

H.H.H. speech pathway to Ellison, Obama

Written by Harry Colbert, Jr.
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Pictured: Former President Bill Clinton helps in unveiling the Hubert H. Humphrey Memorial Statue on the Capitol Mall.

The man who is arguably Minnesota's most revered son is now memorialized with a statue on the mall of the State Capitol. The Hubert H. Humphrey Memorial Statue was unveiled this past weekend with great fanfare, before a crowd of hundreds; and the man known as the "Happy Warrior" was remembered as a pioneer in the fight for civil rights. Among those paying tribute to the former United States Vice President and U.S. Senator were former president Bill Clinton, former vice president Walter Mondale, Gov. Mark Dayton and both of the state's sitting U.S. Senators.



Pictured: Former President Bill Clinton, along with several other dignitaries came out to honor the "Happy Warrior," Hubert Humphrey. Seated in the front row (right to left) are Dr. Josie

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Johnson, Clinton, former Vice President Walter Mondale and Gov. Mark Dayton.

Many who spoke of Humphrey often referred to his now famous 1948 speech at the Democratic Convention where he called for the party to take the lead in the fight for civil rights.

"You have no idea how many times I watched the 1948 speech because I knew that it led to passing of the Civil Rights Act (of 1964), the Voting Rights Act (of 1965) and eventually for Barack Obama to become president and Keith Ellison to go to Congress," said Clinton to thunderous applause. "I was 26-years-old when I first met Hubert Humphrey. I told him I was from Arkansas and I thanked him for the 1948 speech and for t



he '64 Civil Rights Act, and thanked him for raising the level of common decency in America."

Pictured: Former President Bill Clinton shares a smile during the Hubert H. Humphrey Memorial Statue dedication ceremony with civil rights pioneer, Dr. Josie Johnson.

Sen. Amy Klobuchar said the funeral of Humphrey was testament to how beloved was the Minnesota politician. Klobuchar said she was in high school when Humphrey died in January of 1978, and she stood outside in the cold in a long line to pay respects to Humphrey, whose body was inside the rotunda of the State Capitol building.

"That's how much Minnesota loved Hubert Humphrey," said Klobuchar.

Many revered Humphrey for his ability to work with people from all beliefs and backgrounds, regardless of regional or party affiliation. Clinton said if Humphrey were alive today he would be appalled at the level of acrimony in government.

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"I think it would be disturbing to him when a U.S. Congressperson would say that some 78 to 81 members of Congress were Communists," said Clinton. "And he would have been proud of John McCain for standing up against the attacks on the Secretary of State's staff, Huma Abedin because she is Muslim."

Civil rights pioneer and former director of the Minneapolis Urban League, Dr. Josie Johnson praised Humphrey for his courage in fighting for the rights of African-Americans. Johnson said in 1948 – when Humphrey delivered his groundbreaking speech – lynching of African-American men, many of whom had served in the U.S. Armed Forces, was not uncommon and Jim Crow was the law of the South.

"It took courage to ask the Democratic Convention to unlearn the teachings of the past," said Johnson, who was the first African-American to serve on the University of Minnesota's Board of Regents. "We are now in 2012 and we need courageous leaders like Hubert Humphrey."

Sen. Al Franken said if Humphrey were alive, he would be leading the causes of fighting for marriage equality and against voter identification – two issues to be decided upon by Minnesota voters on the November ballot.

"His service was guided by principle and good will upon others," said Franken.

Others on hand for the unveiling of the Humphrey statue included Minnesota Supreme Court Associate Justice Alan Page, State Rep. Bobby Joe Champion and State Rep. Jeffrey Hayden.

Humphrey's statue is set in the middle of several artistic plaques which have quotes from the former vice president, senator and Minneapolis mayor.