Omad: My learning journey into cybersecurity

My name is Omad, I'm a corporate operations engineer at Google.
All I do is solve problems.
Googlers have problems, they need somebody to talk to, they usually talk to us.
If you asked me at 18 years old where I'd be now, I would have never told you I'd be working as a security engineer.
I would have told you I'd be working in a prison or I'd be working as a police officer in some township and just working a regular 9 to 5 shift.
After high school, I went on to work at Trenton State Prison, which is the only maximum security prison in New Jersey.
It was very stressful, but at the same time it's what I wanted to do at the time, or at least, that's what I thought I wanted to do at that time.
Five years after becoming a correction officer, I took the test again to be a sheriff's officer.
And on the last day of that academy, I decided this wasn't for me.
I was tired of being on my face doing pushups, I was tired of being yelled at.
I went home and I did what everybody else would do, do a Google search.
And I saw one for Google and it was a residency program, it was at the top of the list and I applied to it as a joke.
I even told my friends at the time, I'm just going to apply this, I'm not going to get in.
I had no reference, no connections, I knew nobody that worked at Google.
And within a couple of days a recruiter reached out to me, she said, "I think you're a great fit, you're a career changer.
I like your application, I like your resume, I think you'd be a great fit."
All the interviewers liked my background, they liked that I was self taught.
A lot of interviewers were able to relate to me.
They said, "Hey, I did the same thing."
From there, I was offered the job and I started my career.
When I was in orientation, somebody right next to me was actually the valedictorian of Princeton.
Here I am with no college degree, no exposure, no work experience, and I'm in the same company.
For career changers, what you have that other people don't have is a different mindset.
You're coming from experience outside of the technical space that you can transfer into the technical space.
Don't forget that we all have skillsets that can help you in the field.
That's what employers are looking for, that's what hiring managers are looking for.
One thing I learned as a correction officer is how to assess risk.
Every situation is different, just like the security space. Every risk is different. Every vulnerability is different. Every threat is different.
You can teach somebody tech, but you can't teach them a life of skills outside of tech.
If I were to go back and tell my 18 year old self one piece of advice, it would be, don't be scared, do it.

A career in cybersecurity is very fun.
It's very interesting.
It will work your brain.
It changed my life, it'll change yours as well.

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