Transcript of John Quiñones RTD Legacy Awards Banquet Speech, January 13, 2017

All right, how are you doing? What would you do, Tuscaloosa? Good evening. It really is a pleasure being here with all of you tonight at The University of Alabama. The most livable city in America, they say; one of the best college towns in the country and, of course, home to the best football team in the nation (cheers).

It's so great to be here. You know the Rev. Martin Luther King once said, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is what are you doing for others?" That is what this committee of Realizing the Dream at The University of Alabama is all about. That is what tonight is all about. That is what my show "What Would You Do?" is all about, a kind of candid camera of ethics of morals. The show that poses the question when you witness injustice, whether it is bullying or racism, or discrimination, gay bashing, anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim hatred, do you step in or do you step away?

It's also the show that has made it impossible for me to go have dinner anywhere without people wondering "Why are you here?" I'm trying to eat you know. They think there are hidden cameras. SO even on the plane coming in from New York I kind of snuck up on the flight attendant and she turned around quickly and said "Oh, my god! It's John Quiñones! What's going to happen on the airplane now?" (laughter)

So, you've been warned, we can put those hidden cameras anywhere … like here. If you're sitting there and the person next to you passes out and you step over them to get another drink, you're going to have me to talk to. (laughter, "Amen")

You know given the brutal, brutal and bruising presidential campaign and the election that we just suffered through and the racial divisiveness that we're seeing in this country, I think there is no better time than now for "What Would You Do?" So, I'm happy to say that ABC has ordered another batch of scenarios and we will be back on the air on ABC with a new slate of ethical and moral dilemmas and scenarios within a few months. (cheers and applause)

So, I'm really proud of that. When we started the show 10 years ago — it was my idea — we thought we would do five or six scenarios. Here we are a decade later and we've done 500 different scenarios and still going strong. (applause)

On the drive here — I drove myself from Birmingham this afternoon — I was thinking I would never have made it to broadcasting and network news, and I wouldn't have the show that I have now. I wouldn't be here tonight speaking to you had it not been for the civil rights movement, if it had not been for the Rev. King.

You see the people who only know me on television and see me on up there with Diane Sawyer, George Stephanopoulos, the great Robin Roberts and Barbara Walters. People who only know me from that have no idea the long, hard struggle that it took for John Quiñones to get to network television.

I was born in poverty in "the Barrios," the poor neighborhood of San Antonio. You know how people say we were poor but we didn't know we were poor? We knew we were poor. (laughter) We had a pretty good idea. We had an old black and white television in the back of the house and we saw how the other side lived.

I didn't speak a word of English when I went into the first grade. I will never forget going to the first grade, Mrs. Gregory's class; this was before bilingual education. I didn't get any preschool or any of that; I went straight to the first grade. In San Antonio, it's 60 percent Hispanic so you don't have to speak English because everything is in Spanish. The corner store, the church, radio and TV stations — all in Spanish. Even though my family had been there seven generations, I didn't have to learn English until I went to school. Because people forget Texas was once part of Spain, Texas was once part of Mexico. By the way so was California, Utah, New Mexico, Arizona and a few other states. (laughter) So, you don't have to learn English. I get a kick out of it when people come up to me say "John Quiñones, you're Mexican American — my family's been here seven generations right? And they say to me, "When did your family come from Mexico?" We were always there. I am more American than most Americans. I never crossed the border, the border crossed me. (laughter)

Suddenly, I'm speaking English. In the first grade in class I didn't speak a word of English and my teacher, before bilingual education existed, didn't speak Spanish. So there I am, in Mrs. Gregory's class, eight in the morning, twiddling my thumbs, wondering what she's saying and she's wondering what I'm up to. At 10 in the morning the school bell rings and the kids go out to the playground, because it's recess time. Where does the little Juanito Quiñones go? I walked home. I lived two blocks from the school, Carvajal Elementary. When I got home, my mom's there, Maria, and she goes, "Mijo (my son) what are you doing here?" I said, "Se acabó, it's over, Mom. I like school, two hours. This is going to work out nicely." (laughter)

She grabbed me by the ear and dragged me back to Mrs. Gregory's class. They used to punish us in school for speaking Spanish. The coach had a paddle, a wooden paddle. They drilled holes into it for extra speed and power and they would give us three spankings. They'd make us bend over and they'd hit us three times — the coach, the big old coach — if they caught us speaking Spanish. It was crazy.

The great African-American Poet Maya Angelou once wrote we all marvel at the beauty of the butterfly, right? But rarely do we consider all of the changes that butterfly had to go through to

attain that beauty. I'm no butterfly, but man did I go through some struggles, and yes, some struggles to attain the measure of success that people see now.

Like the Rev. King, when I was a child growing up in the barrio, I had a dream of someday making a difference in the world. I wanted to become a journalist since I was a little boy, because I knew there were stories in my community that were not being told. The stories were all about crime and drugs and gangs and illegal immigration, but I knew there were heroes that no one was shining the light on, and I wanted to be that beacon to shine the light. It was something that I understood all too well because of what I experienced as a young boy.

When I was eight years old, I used to shine shoes on the streets of San Antonio, my cousin Joe and I. We would go to all the cantinas because in the bars, the drunken guys didn't realize how much they were tipping you. (laughter) We made a killing until one night we were coming home and a gang in the neighborhood — drive-by shootings, tough neighborhood — jumped us and took away all my polish and all my rags and all my earnings from the night. That was the end of the shoe-shining career.

But when I was 13 my father was laid off. He was a janitor and my mom used to clean houses in the rich part of town. We would go do yard work; my dad and I would cut lawns for $25 a lawn. But when I was 13, he was laid off, and we did what a lot of Hispanic families in South Texas had to do: We joined a caravan of trucks — my two sisters, my mother and father and I — and we jumped in the back of these trucks and journeyed 1,700 miles to Northport, Michigan, the cherry capital of the world, to pick cherries. I remember we would pick them and they paid us 75 cents a bucket. And there I was teetering on a ladder trying to fill that darn bucket and it would take me two hours for 75 cents. Then we spent six weeks there and did what all migrant farm workers do: You get back in the trucks and you follow the migrant trail to Toledo, Ohio. Right outside Toledo is Swanton, Ohio, the tomato capital of the world, where we picked tomatoes for 35 cents a bushel, and man, I was a champ at tomato picking. I did 100 bushels a day and back then, that was $35 a day. My father would pick about as much and also my sisters and my mother. We learned the value of the family coming together in times of difficulty right, pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps and working together. But I will never forget being on my knees on the cold hard ground at 6 o'clock in the morning and my father Bruno, and there I was looking at a row of tomato plants that for a young 13-year-old boy seemed to go on for miles and miles. That's what I had to look forward to that day, and my father looked down and said "Juanito, do you want to do this for the rest of your life or do you want to get a college education someday?"

It was a no-brainer. I knew I didn't want to do that for the rest of my life, but no one in my family had gone to college, no one not even in my extended family. Society didn't believe that I

could do it. I was the kid who was expected to fail like all the other Mexican-American kids in my school, which was 99.9 percent Mexican-American.

So when I came back to school in San Antonio, I would ask my teachers how do I prepare for the SATs? How do I prepare for the ACTs? How do I take advanced placement classes, right? You know what they would tell me? These teachers, these counselors would say, "John, that's wonderful that you have this dream of someday being a television reporter." Because I've wanted to be a reporter since I was a kid, as I mentioned. I used to watch Geraldo Rivera on 20/20, the only one with a Hispanic last name on national television. It turns out he's only half Mexican, but he was my idol. So my teachers would say, "It is great that you have this dream of being a television reporter someday, but we think you should try wood shop or metal shop or auto mechanics," Not that there is anything wrong with those trades. A lot of our relatives make a good, hard living doing that kind of work, but I wanted to go to college.

My own teachers did what people on "What Would You Do?" do every Friday night: They judged me by the color of my skin and the accent in my voice. Thank God for my mother, Maria. She was the one, when everyone else said no, who said, "Mijo, don't worry so much about having to wear the same clothes to school every other day. At least we wash those clothes, right? They are clean." She would say, "Don't worry or be embarrassed about taking the bean and tortilla tacos for lunch when all the other kids are taking their fancy bologna and white bread." (laughter)

Now, we know beans have more protein and are better for you, right? We got the last laugh on that one. She would say, "Don't worry about that. What matters is what's in here, in your cabeza, (head) and what here in your corazón (heart). She was the one that kept me going. Then I met my first hero, aside from my parents, at school, my English teacher in the 10th grade, Mrs. Carmen Ramirez, who when everyone else said, "You'll never make it," she said, "John, I love the way you write your essays. Have you thought about journalism? "Of course! I've been watching Geraldo for all these years." And she said, "No, no, no. Have you thought about writing for the school newspaper and the Brackenridge Times? I want to introduce you to the journalism teacher." So, I met Mr. Harris and he hired me as a reporter. So, I've been doing this since I was 14 years old, writing all kinds of stories."

Then — Dr. Mullins, you'll like this. Within a month, I was named chief of editorial, so there I am writing these big investigative stories like "Why are the teachers parking in the student parking spaces? Tonight, we go undercover to find out," and I loved it. Then came another hero in my life, thanks to Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement, a program called Upward Bound. I don't know if you know Upward Bound, but I am the Mexican poster child for Upward Bound. I was the kid they selected out of a whole class, 10 students out of a whole school. They did this in every inner-city school in America. It was Presidents Johnson's and

Kennedy's War on Poverty. Some of you might remember the sixties and seventies. The argument was that the only way out of poverty is through education. What a thought! They knew these inner-city schools weren't doing a great job of preparing us for college, and so they would supplement that, the government would, with Saturday classes in English, math, biology, and then every summer for six weeks while I was in high school I got to go to college. For a Latino who no one in his family had ever gone to college, and for his parents who were afraid to let their son or daughter leave, this was a big deal.

I remember saying goodbye. I went to Southwest Texas State University (in San Marcos), less than an hour from San Antonio. For six weeks I'm in college and I remember saying goodbye to my mother Maria in the driveway. You would have thought that I was going to Vietnam. (laughter) She was like "Mijo, mijo! I'm not going to see you." I'm going for six weeks and she's crying. I said "Mom, don't worry. I'll be back Saturday with some dirty laundry and some of those bean and taco tortillas." (laughter) But thank God for Upward Bound. Those are the little heroes along the way that helped me. (applause)

Martin Luther King said at times of adversity you've got to have faith, and faith is taking that first step. It doesn't matter if you don't see the entire staircase. Take that first step. Because tomorrow, will be that baby step and the next day another baby step and the next day another one and another one. My steps were trying to learn English and get rid of my accent, because I had a heavy Mexican accent. I grew up speaking Spanish. For example, in Spanish there is no "sh" sound, so I would say, "These are my Choes and this is my chirt," and people would make fun of me. I knew if I was going to be like my heroes — Dan Rather, Walter Cronkite, Geraldo and Tom Brokaw — I would have to work on my accent. And I got involved in drama classes in high school.

I tried out for the role of Romeo in Romeo and Juliet and I — maybe it was because no one else tried out (laughter) — but I got the role of Romeo. Now the good news is that I got to kiss Juliet, Mary Lou Gomez. I'll never forget. We had to practice behind the curtain to get it right. (laughter) And I performed and I learned to enunciate from my diaphragm on a stage like this to the back of the room. The good news is that I got to kiss Juliet. The bad news was that in this very stupidly macho school, I had to wear leotards. So I'm just glad there was no YouTube back then. (laughter)

But I always wanted to try journalism. I wound up going to St. Mary's University in San Antonio thanks to Upward Bound. I remember I had three jobs when I was going to school. I worked at the school cafeteria, I worked in the geology department sorting rocks, and then at night — I have to be careful how I say this — I delivered drugs. People say, "Of course, you're Latino, you're a drug dealer." I delivered drugs for a pharmacy in San Antonio to little old ladies and older men who couldn't come to the pharmacy for their prescription medicine. (laughter)

I would drive this old Volkswagen and I would bring them their medicine. But at night, I would go into the men's room between my deliveries with this little tape recorder, a cassette recorder, and I would read whatever I could to work on my pronunciation and enunciation because I wanted so badly to go into broadcasting someday. I remember the owner of the pharmacy that I worked at would hear me through the men's room door and he would say, "John, you really want to do this?" And I said, "Yeah." And he said, "Well, I know the guy at the local radio station, they are looking for interns and maybe you should go apply. I'll put your name in."

And again, the reason this happened is the Civil Rights Movement and Dr. Martin Luther King. In San Antonio there was a group of very radical Latinos, Mexican Americans, angry that in this city with 60 percent Hispanic population, there were like two people who were Latino on television or on the radio. They argued that the FCC, the Federal Communications Commission, tells us that the airwaves belong to the people. They don't belong to Disney or Comcast or Time Warner. They belong to the people of this country. Therefore, the people who are giving us the stories on radio and television should reflect the population of the city. And this group of radical Mexican protestors — they called themselves the "Brown Berets" because of the brown berets they wore, but their formal name was the "Bilingual Bicultural Coalition on the Mass Media" or the "BBC." (laughter)

And these crazy guys from the BBC started picketing radio stations, saying, "If you don't hire more Latinos on the air, we're going to challenge your license with the FCC and maybe you will be denied a license to broadcast." And of course the owners of radio and TV stations in San Antonio freaked out and started grabbing anyone with a decent voice, and there I was practicing in the pharmacy men's room, and they hired me as an intern. Now I was 18 years old. I loved rock music, R&B music and I loved Mexican music. This was a country music station. (laughter) Now I've grown to like country music now, but at the age of 18 not so much. But it was a job and as I was telling students this afternoon, you've got to get that internship. So, of course I went and applied and I got the job for $2 an hour.

Now, you have to be from Texas to understand this. The disc jockeys, the guys who played the music at the radio station, had horses in the back of the studios that they would use for public appearances like rodeos and parades. It was a big deal in San Antonio. My first job in broadcasting was to feed the horses and clean up after them in the back of the studio for 2 bucks an hour. (laughter) But at night, again taking those baby steps that the Rev. Martin Luther King told us to take, I would go back into the studio at midnight and I would record my voice on these big reel-to-reel recorders, again working on my delivery, right? The only problem was that at that hour of the night, at midnight, all of the disc jockeys, all of the professionals, had gone home. So the only one left at the station was the janitor and his name was Pablo and Pablo's English was worse than my father's. (laughter)

But I would drag him in there and I would say “Pablo, listen to this, what do you think?” And he would say it sounded pretty good “más o menos” (more or less). And that’s how I started. He was my first critic. And then they let me do something on the air for the first time at KKYX radio. There would be some nationally produced commercial and I would get to do the five seconds tag at the end telling you where to get the medicine. So you want to hear the first words John Quiñones ever said on the air? I got to say this: “Now available at Walgreens.” (laughter) I was so proud of myself. Ah, I was so proud of myself.

I would call my aunts and uncles and friends and say, “you’ve got to listen at 1:12 this afternoon, but don’t blink or you’ll miss it.” And then they let me do the news on Sunday nights. It was actually Monday morning. Between one and four in the morning, five minutes of news on the hour. I think we had four listeners, my mother, my father and my two sisters. (laughter) But you learn to make mistakes. If you’re going to mess up, you don’t want to mess up on ABC News in New York, right?

From there I got a better job at a better radio station, but I couldn’t get hired for the life of me in television. Every station I applied to in Texas, my home state — Amarillo, Austin, Lubbock, San Antonio, Houston and Dallas. I could show you 80 letters of rejection because I didn’t have any television experience. I was a radio reporter. And I was depressed and getting ready to give up on journalism and go to law school maybe. But it’s funny how life is. I met a woman at an audition for a job that I didn’t get, but she told me she had gone to Columbia University. She said, “John, you shouldn’t give up on this passion that you have for journalism. If you want to go back to school, why don’t you go to Columbia and get a master’s? And I will write a letter for you to bolster your chances.”

I got accepted. Not only that, I got a fellowship to study in New York, and from there I got my first TV job in Chicago, for the CBS station in Chicago. Step-by-step, and while in Chicago I did a story I’d been wanting to do for a long time about a hot button issue that is still an issue today, immigration.

Even 30 years ago. I knew, because I had family who had come over from Mexico. I convinced my news director to let me go undercover and go into Mexico, posing as a Mexican citizen trying to get into the U.S. Now I could do that because I speak Spanish, because I look the way I look. Obviously, I didn’t wear a suit, but I was 25 years old and posed as just another immigrant from Mexico looking for passage across the Rio Grande. I looked for a coyote, a smuggler, and I found one. He sold me a fake social security card, fake birth certificate for $300, all captured on hidden camera.

Then he says “Tonight, we will cross the river with you here in Nuevo Laredo (in Mexico) into Laredo, Texas across the Rio Grande.” So I got in my car and told my camera crew on the Texas

side — I drove to the Texas side, back then you could go back and forth across the bridge very easily — and told my crew, “Okay, hide in the bushes here. I hope that around 7 o’clock I’m going to be crossing the river.” And they were hiding filming and I went back into Mexico and I had to stash my rental car. Because I think my smuggler would have been very suspicious of this young Mexican immigrant starting a life for himself in the U.S. driving a Lincoln Towncar from National Rental Car. So I stashed the car and I meet with the smuggler on the banks of the Rio Grande. Sure enough he tells me to take my clothes off. And I was a little nervous because I was wearing a wireless mic so I convinced him to let me leave my T-shirt on and he puts me on an inner tube. And I floated across the Rio Grande all captured on hidden camera for this station in Chicago.

And I didn’t stop there. I went from there to Chicago back home and got a job at a Greek restaurant with seven Mexican workers, undocumented, working for this owner who hadn’t paid them in 17 weeks. And every time they complained, he would say, “Hey, guys. You get to sleep here in the basement and you get to eat all the food you want. You keep complaining and I will call immigration and have you deported.” And by the way, that still happens today.

So I went there and I got a job as a dishwasher — speaking only Spanish and obviously not dressed like this — and I told him I had just arrived from Mexico. He understood from his broken Spanish, the owner of the restaurant, so I got hired there with these other seven Mexican workers. By day I’m there washing dishes wearing a hidden camera, and at night I went down in the basement and I slept with the seven other guys from Mexico who hadn’t been paid in 17 weeks.

I still wonder what they must have thought, because during the day they would see me washing dishes with them, and then at night I pulled out a little camera and I started interviewing them in Spanish about their lives. And they told me how they were being held as virtual slaves in this restaurant.

The next day, I came back to work, to the restaurant, this time wearing a suit speaking fluent English with a camera crew behind me and I remember we had to chase the owner of the restaurant through the parking lot, because he didn’t want to talk to us. But then the morning after my story aired about my journey across the Rio Grande and my job at this restaurant, the government moved in, shut down the restaurant, arrested this guy, and got the Mexican workers the money they were owed and temporary visas to remain in this country.

So I knew then that those are the kinds of stories that I was uniquely qualified to tell because of where I come from, because of who I am, because of the color of my skin and because of the accent in my voice.

I see journalism and imagine this room being pitch dark. It's the middle of the night, the electricity is out. We're all here stumbling around, we can't find a way out. We can't see our hands in front of our faces. The journalist, he or she, is the person with the little candle and they can shine it on the darkest corner of this room to illuminate injustice, to illuminate corruption and civil rights violation, and human rights violations. I think when journalism is done right, and we're not doing it right too often these days by the way, those are the kinds of stories that we should be telling. That story won my first Emmy Award in Chicago.

I will never forget the words of my producer David Gelber, who now works for "60 Minutes." And he said, "John." He went with me to the border. He said "John, you're the first Mexican to swim across the Rio Grande and then go to his suite at the Hyatt Regency Hotel." (laughter) But it won an Emmy, and Peter Jennings was watching from New York. ABC was looking for someone to cover Latin America.

It was the 1980s and there were wars going on in Nicaragua and El Salvador. The U.S. invaded Panama. ABC News had a correspondent by the name of Bill Stewart from New York, who was a great reporter but not Hispanic and didn't speak a word of Spanish. He's sent to cover the war in Nicaragua on a moment's notice. He basically parachutes into Nicaragua. He hires a translator at the airport, who, by the way, who has long hair and blue jeans. He looks like the rebels that the government soldiers in Nicaragua are fighting. Big mistake.

When they're stopped at a military checkpoint, the soldiers tell everyone to get out of the van. And they look at the translator and they say, "You are a communist. You're the people we are fighting. Who do you guys represent?" They take the translator behind a hill and they shoot and kill him, unbeknownst to the reporter Bill Stewart for ABC News.

If you Google this, you will see this awful video. Bill is then trying to communicate with the soldiers. The camera crew, who doesn't know that the translator has been shot, thinks it's funny that the reporter can't communicate in Spanish. So from about 50 yards away they start filming Bill trying to talk to the soldiers. On camera you see the soldiers motion to him to get on his knees, and they put a gun to his head and they shoot and kill him. The crew manages to get the body out and the video makes air on ABC, CBS, NBC and CNN. The U.S. government then withdraws support for the government of Nicaragua, and, ironically, the Sandinistas took power after this, because they were killing journalists. It was one of the first times that you actually saw a reporter being shot and killed.

But I tell you this long story to explain that the networks, then in all their wisdom, said we should hire someone who speaks Spanish to go to Central America. And there I was, in Chicago, with my little Emmy Award, twenty-six years old, ready to tackle the world. The irony of this did not escape me. Here was a kid who used to get punished, right, for speaking Spanish in

school and I wind up getting my dream network job with Peter Jennings at ABC News precisely because I spoke Spanish. I spend a glorious decade working for Peter Jennings, who was my hero. The guy was like James Bond, right? We still miss him at ABC.

I'll never forget one time I had this big interview in Nicaragua set up and I called New York, and I was a young reporter. I was just a rookie reporter and I tell Peter Jennings I've got this big exclusive with Daniel Ortega, the president of Nicaragua. I highly sought after this interview and I got it. So Jennings said, "Fine, young man, we look forward to having you on the evening news."

Then I get a call from the president's office in Nicaragua canceling the interview. Now it's 4:30 in the afternoon. The news is on at 6:30. They had made a hole in the newscast for my report, and now I can't deliver that. So, now, I've got to call James Bond in New York, Agent 007, (laughter) and tell him that I'm not going to be able to deliver the story. And I expected to be yelled at, and, who the heck knows, maybe even fired for not being able to deliver this.

Instead, Peter Jennings gave me some words of wisdom that I'll never forget. He said, "John, this is going to happen again in your life. There'll be times when somebody promises you something and they don't deliver. Don't worry so much about talking to the movers and the shakers of the world, the politicians, the presidents of countries. Talk to the moved and the shaken." (applause

In other words, talk to the real people. Jennings was saying "As a Hispanic reporter, you can go into the countryside of Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and because you understand the culture and the language and don't seem like such an outsider you can come back with stories that no one else can deliver. You can do it by standing on the street corner in Managua, Nicaragua."

And that's all I did for the next 10 years and I loved it. Then, I started working for Prime Time Live with Diane Sawyer and Sam Donaldson and I went to Africa and the South Pole and Vietnam. And it was glorious. Along the way, I picked up a bunch of awards. But it's ironic the one show that people recognize me for more today than anything is "What would you do?" And I'm very proud of it and I brought along one of my favorite scenarios. Do you want to see it?

I thought it would be very appropriate for this audience, because it has to do with racism. What would you do if you see someone criticizing a couple because they are of different races? We had done this in a white community and we got certain reactions and I got all of this hate mail saying, "Why are you making white folks look like racists? If you go to Harlem and gauge the reactions in an all-black setting, I'll bet there will be just as many racists." I said, "OK, we're going to go to Harlem. So, Josh, roll the tape.
(VIDEO of "What Would You Do?" segment)

Martin Luther King. What did he say? Our lives begin to end the moment we stay silent about things that matter. That's why it's so important that we sound the alarm and you know some of the scenarios that we do are kind of serious. Some of them are kind of fun.

I don't know if you saw the one we did on bicycle theft, guy stealing a bike at a park. We had a brand new bicycle, chained it to a pole and we had an actor stealing the bike. First, we did it with a white young man about 24 years old, with a hacksaw and wire cutters cutting the chain off the bike. We did it right along a jogging path where people are running and walking their dogs and pushing their baby strollers. When a white actor was cutting the chain and stealing, we told the actors if anybody asks you admit you are stealing the bike, because we didn't want them to think he had lost his key. So, when we did it with the white actor, people muttered something under their breath and shook their heads, but no one called 911.

Then we switched actors. Now we had an African-American young man — same dress, same age — with a hacksaw and wire cutters. Within four seconds, every time we did it, he was surrounded by a posse of folks who not only called 911, which they should have done with the other thief, but they're taking his picture with their cell phone and videos saying, "We got you now." They surrounded him. Even the black actor was like: "John, this is ridiculous." The white guy had gotten way with doing the same thing he was being reported for.

Then, as a final twist, we had a very attractive, young woman, co-ed, beautiful blond young woman, hair blowing in the wind, short-shorts, tight T-shirt, with the hacksaw and the wire cutters. Men helped her steal the bike. (laughter) They were falling all over each other trying to help her time and again. There was one middle-aged couple on their bicycles and the woman said to her husband, "Honey, she's stealing that bike." He says, "Yes, but she's a damsel in distress. She needs help." So he's pulling the bike off of the pole, and, of course, the actress is going along with it. She said, "You're so strong." He said, "Thank you. Thank you." Then, she asks, "Do you see any cops around." Now, he's an accomplice. He's looking for the police. I'm still wondering what the ride home with his wife must have been like after we told him it was "What Would You Do?"

But my favorite ones are the serious ones. And we did one "What Would You Do?" if you're walking down the street and the person in front of you collapses suddenly. You don't know if she could have fainted or maybe had a heart attack, but you don't know what to do. So, we did it outside Newark, New Jersey's train station at 8 in the morning, when people are in a hurry. Not only you may not want to get involved with someone who is hurt, and you have to decide whether to do that, you're maybe in a hurry to get to school or to work. So we did it first with a well-dressed businesswoman in her 40s. She was a stunt artist, so she knew how to fall

convincingly. So, she falls. And within seconds, time and again, people helped her right away. Wow, Newark, New Jersey, gets our big award for humanitarianism. Right?

Then we said, wait a minute, what if instead of this well-dressed, businesswoman, it's a homeless guy, older, elderly, dirty, smelly, disheveled, bearded and he's carrying a beer can. So we had an actor play that role. He's walking along and he collapses. Eight-eight people go by; 88 walk by and no one is stopping. People are stepping over him. One lady made the sign of the cross and kept walking (laughter). And we were about ready to say, "I guess if you're homeless, Newark is not such a nice place after all."

I was about ready to come out with the cameras and tell everybody it's the show. Before I could come out, we heard a tapping on the sidewalk of a walking cane and into the frame of the hidden camera comes this beautiful, African-American woman, who is struggling along because she has suffered a stroke. And guess what, she is homeless herself. And she stops.

She doesn't have a phone, of course, and so she's asking people going by, "Excuse me, do you have a cell phone to call 911 for this man?" He was white. She was black. Another 22 people go by and nobody is stopping. She, then, stumbles over and, we didn't expect this, but suddenly, she — we didn't know what she was going to do — she leans over to the man on the ground and she takes the beer can out of his hand and puts it in the trash can, as if to give him a little bit of dignity, thinking maybe, then, people will stop.

Eighteen more people go by and no one is stopping. She looks up to the heavens and makes a fist. We could tell, because the camera was right on her face. She was almost cursing God Himself as if saying, "God how can you allow this to happen?" Then she stumbled over again, and we could hear this because the actor on the ground was wearing a wireless mic, and she said to him, "Sir, I don't know your name, but my name is Linda Hamilton. And I'm going to call you Billy. And Billy, don't you worry my man. I'm going to stay here until help arrives, because I'm homeless myself, and I've walked in your shoes."

And then finally a woman stops. And by the way, most of the people who get involved in our scenarios are women. Ironically, when I asked her why she stopped, she said, "Well, I've seen your show and I promised my kids that if I ever saw anything I would be the one to step in." But in the excitement of all that we lost our hero: Linda Hamilton. We knew her name, but she disappeared. She walked away because we're having people sign releases and all that.

And then, we put the piece on the air. The morning after we aired "What Would You Do?, I got hundreds of phone calls and emails and Twitters, people saying, "Who was that woman? We want to help her," viewers like yourselves. They collected money for her and they created a Facebook page "Touched by an Angel; Touched by Linda Hamilton." And they raised $8,000.

So now we've got to go find her to give her the money. My producer spent two weeks out there, you know, at every train station, liquor store, homeless shelter, with her picture, saying, "Have you seen this woman?"

And, we found her.

My producer, said John, "You've got to come out here. You've got to interview her. Bring your laptop so you can show her the piece." So, Linda Hamilton — this homeless woman – and I sat on the church steps in Newark, New Jersey, and I showed her the piece. And she goes, "That's me on television?" And I said, "Yes. You caused quite a stir."

So, we got her the $8,000 in a bank account. We got her a place to live. We got her the medicine that she was supposed to be taking for her heart that she wasn't taking. The thing that made her most excited of all, we got her her own cell phone. She was jumping up and down like a 12-year-old with her first cell phone. And I said, "You're a hero, Linda. Now when you see something troubling, you can call 911."

She goes, "No way, John. No way. I'm no hero. Let me tell you what happened. I think God put me on that corner of that street on that day because he knew you were there with your 'What Would You Do?' cameras and he wanted to send people a message. And who better to deliver that message than someone who's walked in the shoes of the homeless." So, I leave you with that thought tonight. The next time you see something troubling or you witness injustice and that little voice in the back of your head says, "do something," remember the words and actions of this woman, Linda Hamilton, a woman who was homeless, who had suffered a stroke. She stopped and helped a man who was down, not because she was going to be on national television; she didn't know that. Not because she was going to get $8,000, a place to live, medicine and her own cell phone; she did not know that. As my mother Maria would say, her corazon, her heart, told her it was the right thing to do.

Thank you for having me here tonight. It's been a pleasure.