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Samkelisiwe
Mahlanze



Here to be Formidable

Building a platform for women in technology.

Samkelisiwe Mahlanze's journey into technology was shaped by circumstances that could easily have sent her life in a different direction. Today, she is using what she has built to help other women find their place in technology and cybersecurity.

Samkelisiwe was just 10 years old when she lost her mother during the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Still a child herself, she had to grow up quickly, taking responsibility for her younger sibling while dealing with grief, homelessness and an uncertain future.

The challenges continued into her teenage years. A teenage pregnancy and subsequent separation from her daughter left Samkelisiwe dealing with isolation, depression and shame while still trying to find her own direction.

Those experiences are an important part of her story, but they did not determine where it would end. Samkelisiwe began rebuilding her life and creating

opportunities that had once felt out of reach. That journey eventually led to the establishment of Global Cybersecurity Technology and Innovation (GCT), an organisation focused on technology solutions and creating pathways for women wanting to enter or transition into technology and cybersecurity.

For Samkelisiwe, those two ambitions are closely connected. "I wanted to create opportunities for myself. I continue building it because I want to create opportunities for other women in technology."

Through GCT, she provides mentorship, practical guidance and support to women navigating an industry that is still widely perceived as male-dominated. She wants more women to recognise that technology and cybersecurity are spaces where they can build careers and eventually become leaders themselves.

Her understanding of what it means to need an opportunity comes from experience. Having faced rejection and periods when her own future felt uncertain, Samkelisiwe knows that ambition does not always come with access to the networks, guidance or the confidence needed to move forward.

That has also influenced how she measures success. Building GCT matters, but so does being able to help another woman take her next step. The women she mentors and supports have become an important measure of the impact she wants to create.

There is a personal reason behind that work. Samkelisiwe does not want other women to believe that difficult circumstances have permanently determined what is possible for them.

Her own experience has shown her that changing direction is possible, even when life has not followed the path you expected.

Today, the organisation Samkelisiwe initially built to create opportunities for herself, has become a way of creating them for others. Through GCT, she is helping more women see a future for themselves in technology and cybersecurity, and making the path into the industry a little easier for those coming next.

**Your
story
matters**

