



NEWSLETTER

MIC NEWS

July 2026

2027 MIC ANNUAL CONFERENCE

March 21st-25th, 2027

It Always Seems
Impossible Until It's Done

SAVE THE DATE



Celebrating Five Years of Leadership,
Community, and Impact



www.mincybsec.org



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:

IESHEA HOLLINS

Tell us about yourself.

Ask me who I am beyond my title, and the honest answer is that it is mostly more titles. I am a mother of two beautiful children, the second daughter of a pastor and a pastor's wife who lead Against All Odds Gospel Assembly in Monroe, Louisiana, and the second oldest of four girls with no brothers in sight. Most importantly, I am a child of God.

I have a heart for people, probably too much of one on some days. Outside of the work, I love music, traveling, trying new food, and being anywhere near water. Water is my happy place, even though I will be the first to tell you I am not the strongest swimmer. Before I moved to Dallas, I served as Minister of Music and Choir Director at my church, and I still love musical theater, a tambourine, a set of bongos, and any excuse to build a room where people learn while having fun.

What first sparked your interest in technology?

I was the kid who had to know how everything worked, especially anything electronic. I wanted to be an engineer because I loved creating things. Money was tight growing up, though, and you do not tear up perfectly good electronics in a Black household, so I learned to satisfy my curiosity from the inside without breaking a thing.

My father saw that gift early and told me "You need to become a "legalized hacker."" You see, he knew what I could do, and he wanted to be sure I stayed on the right side of the law. I was also fairly certain that if I ever landed in a cell, he would leave me there long enough to learn THAT lesson. So I learned to "investigate" the right way.

I went to college on scholarship as a music major, with computer science as my minor. Then Computer Science became my major until I realized I was far too curious and enjoyed talking far too much to sit still as a traditional programmer. I switched to Computer Information Systems, then taught myself cybersecurity and digital forensics, through trial, error, and a stubborn willingness to work problems other people were not ready to touch.



IESHEA HOLLINS



Why did you create Direnzic Technology?

When I decided to start Direnzic, I was a Senior Lead IT Program Manager at a telecom in Monroe. Talented people were graduating from Louisiana schools and leaving the state, never realizing strong technology careers existed right at home, so I helped lead a recruiting initiative that kept me on the road to campuses like Southern University in Baton Rouge.

On one of those visits, I heard about a man accused of a cybercrime who was publicly insisting on his innocence. This was the early 2000s, when digital forensics barely existed as a profession, and I could not stop asking myself one question: who understands the evidence well enough to defend him? A professor told me the school had just launched a grant-funded digital forensics curriculum and invited me to audit it. I said yes before he finished the sentence.

That case opened my eyes to a whole population of underserved people. If one person could be accused and left to fight from the wrong side of the bars, how many others could end up there, and who would be prepared to fight for them? That question became Direnzic, founded in 2008.

What has Minorities in Cybersecurity meant to your journey?

The people, first and always. The chance to meet them, learn from them, and mentor a few along the way. When I moved from Monroe to Dallas, Mary was one of the first people I connected with, and I have watched her work tirelessly to build a community she genuinely believes in. I am honored to be part of a space where professionals from underrepresented backgrounds can find relationships, knowledge, encouragement, and real opportunity.

What would you tell someone who feels too late, too nontechnical, or like they do not belong?

Cybersecurity is a vast field, with room for people who come from law, communications, business, project management, education, psychology, policy, investigations, and risk. The talent gap is real, with millions of roles sitting unfilled around the world. It is not a question of being too late or too nontechnical or not belonging. It is a question of understanding the field well enough to see where your strengths fit, then mapping the path from where you are today to where you want to go. The opportunity is there. Initiative and ingenuity are simply the price of admission, so do not let anyone else's narrow definition of this work convince you there is no place in it for you.

What is one piece of advice you have for people in the MiC community who are looking to make their own mark on the industry?

Do not wait for anyone else to validate your place in this industry. Cybersecurity is broad enough to hold a lot of different talents, perspectives, and paths, but you have to be intentional about finding where your particular strengths create value. Learn the field, understand the problems people are actually trying to solve, and build a bridge from what you already know to where you want to go.

Your mark will never come from trying to look or sound like everyone else. It comes from recognizing what you see differently, developing that gift, and finding the courage to keep showing up even when the people around you do not yet understand your vision. And do not confuse being underestimated with being unqualified. Sometimes you will have to build the room, create the opportunity, and prove the model yourself, and that is not a sign that you do not belong. It may be the very sign that you are the one meant to make the path visible for everyone coming behind you.

One more thing: take full advantage of this community. It is full of remarkable people, so build the relationships and the network, and do not just take from it. Figure out how to pour back into it. That is the part that pays off.



THE SEARCH FOR A CYBERSECURITY CAREER

BY K'DARIUS COOK

Applying five times a day. Recruiters ghosting candidates. Fake job postings. There are many aspects to the job search in the cyber field that makes candidates feel fatigued and abandoned. Even with certifications, degrees, and accelerated programs, a lot of people feel the pressure of the, what feels like, an oversaturated and manipulative job market. As someone who has also been through this and was almost on the verge of quitting all together, I need for you to keep fighting. I know that sounds cliché and something that some may not want to hear, but these sweet things in life come with a fight.

My journey began in 2023 when I joined MiC Talent Solutions as an apprentice in its very first cohort. I was completely new to cybersecurity, but I made a commitment to give everything I had to learn as much as I could so I could build the career I envisioned by the end of the program. Naturally, I embraced every opportunity to grow—learning about networks, security practices, cybersecurity terminology, and earning the free certifications that were available. Along the way, I also benefited from the mentorship, coaching, leadership development, and encouragement from the MiC community, which helped build my confidence and kept me motivated throughout the journey. With the technical training, hands-on support, career guidance, and professional network that MiC provided, I felt prepared not only to begin my job search, but to enter the cybersecurity profession with confidence.

Through the months on my job search, my journey almost came to a stop after receiving a job referral from a close friend of mine for a cyber position at Lockheed Martin. I applied for the position with his referral and even got in close with the hiring manager. The hiring manager and I would spend days talking about the position and my qualifications for the position thoroughly, I even made him laugh a couple times on calls as well. After spending 8 hours a day for 6 days studying all of the materials from the job posting, I went into the interview ready and fired up. I knocked the questions out of the park and even learned about cyber tools that were only used within the D.O.D. and blew the panel of interviewers away with the extent of knowledge I had for the position. All of that to say, I received an email 3 days later saying I wasn't chosen for the position and I felt crushed. More crushed than I had felt through any part of my cyber journey thus far.



K'DARIUS COOK



I stopped looking on LinkedIn for about a week, feeling sorry for myself and almost feeling as if LinkedIn itself was rigged or cursed. Ironically, it wasn't until I watched a movie that I didn't even plan on watching that made me get into my mind to not quit and to apply to a couple of more jobs before switching to some other career.

That movie was called *Bruce Lee: The Man and the Legend*. I know it sounds corny, but it's true. In the documentary, it said that in Bruce's very first fight, in the first round, he had gotten beat up so bad, he almost quit before he even landed a punch on his opponent. The thing that stopped him from quitting though was his master who had physically and mentally pushed him back into the ring. Bruce ultimately ended up winning this fight and found the love and rush for martial arts. Can you imagine if he would have quit? A guy that has been dead since the 70's who still gets brought up today because of his discipline and skills almost quit the one thing that made him who he was to the world. Right then and there, I knew I couldn't stop.

The following day I applied to 4 jobs and ultimately ended up getting hired by the last one I had applied to that day. I couldn't believe it, honestly. Ever since that day, there has been a callus on my brain that makes it more tough in the hard times. Knowing that I didn't quit gave me the confidence to go after so much in this life and I appreciate Bruce, and everything in me that didn't allow me to quit in that moment.

Please keep going. I know it is hard, but it'll be with it when you're living the life you desire. Also, I would like to give thanks to Ms. Mary. Without her, I wouldn't be in the position I'm in now.

Sincerely,

K'Darius Cook
MiC Talent Solutions Apprentice



MIC ANNOUNCEMENTS

CYBERSECURITY WORKFORCE INFRASTRUCTURE SUMMIT COMING SOON!

**CYBERSECURITY
WORKFORCE
INFRASTRUCTURE
SUMMIT**

Saturday, 19 September
9AM-12PM CT

Building
Community.
Strengthening the
Cybersecurity
Profession.

Register: bit.ly/MNCHubSummit

The graphic features a Venn diagram with three overlapping circles: a red circle at the top labeled 'EDUCATION - SKILLS DEVELOPMENT - APPLIED LEARNING', a yellow circle at the bottom left labeled 'LEADERSHIP - MENTORSHIP - CAREER SUSTAINABILITY', and a black circle at the bottom right labeled 'TALENT'. The center of the Venn diagram is labeled 'AN INTEGRATED CYBERSECURITY WORKFORCE ECOSYSTEM'. The MIC logo is also present.

The Cybersecurity Workforce Infrastructure Summit brings together employers, educators, workforce leaders, and community partners to explore how we build stronger, employer-aligned cybersecurity talent pipelines. Join us on September 19 as we introduce a new approach to workforce development.

bit.ly/MNCHubSummit

UP NEXT: THE MNC-CTC SEMINAR SERIES

MNC-CTC SEMINAR SERIES

INSTRUCTOR: QUINTANA PATTERSON

ONLINE COURSE

Cybersecurity for a Cause:
Protecting Your Mission

Date: July 1, 2026 Time: 1pm-3pm CT

Sign Up: bit.ly/mncctcseminars

The graphic features a circular portrait of Quintana Patterson, a woman with glasses and a purple scarf, set against a red background. The words 'ONLINE COURSE' are written vertically on both sides of the portrait. The MIC logo is also present.

The 5th installment of MNC-CTC Seminar Series kicks off on August 08, 2026.

Join us for our next session,
**"Cybersecurity for a Cause:
Protecting Your Mission,"** featuring
guest speaker Quintana Patterson.

bit.ly/mncctcseminars

APPLICATION STILL OPEN

MNC-CTC is still accepting applications for its September cohort. Don't miss your opportunity to begin your cybersecurity journey this fall.

[Apply at mnc-ctc.com](https://mnc-ctc.com)