

## Diverse and Dedicated Summer '18 interns — the most inclusive yet — bring varied talents to their industry training.

**Y**VONNE JOHNSON, a United States Marine Corps veteran and aspiring costume designer who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom in Kuwait and Iraq, once had an entry-level job at a workwear manufacturing company whose employees would fly into a tizzy at a perceived emergency.

"You're making pants, people," Johnson recalls thinking. "I've been shot at in the desert."

This summer, the mother of two is working in an environment that better reflects the practices she picked up in the military, such as time management, adaptability and teamwork. Under the auspices of the Television Academy Foundation's summer internship program, she is interning at Terry Gordon Associates. From that base, she's observing top costume designers and other costume workers at work, and spending time at costume houses and on sets.

"I want a versatile career in costumes; I didn't know about television till I came out here," says Johnson, thirty-five, who's entering her second year of a three-year MFA theater design program at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. "I wanted to know what goes on behind the scenes. You see the finished project, but how do you make that happen? I get to come out here and see the reality."

Johnson is one of fifty-three university undergraduates, grad students and recent graduates chosen for the Internship program, which offers eight weeks of on-the-job training in numerous aspects of television, from animation to scriptwriting.

The internship program elicited 1,822 applications from more than 300 schools nationwide. Three participants are international students, from China, Turkey and Colombia. Overall, 57 percent are ethnically diverse, and 74 percent are female.

"The internship program is a core and critical initiative of the Foundation," notes executive director Jodi Delaney. "This year's intern class is the most diverse and inclusive to date, underscoring our commitment to provide industry access, opportunity and education to students from all backgrounds."

The interns attend a networking event and a professional development speaker series on such topics as brand building. Some hang out in smaller groups. "There's a group interested in writing — we'll get together and exchange ideas," says Camille Padilla-Diffoot, a development intern working at production and distribution company Entertainment One. "It's important for me to get to know them — we're the same age and share a passion."

Padilla-Diffoot, twenty, is a junior at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez, with a major in English literature and minors in writing and communications and film production. Because of last year's hurricane Maria, she spent her spring term at New York University, which offered a hurricane assistance program to select students.

At Entertainment One, she has primarily been reading pilot scripts and giving feedback. "I've really enjoyed that," says Padilla-Diffoot, who wants to produce her own sitcom one day. "They want to hear my opinion: Do I like it? Do I see it as a series? Doing this helps me learn what people like and helps me filter my own ideas, to see what works and what doesn't."

Padilla-Diffoot learned of the

Yvonne Johnson



Camille Padilla-Diffoot



Born Wells



Foundation program when she was researching internships. Born Wells, on the other hand, came across an ad on Facebook — just two days before the deadline. Having recently graduated from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge as a mass communication major with a concentration in journalism, Wells is now a digital entertainment intern at photo agency Getty Images.

A content creator who wants to tell stories on video, primarily on social media, Wells, twenty-two, is working in Getty's studio

department. He tracks Getty photo performance and user engagement on social media and also creates videos.

Besides the tracking software he's learned to use, "[staffers] work with other helpful office tools," Wells says. "They've taught me how to work more efficiently, how to get more things done in a day. They want everything to be premium, visually interesting, and for me to figure out cool ways to do things and enhance the videos."

He was surprised at how open and encouraging the work environment has been. That acceptance extends to a highly personal element: Wells is the Foundation's first declared transgender intern. When applying for the internship, though, "I didn't say, 'I'm transgender.' But I've definitely talked to people about being transgender at home; at home, I usually don't mention it. It's more normalized here."

Being transgender, Wells adds, gives him a unique perspective on the world and helps him get people to open up when he interviews them for videos. "We're all human beings, and we're all trying to tell our stories in as authentic a way as possible," he says. "Whatever my skills are, I want to amp them up and make a difference."

The internship has assisted the amping. And Wells says, "This is my opportunity, my entry point to the industry I want to be in. I make a gratitude statement about it every day." —Libby Slate

The Television Academy Foundation is seeking host companies for virtual reality and scriptwriting interns, and welcomes gifts to expand the program and increase support for underserved students. To learn more, contact Karla Kitchel, senior director of strategic partnerships and external relations, at [kitchel@televisionacademy.com](mailto:kitchel@televisionacademy.com).