generated, that will then help the people of the United States. And it's a good metaphor, I think, for a whole range of issues, from climate change to poverty to terrorism, whatever the issue. So many of these issues now cross borders. We can't look at them in isolation, and that, I think, is going to be the basis for a strong working relationship in the future.

So thank you.

The President's Visit to Chile

Q. Last question. There is—there is in Latin America clearly——

Q. When are you coming to Chile?

President Obama. Sorry, everybody is——

Q. When are you coming to Chile? When are you——

President Obama. I'm looking forward to coming soon.

Chilean Press Corps

Q. President Obama, can you take a photograph with the Chilean press, please?

President Obama. A photograph with the press?

Q. Yes.

Q. Yes.

President Obama. Okay. Why don't we go outside?

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:22 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Remarks Following a Meeting on Health Care Reform and an Exchange With Reporters

June 24, 2009

The President. All right. We all set? Well, I just wanted to thank the Governors that are represented here today, Governor Rounds, Gregoire, Douglas, Granholm, and Doyle. They are representative of the bipartisan group of Governors that hosted roundtables around the country on health care after some initial meetings that I had with the National Governors Association, in which every single Governor—Republican or Democrat; small State, big State—emphasized how important it was to reform our health care system to control costs, to assure choice of doctors and plans for individuals, and to make sure that we are providing high-quality care.

And all of them represent States that have done some terrific work, wonderful experiments, have seen successes. But all of these Governors also expressed to me, and I think heard from their constituencies, deep concerns about what the future holds. I think there's a recognition that when you have premiums doubling three times faster than wages, when you have businesses seeing 25- or 30-percent increases in terms of their health care costs for their employees, when you look at

Medicaid budgets and what that's forcing Governors to do in terms of making choices about trying to still fund higher education and the other things that are going to make States competitive, there's a recognition that we have to change the status quo.

And so they've reported back to me. There's no perfect unanimity across the table in terms of every single aspect of reform. I think everybody here wants to make sure that Governors have flexibility, that they have input into how legislation is being shaped on the Hill. But they have done my administration and, I think, the American people a terrific service in bringing some of these individual stories to us. And we're committed to working with them in the weeks and months to come to make sure that when we get health reform done, it is in partnership with the States where the rubber so often hits the road.

And one of the advantages they have, as Joe Biden put it, they've planted a mole inside our administration. [*Laughter*] Kathleen Sebelius, very recently a Governor, knows exactly what all of them are struggling with, and she and Nancy-Ann are going to be interacting with