

Good Morning. When I left the house in my dad's Explorer to run a quick errand on July 7, 2001 I had no idea I would return home hours later with my life completely changed and in left shambles. I'd like to ask that if you would be so kind as to close your eyes and attempt to visualize my experience. We were riding down 285 west near Riverdale Road, and I was sitting in the back right passenger seat, looking out the window thinking about some boy when we were struck from behind by a drunk driver. My step-dad yelled, "Hold on!" and I immediately felt myself engulfed in this amazing calm. I sat pinned in my seat by the belt, heard the glass shatter faintly, and watched the view from my window change from asphalt to sky and back again, after we hit the median wall. When we finally stopped rolling I saw my step-brother laying on the roof of the car, and

my step-dad and step-sister leaned over what was left of the dash, all while hanging upside down myself. It was as if we were thrown into a washing machine and tossed around like a dirty pair of socks. When I unbuckled my seat-belt, I too was on the roof, and crawled out of the car. When I got out, I noticed that we were all looking around to see if everyone was alright and didn't see Briton. Up until that moment, I was in a protective bubble of peace and at that moment my peace left me. I panicked and began to think the worst. When I finally found him, he was lying on the hot blacktop of the highway in the fetal position, with his eyes closed in a pool of his own blood. At that moment, I dropped to my knees and prayed. I had never been spiritual before or had any type of relationship with God, but that moment was the first time in my life that I'd ever

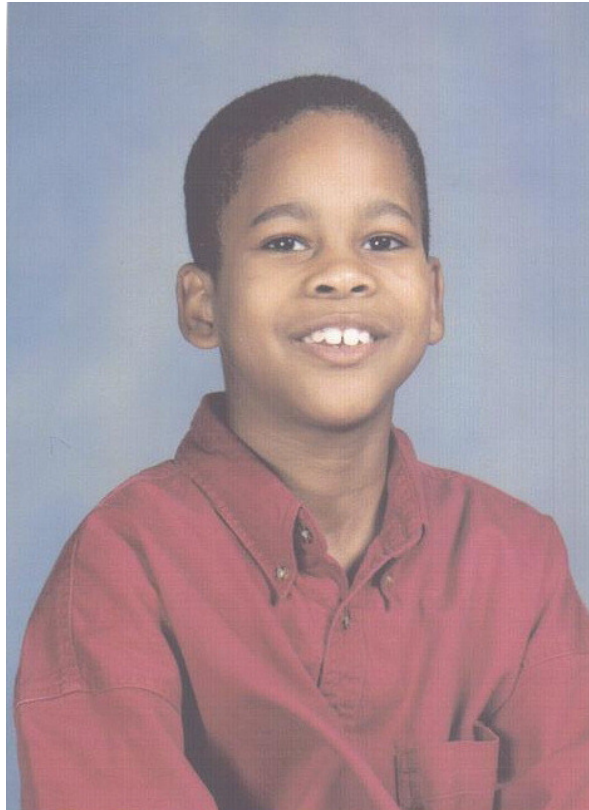
earnestly prayed to God about something. I prayed a selfish prayer. I asked God to spare my brother's life. I didn't care if he was a vegetable or paralyzed, all I cared about was him living. I was grabbed by a bystander who informed me that I was bleeding and was taken to an ambulance. When I was inside lying on a stretcher they informed me that I had sustained only a seatbelt burn and that I was fortunate to have survived a crash where the car was completely totaled. I rode all the way to the hospital pleading with God to spare my little brother. At the hospital I was left lying on a stretcher in the emergency room hall with a neck brace waiting for what seemed to be the longest time in the world when I heard my father crying out my name. I yelled to let him know where I was, and asked him how Briton was and he said exactly that, "he didn't make it." You may open your

eyes now. Let me ask what would you do if the only person who had been through half of your life struggles with you was snatched away in a instant? How would you handle seeing your mother slumped over in a wheelchair vomiting and broken down to nothing? How would you tell your best friend that the accident she saw on the news that night killed her play brother? How would you sleep when you got home that night? Would you, a fifteen year old climb into bed with your parents and sleep only out of exhaustion, only to wake again the next day all cried out? Would you get up the next morning and go church and find that the only respite for your despair could be found in God and dedicate your life to him? I dealt with all of these things and multitudes more. Ladies and gentlemen, I stand before you today as a survivor only because of God's

grace and mercy, but don't think that I don't miss my brother. I didn't get to see him graduate on what would have been his graduation this May. I didn't get to help him pick out a tux for prom, and I'll never see his children. It's a shame that some people take drinking and driving so lightly as it not only changes their lives, but others. Whenever someone drives drunk, no matter if they get caught or not, someone else's life is automatically put in danger. I ask that as you leave today, you make it a point, to rebuke that friend who wants to leave the party and insists that they are only buzzed not really drunk. Discourage that relative who you know has had too much to drink from driving home just now, let them know that whatever they have to do can wait. Most importantly, inspect your own behaviors and make an effort to ensure that you don't make

the same mistake as Jerome Parks did, because my life and the lives of numerous family members and friends had been changed forever by his decision to drink and drive. God Bless you.

Briton Hali Batchelor



Victim - Briton "Brit" Hali Batchelor (age 11)

Killed on July 7, 2001 in Clayton County

Brit spent his last 4th of July at Centennial Park, his favorite place to visit in Atlanta because of the fireworks and the fountain.

Other crash survivors:

Alene Batchelor (sister) Age 15

Tony Tunstall (stepfather) Age 37

Antonio Tunstall (stepbrother) age 15

Katasha "Shae" Walker (stepsister) age 9

Family was headed towards Tony's office. Offender had just got off work and was speeding and driving drunk and hit family from behind on I-285 near the Riverdale Road exit. Briton was ejected from the vehicle when the SUV flipped and slid. Brit was killed instantly from head trauma. The four survivors were transported to Southern Regional for their injuries.

Offender's Info.: Jerome Parks, EF-494555 Sentenced to 10 years

**Speaker Info: Alene Batchelor (crash survivor) now age 22
& assisted by her and Brit's mother, Lyteese Tunstall**

