

Micah Watson

2nd Year | Drama, African-American and African Studies

Rising Third-Year Arts Award Proposal

Black Entertainment Television Networks Internship

Stories are important. Acclaimed Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche said that, "The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story." The stories told about a people could influence the way that we think about that group and even change their entire trajectory. Take, for instance, the once common false narrative of the biological inferiority of Africans as a justification for enslavement. We must, therefore, be very intentional about the stories that we choose to tell. I have chosen to tell stories about my people—it is both my passion and my duty.

As an African-American and African Studies major, I have the opportunity to delve more deeply into the complexities of Blackness and am compelled to share my knowledge and give voice to the voiceless. As a playwright, director, actor, filmmaker, and blogger, I find art to be the most effective and fulfilling means by which to tell such stories.

I hope to use my future career as a screenwriter and director to tell stories about and for peoples of the African Diaspora. In order to effectively convey narratives, I find it important to work and study under the tutelage of those who are already doing so on a large scale. Therefore, during the summer of 2016, I plan to intern with Black Entertainment Television Networks. As a Programming Intern, I will have the opportunity to create original programming, act as an on-set production assistant and study with the Writing Team. I will be able to be a part of the creative process of the television industry from beginning to end. Specifically, I will be under the tutelage of Senior Vice President, Connie Orlando in New York, New York. It is important that I learn the systems of the television and film industry so that, in the future, I will know the best ways to share my art.

Because BET does not cover housing costs and the cost of living in New York is so high, I will need assistance in order to take part in this internship. The Miller Arts Scholars Rising Third-Year Award would be extremely helpful with housing, travel, and food expenses. Additionally, not having to work another job while also interning would provide me more time to work on personal projects including plays that I am writing and my blog.

In order to cover or offset my living expenses and to be able to concentrate more fully on this learning opportunity, I am requesting a Rising Third-Year Arts Award:

Budget:

- Apartment housing with meal plan at New York University (8 weeks)- \$4,100
- Travel costs to and from Wichita, Kansas (hometown)- \$600
- Total living expenses: \$4,700

In his essay “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” Langston Hughes expresses the importance of Black artists approaching their work with both passion for our people’s struggle and with a high skill level. Through my coursework and personal projects at the University I feel that I have and will continue to display my passion for telling the stories of African-Americans. Through this internship with Black Entertainment Television Networks, with the help of the Rising Third-Year Award, I will be able to hone the skills necessary to share my work with larger audiences.

Timeline:

- March 4th and 5th, 2016: Internship with Black Entertainment Television Networks and Jessie Collins Entertainment, BET Honors (Awards Show)
- March 2016: Receive confirmation and specific logistical information about internship
- June 2016-August 2016: Participate in internship with Black Entertainment Television Networks
- Fall 2016: Maintain working relationship with contacts at Black Entertainment Television Networks
- Spring 2017: Present Awards Outcome Presentation for the University community