

happened, the same day I pick up this article in the Washington Post which says that in all these suburban counties around Washington, DC, there's this huge shortage of high-technology workers. Well, if Washington, DC, had an unemployment rate of 2 percent instead of nearly 8 percent, we'd have about a quarter of the problems we've got here, maybe a tenth.

And so it occurred to me that a lot of—but a lot of these jobs in high-technology areas do not require 4-year college degrees. They do require technology training; they do require advanced skills over what you would get just coming out of high school. But they do not require a 4-year college degree. So what this announcement in the paper is about—it's Alexis Herman and some others, we've been working on this—we're trying to figure out whether, not just in DC but anywhere around the country where you've got this suburban ring of job demand and a high unemployment core, whether we can go in there and do profiles on people and see who is capable of getting these skills. And we're going to try and do it in some of the less urbanized areas, too. One of the problems—a lot of our Native Americans without jobs, without good jobs, live in highly dispersed areas where it's not as easy to get there.

But anyway, if this works—that is, if 4 months from now we can show you that we did “X” amount of training and the people that formerly would have gone into minimum wage jobs are now going into jobs that pay above-average wages, where they actually get retirement and health insurance and other things, because they got this—it will rather dramatically change the nature of job training and the whole strategy that the Federal Government has generally followed.

So, anyway—but I appreciate what you're saying about it.

Bob, you were next, I think.

[Representative Robert T. Matsui commended the President for the diversity within his administration. He stated that affirmative action was a critical issue because its elimination would have a profound negative impact on the Nation. He also stressed the need to address inner-city poverty by involving the private sector in long-term planning, as well as technology and empowerment zone initiatives.]

The President. Thank you. Go ahead.

[Asifa Quraishi, president, Karamahi Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights, described the diversity within the American Muslim community and its problem of harassment as a response to international political events. She stated that the American public must separate those events from individual minority citizens and see American Muslims as being American citizens first.]

The President. You know, when I was—I made a big point to try to make that exact same point, interestingly enough, when I spoke in the Jordanian Parliament when we went to sign the peace agreement between Israel and Jordan, and how the United States had no quarrel with Islam. And it was amazing the impact it had when I went back to the place where I was—I didn't stay in this hotel, but I went back to this hotel and this public crowd there. It was amazing the impact that it had on the young people that were there. And then I got to Jerusalem, and I had an Arab Palestinian employee in one of the hotels where I was—came up to me and mentioned it to me. So even abroad it's a big deal.

And here at home, there was a very kind of troubling story here in our local press in the last week about a Muslim school that had 50 students, and they were trying to expand it, and they were looking for a new home. And people in the various places where they were looking were afraid that this would be funded by people who would be preaching terrorism and all that.

And I think it's exceedingly important that we disassociate religious conviction, and particularly being of Middle Eastern or South Asian heritage, from some iron connection to all the problems we're having there. And we're going to have to work on it more because the Muslim population is growing so substantially in this country.

[Raul Yzaguirre, president, National Council of La Raza, suggested using the Advisory Board as a teaching tool for the long term to help the Nation build a national identity based on respect for all its constituent groups, including victims of conquest and colonialism. John Echohawk, executive director, Native American Rights Fund, advocated an effort to teach the American public about the legal and political status of tribal governments in the Federal system and their role in combating such problems]