

Biography – Gary H. Collins

Family History

Gary H. Collins was born in Islip, New York in December 1965 to Earlene Guillary Collins (1940-2000) and Huwelett (“Hugh”) Berwell Collins (1937–1989).

Hugh Collins was born and raised in the southeast section of Washington, DC. Determined to fight his way into the American middle class, Collins, enlisted in the United States Air Force upon graduating from high school where he was trained as a jet mechanic. While stationed at Chenanault Air Force base in Lake Charles, LA, he met Earlene Guillary of Opelousas, LA. The couple wed in 1959 and then returned to Collins’ hometown of Washington, DC to look for employment and start their family.

Collins’ race proved to be an insurmountable obstacle to finding work in his chosen field. Prospective employers were impressed with his qualifications but upon learning the color of his skin, cancelled scheduled job interviews or otherwise refused to speak with him. Unable to find full-time work in his chosen field, Collins spent the next several years driving a cab to provide for his growing family.

By 1962, Collins was close to giving up on his dream to work as jet mechanic (and his fight to enter the middle class). During this time period, Collins picked up a public servant at the U.S. Capitol. His name was Hobart Taylor, Jr. Taylor was one of the thousands of young people who had given up more lucrative pursuits in the private sector to answer President Kennedy’s call to public service. Taylor was serving on the President’s Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity (later to become the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission).

After hearing Collins’ story, Taylor helped him find an opportunity at a then new company, Grumman Aircraft Engineering (later to become Grumman Aerospace and now Northrop Grumman), where he worked for more than twenty-five years.

This was an opportunity that enabled the Collins family to eventually enter the middle class. As a result of this experience, Hugh and Earlene Collins emphasized what would become the driving principle in the lives of all their four children: citizens have an obligation to serve others in their community and can dramatically change the lives of others through public service.

Career

Gary H. Collins graduated from the State University of New York at Buffalo in 1988 where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science. He received his J.D. from Vanderbilt University School of Law in 1991.

Upon graduating from law school, Collins joined the law firm of Winston & Strawn in Chicago, Illinois. His law practice, which focused on government investigations,

included a substantial commitment to providing pro bono legal services to the indigent. Collins also worked and coached with the creators of a little league team in Chicago's Cabrini-Green housing projects.

In 1994, Collins sought and earned the opportunity to serve as an Assistant United States Attorney at the U.S. Attorney's Office in Washington, DC. Hired by then U.S. attorney Eric H. Holder, Jr. (now the US Attorney General), Collins joined the battle to, among other things, prevent violence against women and children and to rid our neighborhoods of drugs and violence.

In 2002, Collins joined the law firm of Day, Berry & Howard (now Day Pitney) in the firm's government investigations practice group and was elected partner in 2006.

Collins has taught Investigations 7886 at UConn Law School since 2004. He served as a Managing Director and Core Compliance Leader (Exec.) at GE Capital in Norwalk, Connecticut from March 2007 through August 2013.

Collins has and continues to serve in leadership roles on a number of boards and nonprofit organizations, including the Council for a Livable World (www.clw.org). The Council is the nation's largest organization of its kind devoted to advancing a progressive agenda on national security and arms control issues. During his tenure as President of the Council, its ranks have grown to more than 40,000 members.

He is the founder of the Collins Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to providing support to students from under-represented and/or disadvantaged backgrounds to pursue higher education through its Power of One scholarship.