If I had to choose one word to represent Everette Taylor, it would be grit. If I had to choose a single characteristic that separates Everette Taylor from other technologists, I’d choose **determination**. From **birth**, Everette has embraced struggle. He was born to a single parent family. He was raised by his **mother**, Millicent, and never knew his father. He grew **up in housing projects** in Richmond Virginia. Everette never thought that he was poor or considered himself disadvantaged until he began working in a museum. Everette went into some detail about his **youth**: “You think gunshots are normal. You think drug dealing is normal. You think not having enough to eat is normal. So I never grew up thinking that I had it rough or I had it **hard**.”

**During** the beginning of his high school career, he started going to the library. He was fascinated with the computers but didn’t have a computer of his own. **When** he started working at the museum, he got to interact with privileged families, primarily white. While working at the museum, he realized that **there was** was a “whole nother world out there… I started to see white people for the first time. Just imagine like seeing white people on TV and seeing these people but never really integrating with them or interacting with them.” It was incredibly foreign to him to see people spending their money on nice cars or buying items at a gift shop. He began to research the unknown world, the world outside of the projects in **Richmond** on the internet.

For personal reasons, **Everette** lost his home with his mother, and was out on his own. He lived out of his car (which didn’t work) for his senior year of high school. He talked about how he sometimes went days, if not weeks without showering, and wearing the same clothes every day. This is where his entrepreneurial determination **manifested**. He began shoveling snow, then wiping windshields at local gas stations, then raking leaves, or doing whatever odd job he could find so that he could spend a night at a **motel**. Everette is and always was a people person. Towards the end of his **senior** year, he landed a minimum wage hourly marketing position at United Way. While working at United **Way**, he started up a marketing consulting **company** that focused on connecting 18-20 year olds to events at primarily 21 and older venues. His **marketing** company was then acquired, and from there he began to climb the **ranks**; eventually **becoming** both a Chief Marketing Officer, and a Chief Executive **Officer**.

**Everette** worked perpetually. He never stopped. He doubted himself constantly, **but** never held back from putting himself out there. He had a **passion** for understanding peoples’ viewpoints and creating marketing schemes that would perfectly relate to his target demographic using what he loved - **technology**.

Growing up, however, there are several major differences between Everette and myself. I **had** a very privileged upbringing. I grew up with an intact nuclear family (except for a divorce). I **didn’t** have to work at 14 to pay bills to make ends meet, **and** I had access to technology. My dad, a Computer Science professor, always made sure of that. Everette talked about how **difficult** it was to talk about technology with his peers, because they had no interest in it. **Everette** explained, “you’ve got to understand, when we started becoming teenagers, my friends started becoming drug dealers. My friends were caught up in other things that were street related They didn’t really worry about tech or anything like that.” I, to this day, talk to my dad about programming, technology, and anything in between regularly. My inner circle of friends are all developers, I had a very nurturing life to **technology**.

I **love** what I do, and it is apparent that Everette does too. He and I are both fascinated with modern technology, but from different angles. **Even** though I’ve never met Everette, we have a connection. We both like to make art, whether it be the art of writing out the HTML / CSS / Javascript that creates what’s on the screen, or the design of what’s on the screen. **We** also both grew as young adults in public libraries. I frequented the library when I was younger and have found it to be a great place to meet people of different backgrounds, and to gain perspective.

**Everette** demonstrated that achievement can be obtained by pure grit, as opposed to luck. He talked about how “growing up was actually pretty normal to me because when you grow up and struggle that’s all you know.” He has gone from sleeping in his car to a C-level executive in several companies within a single decade. There were some bumps along the road, but Everette demonstrated that adversity is beatable, and that success is a function of hard work and grit. I have been blessed with the life that I have, with the opportunities that I’ve been given, and I’m inspired by what this man has accomplished.