

## **ONE PAGE: Why should I be accepted into the program?**

My introduction to coding was through the social media platform MySpace around 2006. I wanted to customize my page with a chosen background image, add special effects, and have a song play when people visited my profile. The way to do this was directly in the page's code, and there were online guides about where to put what. I'd never seen or really heard of coding at the time and I was fascinated enough to try my hand at making simple webpages using basic HTML and some CSS, and even coded my first resume as personal project.

I love creating and bringing to life something that exists only as an idea or a conversation. I love seeing something through from start to finish. I love collaborating with those that think differently than I do. I love seeing a problem or feature that needs tweaking and having the tools and knowledge to act. I see coding as an enormous toolkit that can be used in a plethora of ways, can be expressed through a variety of mediums, and is always fluctuating and changing. I also see it as a set of skills that will become necessary in the workplace over the coming years; schools around the country are beginning to include coding classes in the required curriculum for students of all ages.

I studied chemistry and biology in college with the intention of a career in renewable energy. Upon graduating I worked in solar for a time, but the experience left me facing a lack of clear growth potential and the passion I'd felt in college. I subsequently moved to Beijing, China in 2015 for a year to teach English and to gain some perspective on life and what I wanted out of it. That experience taught me how to face my fears of uncertainty and instability, and it showed me that I'm much stronger and more resilient than I gave myself credit for. 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. It was single-handedly the most transformative decision I've ever made, and I grew more in one year there than the previous 23 of my life.

Emboldened by my time abroad I moved to California in 2017 to work in the cannabis industry and enter a business sphere 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 and tech companies. Both these industries in the Bay Area are severely lacking in BIPOC and LGBTQ+ 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 last year and struggled to find new work before COVID-19 shut down the country.

In pursuing a career in software development I hope to improve my salary and employer value, find new ways to contribute to the cannabis tech space, and to open myself up for work in different industries and locations. As a Black American it is also important to me that reparations and other measures be taken to lessen 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 the 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.