



**Hubert H. Humphrey
Institute of Public Affairs**

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

**Hubert H. Humphrey 2006 Leadership Awards
May 30, 2006**

**Remarks of Gary Cunningham
Recipient of the Public Leadership Award**

I saw the gorilla.

I am so honored, and it is such a privilege to be here today with the other honorees, as well as to be honored by the University of Minnesota and the Humphrey Institute. It's particularly important for me because I had an opportunity to work at the Humphrey Institute for a stint, and people like John Bryson and Harry Boyte and Sam Myers and just all kinds of great people at the Humphrey Institute really made a difference for me in my life, and allowed me to give back to others today.

But I also am grateful particularly to my wife Jeanne, and I love her more than one more day—that is who she is to me—and my children. I am also grateful to the staff of NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center who are here today, particularly, Brian Nancy and Brian Bergs, and Stav Zanjani and others, as well as to the Hennepin County board of commissioners and the county administrator Sandy Vargas. If you would please stand up and take a bow; I want to thank you very much.

I would also like to thank the NorthPoint Community Board. These are citizens in our community who volunteered their time and effort to make a difference and have been making a difference over the last four years, so could you please stand and take a bow.

As I was thinking about what I was going to say today, I thought about Hubert Humphrey. In my first interaction with the memory of Hubert Humphrey, in the 1980s I was working on a project on housing discrimination in Phillips Neighborhood, and I came across a report that was done in 1948 on housing discrimination in Minneapolis that was commissioned by the then Mayor Humphrey.

The document talked about widespread housing discrimination against blacks, Jews and Irish in Minnesota and in Minneapolis, where there were covenants and places where you couldn't live if you were Jewish. There were places you couldn't be if you were African American. There were places you couldn't work if you were Irish, here in this community.

I thought about the kind of courage for him back in 1948 to commission this study and begin to address some of these deeply rooted issues in our community. I was so moved by that back in the 1980s, of Hubert Humphrey's stand, that it really talked about leadership and courage and going against the grain at what other people in the community might have thought was the right thing to do.



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I thought about some of the everyday people that are out here with courage every day fighting against the tide of what the conventional wisdom would say. When we started down the road of working on the African American Men project, I think there was one person and that was Commissioner Mark Strenglein, and Mark if you could please just stand. Commissioner Strenglein clearly stood against the tide and said ‘why don’t we do this?’ Why don’t we try to make a difference for young me in our community, and it happened.

I think about Commissioner Gail Dorfman when she provided leadership when we worked together to create the affordable housing incentive fund when we were moving against the tide of what was then ‘the county doesn’t do housing,’ and now we have created thousands of homes for poor people in our community through here work. Could you please take a stand.

I think about today in North Minneapolis and a project we are working on that started with a conversation between President Robert Brunix and Commissioner Linda Copeland and Vice President Robert Jones to initiate a partnership between the University of Minnesota and Hennepin County that is moving against the grain and doing what the conventional wisdom says you shouldn’t do is part of what leadership is about.

Today the University of Minnesota and Hennepin County are hosting a partnership to create a new University of Minnesota family center, under the leadership of Dr. Dante Jaketoo, who is just came here from New York to visit us and be a professor here at the university.

That center will work on what Kathleen Blatz talked about earlier and that is dealing with the issue of child maltreatment and neglect, creating whole families and working on the root causes. So often in my work, we are really just working with the symptoms of greater problems. If we can get to the root causes of these issues and really work through these issues, but it’s going to take a partnership. It’s going to take a partnership of this great university, with its talent, with its skills, with its professionals, with its academics, with its scientists, with its researchers, and its going to take a partnership with the community. What that means is that everyone brings value to the transaction, that it’s not a one-way transaction, but it is a two-way transaction. I tell you today that we are working on something that has not been done by a major public research institution in this country, and that is to work on transforming for community.

You know the legacy that we sit here today, the legacy of Hubert Humphrey, is a legacy of making a difference for poor people in our community, and that fight and that work continues through this partnership with the University of Minnesota. Now I tell you not just to gain publicity for this; I tell you this because I see people every day, children, every day that suffer from trauma, from neglect, from abuse, and this opportunity that we have before us is too profound and dramatic. And I want to thank Dr. Robert Jones. Dr. Robert Jones, are you here? Could you please stand up.



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Dr. Jones has shown so much courage in working in the community, and the ability to transform language from the community to the university and back, I think that is such a gift, and he is such a gift to us, both at the university and in the community.

I just want to end this by saying a few other things that I think are important.

As I came to NorthPoint about four years ago, and at that time it was called Pilot City. I was sent there by the county administrator to resuscitate an organization that was really beloved in the community and really try to make a difference for all people in the community. As I looked at the many issues of disparities and difficulties, I also saw that in each one of the people I dealt with in North Minneapolis that there's hope. There are mothers that have hope for their children. There are fathers that are working to make a difference for their families, there are children who want to find a path to this university.

This connection, this bridge that we build to this university from our urban community, the University of Minnesota has been known as a land grant institution that really is set up to assist people that are everyday citizens to take part in a part of our educational process, and the university has defined its role pretty clearly. What I ask the university and what I believe the president is working on is to create an urban agenda for this great university. And I ask everyone here to join me and join your university and to support, really create an urban agenda for this university that transforms these communities. I can tell you that given the opportunity, people will find a way. I'm just honored, and we at NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center are honored to receive this award, and I don't receive this for myself, because there are many heroes at NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center that deserve this award. Thank you so much.