



Written by [Steven Yates](#) on July 6, 2009

The White House and Media Control

"Nixon didn't try to do that," Thomas said. "They couldn't control (the media). They didn't try."

CNSNews.com also reported:

Thomas said she was especially concerned about the arrangement between the Obama Administration and a writer from the liberal Huffington Post Web site. The writer was invited by the White House to President Obama's press conference last week on the understanding that he would ask Obama a question about Iran from among questions that had been sent to him by people in Iran.



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"When you call the reporter the night before you know damn well what they are going to ask to control you," Thomas said.

Thomas' comments followed last Wednesday's briefing with White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs. At the briefing, Gibbs and CBS White House correspondent Chip Reid (with Thomas jumping in) engaged in a back-and-forth exchange on how (in Reid's words) "the audience and the questions are being selected" for the president's town-hall meeting on healthcare that day.

Reid charged: "It just feels very tightly controlled. It feels — I mean, the concept of a town hall I think is to have a open public forum, and this sounds like a very tightly controlled audience and a list of questions. Why do it that way? Why not open it up to the public?"

"Why pre-select?" Reid asked. "Why not just open it up for people and allow any question to come in?"

A later segment of the exchange follows:

Helen Thomas: "I'm amazed. I'm amazed at you people who call for openness and transparency and —"

Robert Gibbs: "Helen, you haven't even heard the questions."

Chip Reid: "It doesn't matter. It's the process."

Thomas: "You have left open —"

Reid: "Even if there's a tough question, it's a question coming from somebody who was invited or was screened, or the question was screened."

Thomas: "It's shocking. It's really shocking."

Gibbs: "Chip, let's have this discussion at the conclusion of the town hall meeting. How about that?"

Reid: "Okay."



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Gibbs: "I think —"

Thomas: "No, no, no, we're having it now —"

Gibbs: "Well, I'd be happy to have it now."

Thomas: "It's a pattern."

Gibbs: "Which question did you object to at the town hall meeting, Helen?"

Thomas: "It's a pattern. It isn't the question —"

Gibbs: "What's a pattern?"

Thomas: "It's a pattern of controlling the press."

Here's a video of a large portion of the exchange:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q37kt0ga0OA>

Photo of White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs: AP Images



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