

True Heroes: Honoring Congressman Elijah Cummings and His Nephew, Christopher Cummings

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“When we’re dancing with the angels, the question will be asked: In 2019, what did we do to make sure we kept our democracy intact? Did we stand on the sidelines and say nothing?”

– Rep. Elijah Cummings

“Speak my mind, pour out my heart, love my soul.”

– Christopher S. Cummings

We all have heroes in our lives. That is true for us as much as individuals as it is for society as a whole. From the moment we are born, into our lives come individuals that we recognize as important to us for so many reasons. As we grow older and expand our self-awareness and our recognition-giftedness, we come to appreciate those who step into the very center of our lives and inspire us to grow, evolve, and expand who we are as well as all we do.

Over the last years, two individuals who have inspired me are Congressman Elijah Cummings and his nephew, Chris Cummings. I had the utter privilege of meeting the Cummings family, including Chris, at a special celebration dinner for a mutually beloved friend. I had already known the Congressman’s amazing giftedness and, at this dinner celebration, came to know and respect Chris deeply. Chris so obviously embodied and carried on the same values and sense of selfless otherness that were at the very heart of his Uncle Elijah’s life and service to our nation.

So sadly, in October of 2019, Congressman Cummings passed over from this life. And we lost his earthly presence to us in a time when our world needs the voices of social justice and human rights speaking out courageously and boldly above the snarling of every form of hate and discrimination. Our world has seen a terrifying resurgence of the addiction to power and domination that robs so many of what is their right to human decency, freedom, equality, and joy. Congressman Cummings is deeply missed and always will be.

Christopher is also deeply missed by his family, friends and so many. Horribly, in June of 2011, Chris lost his life when he was made the victim of a murderer who still has not been apprehended after all these years. Chris lost his life at his off-campus housing while an undergraduate at Old Dominion University. He was a pre-law student who loved and admired his Uncle Elijah’s pathways of personhood and selfless service. Chris wanted to follow in his uncle’s footsteps. He even was serving as a very special youth counselor for those in great need.

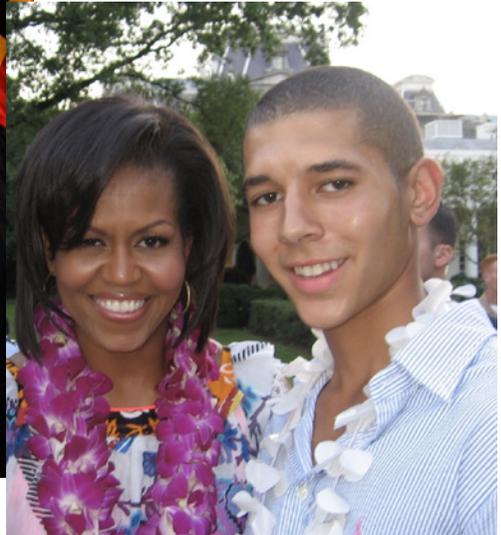
Without question, both the congressman and his nephew are two individuals who truly are heroes. With his nephew following in his footsteps of integrity and goodness, Congressman Cummings raised his voice ever and always to speak out against every form of evil and injustice. His voice raised up those who are bowed down. He truly gave flesh in his life to the words of faith and human goodness that he heard and himself spoke. In that same pathway, Chris Cummings was one who always expressed and embodied his love and respect for others with a fulness that is critically central to the experience of being human and humane. Chris always was there for his family and his friends. And he clearly knew he was being called to be a defender of the Truth and a promoter of the Good.

As we honor in this volume our Journal's 2020 theme to "reclaim our 20/20 vision of life," we need to let the presence of true heroes like Elijah Cummings and Chris Cummings to remain close to us. We need to let them inspire us. In our world today, it seems so much of the ability to "see things clearly" has become clouded by cataracts of hate and discrimination. We need to be awakened. We need to regain the clear vision of what it means to be truly human and humane. Indeed, it is so clear that we must let the living presence of individuals like Elijah and Chris to walk with us now in this life until that Day when we all shall be seated with them again at the Promised Eternal Table of Love and Peace.

Congressman Elijah Cummings 1951-2019



The photograph of Christopher Cummings is used with his family's permission.



**Christopher Cummings
1991-2011**