

There are two letters that make a lifter smile: PR. Personal records require time, dedication, and inspiration. We are only as great as we dare to dream. And there are some whose dreams positively impact others' self-discovery. C.J. Cummings is an African American person from South Carolina who opened a world to me that I didn't know existed. He is one of the greatest weightlifters of all time and grew up in Beaufort, South Carolina. Though he did not teach me to read, or computational mathematics, he did teach me to seek consistency, maintain dedication and set lofty goals.

Clarence Cummings Jr. was born in 2000. At 18 he had set four Junior World records in Olympic weightlifting. CJ is a team member of Beaufort weightlifting, training beneath Rayford Jones, a well-known strength and conditioning coach. For three years I have lifted two platforms down from CJ, sharing weights and phone stands. I strive for his level of performance repetition. I watch his approach to the barbell, his focus and response to critical feedback. I try to match his movement and apply his consistency to my own lifts. Mimicking successful behaviors of champions applies to academics as well as weightlifting. Consistent students are successful students, and it never hurts to copy the behaviors of people who are great at what they do.

CJ has maintained his dedication to Olympic weightlifting regardless of failure. In the last Olympics, CJ did not medal. He came back to the gym discouraged. After a few weeks, his dedication returned, and he trained harder and more focused than ever. It was inspirational to see a champion fail but then get back up and recommit. Realizing failures are a process for success is a painful lesson. Learning a new topic in any class is hard because students are expected to know the information soon after they are introduced to it. It takes time and failures to learn, and I learned that lesson in the gym.

Training for the Olympics is a lofty goal. There are many wins and losses between lifting a bar for the first time and lifting it in front of a worldwide audience. CJ has lofty goals and has inspired me to raise mine above the standard acceptable to most people. I want to be a better, smarter, stronger, more inspirational person. It's hard to want more out of life when so many people just want to get by with what they have. CJ inspires me to try harder each day.

It may be a stretch to link weightlifting with academics, but CJ Cummings is an inspiration to me regardless. He taught me consistency, dedication and to set lofty goals both in and outside of the gym. His dream of medaling in the Olympics has led the way for me to want more out of my life. CJ Cummings is an African American person from South Carolina who is a champion.