

## Noah Humphrey '20 Senior Story

Headline: Cultivating Kindness, Brotherhood, and Faith on Campus



“With everything I’ve gone through, the most important things to me are faith, having the mental resilience to go on, and having kindness,” says Noah Humphrey '20. “Being genuine goes a long way.” Kindness is a quality Humphrey is known for in the Whittier College community. He’s often seen holding doors open for his peers and offering a friendly hello to those he passes on the way to classes. He has strong convictions, and takes every opportunity he can to be a leader on campus.

Humphrey overcame many struggles on his path to Whittier. He comes from a large family that has had to move around a lot. In his senior year of high school, he slept on the couch with his schoolwork on one side and his football cleats on the other. The year before coming to Whittier, his family moved to South Central LA, where Humphrey was exposed to gang and racial violence.

“Even though I only lived a few blocks away from my high school, I had to take different routes to avoid the gangs,” he said. “These experiences made me more resilient.”

To escape his environment, Humphrey chose to live on campus and join the Poet football team during his first year at Whittier. Collegiate life presented its own challenges. Humphrey would have football practice until evening, and then he’d head over to Wardman Library to spend the rest of the night studying. He spent so much time pouring over his books in the same study room that some started to ask if the room was personally reserved for him.

Humphrey values the importance of being a role model for others, and it shows. He makes an effort to be a leader in any way he can, whether by helping his peers with their studies, or counseling them through their struggles, or serving as a spiritual advisor. He's the vice president for Black Men of Whittier College, an organization he helped form that seeks to provide a community and a place of belonging for black students on campus. He also took on the role of chaplain for his football team after his health—he has sickle cell trait—pushed him to stop playing.

“Making the decision to stop playing football was an extremely hard decision to make,” Humphrey said. “I was pushing myself and working hard, but I had to come to terms with the fact that God’s plan for me was different. So before I closed that door, I opened it to something else.”

For Humphrey, being a leader also means standing up when you’d rather sit down. This past Martin Luther King Jr. Day, the Westboro Baptist Church held a rally to protest Whittier’s support of LGBTQ+ students. Humphrey was driven to speak out; he delivered a speech advocating for diversity, equity, and inclusion.

“When times are harsh, you have to keep your faith and make the right choice,” reflected Humphrey on the Westboro protest. “I don’t forget the people who carried me forward and I don’t forget the people who are seeking justice, hope, and love.”

If Humphrey’s actions and words sound like those of a hero, it’s because to some, he is. Humphrey said the greatest act of kindness that’s been shown to him at Whittier came from one of his close friends, Connie Morales '20. Morales, who suffers from a congenital muscle-wasting disorder, wrote Humphrey a poem for his birthday entitled, “A Hero.” The poem talks about what a hero should be, using Humphrey as an example. Over their time at Whittier, Humphrey and Morales have bonded over the struggles in their lives that each of them have overcome.

“Connie helped me deepen my faith and recommit myself to God again,” said Humphrey. “She helped me resolve to do the things I’m doing today to be a better person.”

In addition to the friendships he’s made with people like Morales, Humphrey cherishes the brotherhood he’s formed with his fellow members from the Orthogonian Society. He considers his Orthogonian brothers as lifelong family, and said his decision to join them

is one of the best decisions he's ever made. Going through the process of becoming an Orthodoxian and participating in its members' fraternity has given Humphrey a greater understanding of the importance of community and what meaningful friendships should be. It's also allowed him to continue deepening his faith. He currently participates in a Bible study group with an Orthodoxian alumnus from the Class of 1963.

The mental, physical, and spiritual—Humphrey believes these are all interconnected, which is why he chose to major in religious studies with a minor in holistic care. It's also why he aspires to be a life coach, a pastor, and a chiropractor. He plans to earn a master's degree in divinity, and then go to medical school. In fact, he's already been accepted to Yale University's Master of Divinity program. Above all, Humphrey's goal is to set an example for the people in his South Central community.

"I owe a lot to that place," Humphrey said. "Even though I've only lived there a year, I feel like that is my home. I feel like I can always go back there."

Reflecting on his experiences at Whittier, Humphrey said one memory sticks out as capturing his feelings about the past four years, what he's learned about himself, and what he's learned about the person he wants to become. It was when Holocaust survivor Dr. Jacob Eisenbach came to speak at Whittier this past February for his 2020 Feinberg Lecture, *Surviving and Remembering the Holocaust: A Lesson on Genocide*. After Dr. Eisenbach's talk, Humphrey prayed with him for world peace.

"He told me I have such a light in my heart, and I told him to keep on doing the powerful work he's set out to do," said Humphrey. "Sharing that moment with Dr. Eisenbach showed me how important it is to stay true to yourself."