

*Attention to detail is often the difference between goodness and greatness.*

I have always been insatiably curious and thirsty for knowledge, novelty, and experiences that breathe life into me. I discovered early on that the intricacies and nitty-gritty aspects of something are what make it interesting and worth investing time into. Growing up, the details of life were mostly micro and confined to their respective topic. As I became an adult, I began to see the macro details that affect and influence our society and the people I encounter. Presently I'm facing an intersection of the micro details of my life and interests, and the macro details of my career and community. I see software engineering as the toolkit I need to dive in and merge one with the other to create a cohesive and beneficial environment for me and those around me.

I studied chemistry and biology in college with the intention of a career in renewable energy. Upon graduating in 2014 I worked in solar for a time, but I quickly found myself facing a lack of clear growth potential and the passion I'd felt in school. I subsequently moved to China in 2015 for a year to teach English and to gain some perspective on life and what I wanted out of it. My time there taught me how to embrace uncertainty and instability. It also showed me how technology has the power to connect the world and the people in it in ways I couldn't have understood until I was learning Mandarin through texting apps and teaching rap classes to kids across Beijing. In that new, unknown environment, life really was in the details. It was single-handedly the most transformative decision I've ever made, and it made me realize I have a fervor for being at the forefront of my own limits and engaging with new ideas.

Emboldened by my time abroad, I moved to California in 2017 to work in the emerging cannabis industry and enter a business sphere that I'm interested in helping mold. It has been an incredibly unique and fulfilling journey; that being said, I've seen firsthand the lack of diversity in cannabis companies and in the tech companies bridging the gap between them. Both these industries in the Bay Area are severely lacking in BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ representation among employees, executive leadership, and ownership. Where there is greater diversity there is still a stark lack of Black bodies and minds. I've also experienced the strain that comes with low-wage work and lack of job security in the cannabis/tech spaces; I was laid off twice in 2019 and struggled to find new work before COVID-19 shut the country down. Software engineering is an additional set of skills that I can use to address these access issues.

As a Black American it is also important to me that reparations and other measures be taken to lessen and eliminate the impact illegal cannabis and the War on Drugs has disproportionately had on Black people and other communities of color. I feel that, as a software developer, I can have a more direct impact on whichever company I work for and, moreover, my community. This program would afford me the opportunity to gain and develop important skills for life, help lessen the diversity gap, and advocate for other marginalized and underrepresented groups. For me it symbolizes empowerment, autonomy, and a chance to permanently elevate myself and those around me. I also see it as a clear, immediate, and actionable way to help Black people around the country, and for that you have my respect and gratitude.