

NBA All-Star Technology Summit

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Bob Costas President Barack Obama

A CONVERSATION

BOB COSTAS IN CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT
BARACK OBAMA

AHMAD RASHAD: Welcome back, everybody. We will close today with a very special one-on-one conversation. It's with someone who needs no introduction, but I'll give him one anyway.

As the 44th President of the United States, Barack Obama led our nation through an extraordinary period of progress. After leaving the Oval Office, he's engaged in tremendous work all over the world. From supporting NBA Africa to empowering the next generation of leaders here at home, President Obama has always been known for playing the long game. But as someone who has played a lot of golf with him, I'm proud to report he's got a pretty good short game too.

So here for the interview is someone who has no golf game whatsoever, is Bob Costas. And Bob is a Hall of Fame broadcaster and one of the greatest to ever come along. He's the only person in history to win Emmy Awards in news and sports departments and entertainment. For many, many years, Bob and I were great teammates on NBC. We had so much fun together.

Please welcome President Obama and Bob Costas.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Testing, testing, testing.

BOB COSTAS: I hadn't seen Ahmad, my longtime colleague and dear friend, in a while, and for a second I said to myself: I didn't know James Harden had a side gig.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Yeah, I told him I don't know about that beard, man. It takes some getting used



to, I think.

BOB COSTAS: So Ahmad introduced you, rightly, as the 44th President of the United States.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: That is accurate.

BOB COSTAS: And it occurs to me that 44 is a hallowed number in sports. In the NBA, Jerry West, Pete Maravich, George Gervin; in baseball, Hank Aaron, Reggie Jackson, Willie McCovey.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Pretty good company.

BOB COSTAS: In football at Syracuse, Jim Brown, Ernie Davis, and Floyd Little. And then in the pros, John Riggins.

So what I'm getting to is, all things considered, maybe they should retire your number.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Well, listen.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: That is good company to keep.

Some people know this, but my number on the basketball court was 23. And so somebody obviously saw my jersey and stole that number. I won't mention who.

BOB COSTAS: Well, you were a Bulls fan living in Chicago during the dynasty years. You must have become close to Michael for a while.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Well, during his playing days, we were not close. He was occupying a different orbit than me.

BOB COSTAS: But then you caught up with him.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: He'd argue that, but...

(Laughter.)

BARACK OBAMA: But the Bulls' run, that dynasty, I think

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any city that's gone through a truly great team, the way that brings a community together, the way that brings a city together, the way it transcends divisions, it was extraordinary. It was exciting.

BOB COSTAS: Did you go to a lot of the games?

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: No, I was broke. Occasionally, there were folks I would know that would send a ticket my way. But I think I maybe went to three games during that entire run.

Part of the run I was -- for part of the run I was still in law school and then working as a young lawyer. So it was a good diversion just watching the games. Now, keep in mind that, like any fan, I also went through the heartache of watching the Pistons beat us down for two to three years.

BOB COSTAS: Yeah.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: And that makes the wins that much sweeter.

BOB COSTAS: Then the torch was passed because they had to get through the Pistons, and they didn't just win a championship, they went through them in the Eastern Conference to get there.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: That's exactly right. Old school.

BOB COSTAS: Basketball has been part of your life since you were a kid, right? What does the game mean to you?

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: I've written about this. I didn't know my father. And I lived overseas for a while. When I came back around the age 10, 11, I was living in Hawaii.

And it's interesting how kids' minds work. I did not remember that the only time I met my father, it was during Christmas. He came for a month. And he and my mother had separated when I was two, so I didn't know him.

And I -- he gave me my first basketball, which I -- you don't think about, but suddenly I was taking this basketball, and I'd go down to this court, outdoor court, with the old metal rims, and would just start shooting by myself. And it became a refuge for me.

There was an all-Black starting five at the University of Hawaii that was called the Fab Five. Guys had huge afros, and they went to the NIT and they went to the NCAA. And for a 10-year-old boy, who didn't have a father, and I'm seeing them, they were so cool. And they looked like they

just owned the court. And I thought, well, you know what? I wouldn't mind being that.

And then when I started playing seriously in pickup games, there was a meritocracy about basketball, the fact that it didn't matter whether you were rich or poor, Black, white, your game spoke for itself. And there were moments when you'd get into a flow with your team and the ball is moving around, and so there's both individual expression but also something collective.

So the culture of basketball for a young boy who didn't know his dad, something that you could take to the court without structure or having a lot of money, or back then sneakers were cheap because we were wearing Converse All Stars, High Tops, Chuck Taylor's, that I think was a formative part of my life that ended up continuing.

BOB COSTAS: When you got to high school, how good a player were you?

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: I was a good playground player who chafed at Coach wanting me to, I don't know, like not throw behind-the-back passes. And I was not a disciplined player.

We won the state championship, and I am still close to the coach. And in retrospect I told him -- he's told me that I should have featured you more, and I've told him that I should have been more coachable.

So I was never great. I probably could have been a walk-on player at a, you know -- maybe a mid-major or -- I could have played Division III. I was recruited.

BOB COSTAS: Now, your nickname in high school as a basketball player was Barry O'Bomber. Now, your staff, which takes very good care of you, in our preliminary discussions, the way they shaped it was: He was called that because he tended to take difficult shots.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: I don't know about that.

BOB COSTAS: But when a guy is called Barry O'Bomber, that really means he's a chucker, doesn't it?

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Yeah, I think your interpretation is more accurate.

No, look, like I said, I did not -- back then, we didn't have AAU and all that stuff. So you learned on the playground. And you didn't have a lot of structure, and I wasn't going to these fancy training camps, all this stuff.

BOB COSTAS: Right.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: So you're just kind of making stuff up. And as I said, Coach noticed that sometimes. So I would have frustrated me now if I was watching.

But it does raise, you know, sort of a broader point, and I say that not just because the nature of this audience. I will say that basketball right now, the players are unbelievable. I am not one of those old heads who thinks, oh, back in the day. I think the very best players of the '80s, '90s would be superstars.

BOB COSTAS: Sure.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Larry Bird, Michael Jordan, Magic. They would still be who they were. But the average NBA player today is so much more athletic, more talented, more skilled, the way the game is played. You watch those old, you know, hardwood classics, guys aren't running that hard. But, I mean, they're, you know -- everybody's kind of dribbling and everybody is going in the paint and they're all sitting there.

And you watch now, particularly if you go to live games, people are playing so hard because you have to close out at the three-point line, and the amount of running and the strain on the body, et cetera, it's remarkable.

And then you look at these younger kids who are coming in, they had so much poise and experience, somebody like a Cooper Flagg or --

BOB COSTAS: He's 19 years old.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: He's a baby. You can tell the guy's barely shaven. And he's out there doing what he's doing. Knueppel? Unbelievable. Edgecombe. So you've got these young folks who are now performing at levels that I think we've never seen before.

So I am not a believer that, oh, back in the day, and, you know, the average score was 88-84, that somehow that was superior basketball per se. I think the game has evolved, and it continues to get better. And so I love when folks are -- particularly once we get to the playoffs.

Now, since we have some owners here, I would say consider knocking ten games off the regular season, just because I don't know that the body, that physically you can prevent injuries at this pace. They are playing a much faster pace than they did 20 years ago. So it was easier to play 82 games or 75 games back then than it is today.

BOB COSTAS: When you got to the White House, you took hoops with you.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Oh, absolutely.

BOB COSTAS: Nixon had a bowling alley. It was funny to see him in his. He took his jacket off, but he had his shirt and tie and he was bowling, right?

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: And apparently he was a killer bowler. Nixon would have beat me bowling, but one-on-one or HORSE, I would have whooped him.

BOB COSTAS: Eisenhower was a member at Augusta National. And he had at least a putting green, maybe a small hole, like a par-3 hole, right?

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Yeah, which is still on the South Lawn, and then he built one up at Camp David as well.

BOB COSTAS: And you put in a basketball court.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: I didn't put --

BOB COSTAS: Was it there already?

BARACK OBAMA: Just to be clear, because it was a recession coming in, so I wasn't spending a lot of money. We did not build a basketball court; certainly didn't build a ballroom.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: We were thinking about taxpayer money. We painted some basketball lines on the tennis court and then brought in some, you know, movable baskets.

But we did have some games there. We would have -- and then Fort McHenry had a basketball court where we had a regular pickup game probably once a week. And people used to say, oh, you know, Obama, these guys are just letting you score.

But anybody who played with me knows that's not the case because I talk so much trash if I whooped you that people would get angry and then -- and, in fact, I split my lip. I got an elbow from a staffer, 2011. Had to have 12 stitches. And you can see -- I had to make a speech the next day, so you can see sort of the butterfly stitches right on this lower lip.

And my White House photographer, Pete Souza, took a

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picture of the sequence of me getting elbowed, and I'm on the ground, and there's a pool of blood and I'm going like this. And I got those produced or developed and framed them and sent them to the staffer.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: And I said: To the only person who ever assaulted a U.S. President and got away with it.

I'm sure he still has it somewhere.

BOB COSTAS: Apart from staffers, were there guys, like good players, who were sort of lobbying: I want to play on that White House court. I want to play in a game with Obama?

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Well, for my 49th birthday -- this a perk of the job -- we had our own little All-Star Game. LeBron, D-Wade, Carmelo, Derrick Rose, Chris Paul, Chauncey Billups, a bunch of guys, Grant Hill was there. Kobe came, but he had just gone to Germany, I guess, spinning blood or something, but he was there. And Bill Russell came.

And Magic came, and Magic had been retired, I don't know, for six or seven years. It may be the last basketball game he ever played, and for good reason, because he had these no-look passes and they were going into the stands.

(Laughter.)

BARACK OBAMA: But we had three pros and two amateurs on every team. And we played in front of a bunch of Wounded Warriors, and then afterwards we signed shoes and jerseys and gave them out. And folks were playing, you know, three-quarter speed, but I did hit a game-winner.

(Laughter.)

BOB COSTAS: Did you declare the game over at that point so it'd be --

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: No, no, no, no, no. I mean, it was kind of a round-robin. Maya Moore played, and she stole the ball from D-Wade and shot a three in his face and everybody were whooping about that.

A week later Derrick Rose -- this is in his -- I think he's coming off his MVP season. He's interviewed on some radio station. They're all, Hey, we hear you played with Obama.

He said, Yeah.

So how was he?

He said, Oh, you know, Obama, yeah, he was okay, he was pretty good, but he was a little slow.

And I'm thinking, Dude, I'm a 50-year-old man. You are the fastest player in the NBA at that point. Of course I seem slow to you.

No respect.

(Laughter.)

BOB COSTAS: This is the Tech Summit, so let's lean into that a little bit. You made great use of social media in your first presidential campaign, but social media has since evolved or devolved in a different direction. How much does that concern you in what it does to the way people absorb information and our national discourse?

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: It deeply disturbs me. I've spoken about this publicly. If you ask me what is it that has changed politics, public discourse, what accounts for the enormous polarization and meanness of our discourse, I would have to say that social media is 80 percent responsible for it.

And it's not a conscious effort on the part of the platforms, obviously. It is -- although I do think that there is some accountability to be had there.

You and I grew up in a monoculture in a sense that we watched the same things, read the same newspapers. We got the same facts. And there were differences of opinion, there were conservatives and there were liberals. But when you watched Cronkite or Brinkley or you read -- didn't matter whether it was the "Chicago Tribune" or the "L.A. Times" or "The Washington Post" or the "Baltimore Sun," there were a shared understanding of what's true, what's not, what's confirmed, what's rumor, a difference between opinion and fact. And in popular culture we were all watching the same thing.

Michelle recently had on her podcast Carol Burnett, who --

BOB COSTAS: Is like 92, and she's amazing.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Amazing. Just a remarkable woman. Could not be sharper, and just bighearted, sweet, wonderful person. And we just reminisced about the fact it did not matter where you came from, everybody was watching "The Carol Burnett Show."

Everybody was watching "M.A.S.H." or "Good Times," or all the kids were watching the same cartoons.

BOB COSTAS: Yeah.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: And so as a consequence, we had a shared vocabulary and a shared understanding and common reference points.

And I think what social media, and we didn't fully anticipate, has done is segmented and splintered audiences. It's most damaging what it's done to news. Because now you can tailor your news feed to your opinions to reinforce them. And that radicalizes people on both sides or on multiple sides.

You and I can have a debate about do we like this furniture, is this coffee table well-made, but we can't have a debate if you claim that this is a --

BOB COSTAS: An ottoman.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Or a boat.

BOB COSTAS: Right.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Or a giraffe.

BOB COSTAS: Right.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Then I think you're crazy, and you get mad because you think why is he insulting me, saying that I don't know what this is. And that's what's happened in our information ecosystem. Now, the platforms, the reason that they are -- have to be somewhat accountable, they made a decision.

And I was the first digital president, right? People forget how recent the smartphone is. It was like I was in my second year in the presidency when there was really significant take-up of the iPhone. And even then it was, you know, buffering and you couldn't really get much video out of it.

But I could track, you could see the shift in the initial platforms that were premised on speed, accuracy, relevance. The business model then shifted to advertising. Advertising required engagement.

BOB COSTAS: Clicks.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Clicks. And at that point, the algorithm gets tweaked to maximize clicks because that increases revenue.

And it turns out that there's a reptilian side of our brains that responds to spectacle, anger, resentment, grievance, insult. And so those things start popping up higher and higher and higher. And so we're now inhabiting an environment in which that's happening.

And the other thing that I think has been well chronicled is that it has been isolating, and particularly I think people became more acutely aware of it during COVID.

So you mentioned I was -- we were -- my campaign was an early adopter of social media.

BOB COSTAS: Yeah.

BARACK OBAMA: But dating myself, the two social media apps we had was Myspace and Meetup. And for those of you who are relatively young, let me tell you about Meetup.

Basically you send out a message: Hey, let's meet up.

Hence the name.

(Laughter.)

BOB COSTAS: Ingenious.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: So, but we would use this during our campaign because we had all these potential volunteers, but we didn't have a lot of money for staff and advertising, et cetera. So early in the campaign, we would use this tool and essentially would send out information.

Let's say -- my favorite story is Idaho. Not known as a Democratic bastion. But there were a bunch of Idahoans for Obama.

We used Meetup, and somebody would send out a message and say, Hey, we're meeting up at a church or we're meeting up at a VA hall or a union hall. And the advantage of that old-style social media was you didn't -- you started online, but it led you to actually meet face-to-face and have a conversation. And so part of -- so it was -- the social part of social media was much more relevant.

And the great thing about when you meet somebody face-to-face, all these folks in Idaho would show up, and they'd have a certain idea of what an Obama supporter should look like, and then suddenly you'd have some old Marine with a crew cut, and you'd have some young Black woman with a nose ring, and you'd have a suburban mom, and you'd have a Hispanic businessman, and suddenly they realized, oh, we all support this candidate, but we're not exactly the same, so now we have to learn how to

understood each other and work with each other and compromise and cooperate.

That element of building community through conversation and listening and seeing each other and not trying to pigeonhole them and stereotype them, that is something that I think current social media has lost and needs to be rebuilt.

BOB COSTAS: No one would contend that politics historically has been always genteel. I forget who it was that said "Politics ain't beanbag."

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: That was Harold Washington, I believe.

BOB COSTAS: The former mayor of Chicago?

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Mayor of Chicago.

BOB COSTAS: So in any case, now, though, it's become almost uniformly a blood sport: my tribe; your tribe.

I think back to 2008, you're running against John McCain, and he's at a town hall. And some elderly woman takes the microphone to ask a question and mischaracterizes everything about you as a person and about your beliefs.

And he very politely reaches over, takes the microphone from her, and says: No, ma'am. He's a good, decent American. He's a good family man. We have policy disagreements.

BARACK OBAMA: Correct.

BOB COSTAS: That was a moment of decency that we seldom see today.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: No, no, look, I think John McCain and I, we had big differences. But he asked me to speak at his funeral. And when I say he asked me to speak, he really did arrange it ahead of time because tragically he knew he had a terminal disease. And I gladly accepted it because he was an honorable man.

And I think there was a code of conduct and a shared sense of we play within the rules of the game, but we respect the integrity of the game and we recognize that sometimes we'll lose and sometimes we'll win, but we're on the same overall team.

And there are a lot of reasons why that's broken down. I think it is important to recognize that part of what changed is that we get nostalgic about the past and decorum and decency, et cetera. Part of that had to do with the fact that

the people in power all looked the same, so it was easier to maintain decorum, Democrats, Republicans, but you didn't have people of color, you didn't have women.

When I first arrived at the Senate, I often say this, the Senate gym, you had this swimming pool and all these facilities, et cetera, and then they had constructed -- I think converted, like, a closet for the women's gym. And first time I walked in the Senate gym that was the original one for the guys, these old guys are walking around with no towels. I mean, it was a sad sight to see.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: I was a little taken aback. But you had a sense that it was such an afterthought. Right?

BOB COSTAS: Yeah.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: When I was elected, I was the only African American in the U.S. Senate. There were two Latinos, maybe six women, seven, out of a hundred.

So part of what happens was people who were not at the table insisted on reaching, having a voice, getting to the table. And that created more tension. And I'm not saying anything original here. Lyndon Johnson said the minute he signed the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act in 1964 that we probably lost, you know --

BOB COSTAS: Parts of the South.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Parts of the South.

BOB COSTAS: But it was the right thing to do, damn it.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: It was the right thing to do.

So there was going to be probably more contentiousness as more people with different views and different claims became part of the political process.

But what I also think has happened is -- we already talked about social media. What I also think has happened is that there is a sense -- and I would not say this is completely symmetrical. I don't think there's equivalence on both sides on this. I'll leave it up to you to figure out which side might be a little bit more to blame on this, but I do think that there is, in our politics today, a sense that it is the old norms, decorum, rules of the game don't matter; that all that matters is winning and power.

And so when you see -- historically there were certain boundaries that you just didn't cross. You would not politicize the Justice Department. Because that's a really powerful tool. You can't have one party saying: We are going to target our opposition and use the weight of the criminal justice system to chill opposition or criticism of us.

So that I would never even talk to my Attorney General, Eric Holder, about any active case, much less tell him: You need to go prosecute somebody.

BOB COSTAS: The Attorney General is not supposed to be the President's consigliere.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Correct. It's supposed to be the people's lawyer, standing above politics.

The military cannot politicize. Neither I, nor George Bush, nor John McCain would ever consider the notion that our military takes a side because that's contrary to the fundamental belief that it is the people who govern.

BOB COSTAS: Or that patriotism is defined as only being loyal to one side.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: You cannot do that. Right? And so I think what we've seen is an erosion of those standards, and we're going to have to rebuild them.

And the good news is I think that these institutions, most of those who've been involved in these institutions, understand the honor, the duty, that there is a fidelity to the Constitution that rises above partisanship that has to be observed.

But it is being tested. And that is what I think is creating this kind of viciousness, this sense of existential stakes in every election.

And to use a basketball analogy, you want tough competition. Sometimes there's going to be an elbow. Sometimes there's going to be a hard foul. There might be a fight. Folks might pull on somebody's jersey or their shorts or trip them up.

But the integrity of the game itself, the idea that the refs have to call it fairly for both sides, the sense that you don't midway through the game suddenly try to change the rules to try to advantage one side or the other, there's a respect for the game that has to be observed; otherwise, there's no point to it.

And I think the same is true with our democracy. And so we're going to have to get back to that. And that will require citizens insisting that our democracy is worth

preserving because, frankly, politics, politicians typically follow the voter and citizens. And if citizens make enough noise and insist on decency and norms and abiding by the rules, then usually they do.

BOB COSTAS: And you can all infer from that what should be inferred from that.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Yes, you can. I didn't think I was being that subtle, but I thought --

(Laughter.)

BARACK OBAMA: -- this is a nonpartisan event.

One last point I want to make about this, because I think it's -- I was not born into some Democratic household. I'm not like some yellow dog Democrat. My favorite president is a guy named Abraham Lincoln, who helped found the Republican Party.

As an African American, when you look historically, it was the Republicans, not the Democrats, for most of our history that were advancing civil rights, and Democrats who oftentimes were populist and looking out for working people in places like the South, combine that with virulent racism in defense of Jim Crow, and then it flipped in the '60s.

BOB COSTAS: The Dixiecrats became Republicans.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: The Dixiecrats became Republicans.

The reason I say that is I can say confidently that what I just described about norms, rules, that that I am not saying from a partisan perspective.

And you mentioned people like John McCain, George Bush. I have a great relationship, Michelle and I have a great relationship with the Bushes. They are honorable people who believe in our Constitution.

So the things that we're talking about here are American values; they're not Democrat or Republican values. And I think that's what's important to remember.

BOB COSTAS: We only have a few minutes left here they're telling me. Artificial intelligence is part of the conversation here at the Tech Summit. One of the higher-ups at Microsoft recently said that in the next year to 18 months, 80 percent of white collar jobs will disappear because of AI.

What do you see as the upside of this emerging technology

and the potential downside and how, if at all, can we manage it?

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: So currently the capital investment being made in AI is significantly higher than the investment that was made in the Apollo program at its peak in the Cold War. We'd never seen this much money going into a nascent technology. And some have talked about, well, is this over-hyped and is there a bubble and so forth.

There's probably some overinvestment, some money is going to be wasted, some investors are going to lose money. The technology itself is not being over-hyped. I know many of the people who are creating this new technology. And right before I left office I actually anticipated how important this was going to be and set up a commission, and we had an entire game plan, blueprint for how the federal government should engage and help harness and encourage this in a thoughtful, creative way.

My successor did not implement it. Apparently the Chinese got ahold of it and they're running with it. That's a whole 'nother thing.

But this is going to be transformative in ways that I don't think we fully yet appreciate.

The upsides are that these models are potentially so powerful that finding pathways to cure cancer, getting breakthroughs that could lead to carbon-free -- carbon emission-free energy that solves climate change, the jumps in productivity that can be achieved as a consequence of the new pathways and engineering that these models can come up with could be a huge boon to our material well-being and to our health, the capacity for tailored education for kids in remote areas where they've got AI teachers that are able to work with them. It could be transformative in all kinds of ways.

The downsides. There's a whole set of national security concerns about people getting ahold of these models and designing new smallpox strains that are released through bioterrorism. There's concerns about critical infrastructure, AI agents being able to get into the nuclear codes or the stock market and financial markets.

I actually think that we're paying attention to some of those dangers. We can't drive them to zero, but I think there will be a lot of work by our national security infrastructure to try to deal with that.

But I think the bigger, more profound concern has to do with the economic disruptions that are going to happen. This is going to be similar to the shift from the Agricultural economy to the Industrial Revolution, but the timetables

are so compressed that our politics and our societies are going to have trouble adapting.

So you mentioned -- I don't know who the Microsoft executive was. I don't know that 80 percent of white collar jobs are eliminated in 18 months, but white collar jobs are going to be subject to the same forces that factory jobs were subject to through automation 10, 20 years ago, and it's going to happen faster.

So a lot of middle management, a lot of clerical, office, call center -- even I'm an attorney. If you are a young associate in a law firm, most of your work, which is being billed at very high rates, is I would say probably already, but certainly in the next 18 months, a lot of the work of that junior associate that's getting paid \$200,000 a year can be done by AI, and they don't need mental health days, they just keep on going.

So I think the need for us to now start having a conversation of what happens when not just unskilled labor but skilled labor, some of our kids, our kids' friends, et cetera, who've gone to school and aspired to a middle-class, upper-middle-class life, when their pathways to success are suddenly gone, how are we creating new opportunities, and how are we avoiding even more inequality that puts more strain on our democracy, more strain on our society, creates more anger, more resentment. Those are conversations that we're not yet having, but we better start having them fairly quickly.

BOB COSTAS: Now, they tell me they want to run a tight ship, and technically we're out of time, but this is Barack Obama sitting here, and I'm sure that you would not mind if I ask two more questions that specifically are connected to the NBA or to basketball.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Got it.

BOB COSTAS: Your Presidential Center on the South Side of Chicago will open up later this year. One of the first buildings that was completed is called Home Court. It's a full-court basketball situation, and if it's not at the heart of it, it's an important part of what you want that Presidential Center to represent.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: We are going to be opening in June. If you want more information, look at Obama.org, and you'll see that this is going to be a remarkable living institution.

I was relatively young when I got out of the presidency, and so it was premature for me to build a mausoleum.

(Laughter.)



BARACK OBAMA: And, look, my theory of our democracy, of America, of social change has always been that it's driven by people, ordinary people doing extraordinary things, citizens.

And so we built a campus. It will have a museum section, it has Michelle's dresses for those of you who want to go see, signed basketballs from some of the championships, et cetera. So there will be fun stuff.

But what we're really building is a place where people can converge, meet, have conversations about their communities and about issues and listen to the debates and learn and teach and find out how can we build stronger neighborhoods and stronger communities.

So we'll have recording studios in the Chicago Public Library and an auditorium theater for plays and music. But one of the things I thought was important was to have not just a basketball court but a really nice couple of courts and an athletic center because sports is a gateway particularly for kids.

And this is on the South Side of Chicago. There isn't going to be an institution of this magnitude in many places, if anywhere, in a really intercity, urban environment. There's a high school right across the street from us with a bunch of kids who are great kids but don't have a lot of opportunity.

Creating gateways in which they can come and have fun and then be seen and meet people who open up their imaginations and give them a sense of what's possible, that's as important to me as having world leaders come and visit and making speeches. Because ultimately I believe change comes from the bottom up, and I believe our core mission is to train the next generation of leaders.

And in order to attract young people's interest, it can't just be a bunch of boring policy, there's got to be some fun.

BOB COSTAS: Sure.

BARACK OBAMA: I'm a believer in joy as a tool for bringing about change and not just sadness and anger.

(Applause.)

BOB COSTAS: That might have been a good note to end on, but your folks told me that we ought to mention this, and we should, it connects to the NBA. You're partnering with the NBA to -- let me get this exactly right -- for social responsibility efforts in Africa. So expand on that. But not too much.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: No, I'll be very brief. Look, I think a lot of people know here the NBA has made an investment in Africa. We've partnered to help not only the basketball league in Africa but also to make sure that, as I just described, the power of sports then helps to build communities and development and opportunity in those participating African countries.

And I think that has always been one of the great features of the NBA that differentiates us, frankly, from all the other great North American sports leagues.

Basketball has become international in a way that the only other sport I think that's comparable in that sense is obviously soccer. And but this is one of America's great exports. And we're now obviously seeing talent from the African continent come into the NBA, and we want to make sure that the opportunities, the economic development, the inspiration goes both ways.

And so kudos to the NBA owners for making that investment. It's a big, complicated continent, and doing business there is not always easy. But the fact that the NBA is making that effort I think will serve it well in the future in the same way that the investments in China, investments now that are being discussed in Europe are going to make a difference.

It's a cliché to say that sports can bring the world together, but right now we're in the middle of the Olympics. It's worth reminding us, we saw it in Paris, that when you watch the U.S. team play in Paris and the Serbian teams and the French teams and you're reminded of what the Dream Team did to inspire all that, and you saw the French fans when Steph was hitting those threes, and they're mad, but they can't be too mad because it is such a --

BOB COSTAS: It's art.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: It's art and it's joy and it binds us together to see human excellence in that way. Only sports and music and the arts can do that, to bind us together to remind us of our common humanity. That's something we want to preserve and build on.

BOB COSTAS: Mr. President, it was an honor to speak with you again.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: It was a great talk.

BOB COSTAS: Thanks for being here.

BARACK OBAMA: Thank you, guys.



(Applause.)

BOB COSTAS: Ladies and gentlemen, the 44th President of the United States, Barack Obama.

(Applause.)

BOB COSTAS: Thank you so much.

BARACK OBAMA: Appreciate it.

AHMAD RASHAD: All right, I have another thing. Let's see. This was an incredible crowd. Thank you all very much for being here, and we want you to enjoy the rest of All-Star Weekend. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

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