



INTERNSHIP program

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TELEVISION ACADEMY FOUNDATION LAUNCHES NEW DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION UNSCRIPTED INTERNSHIP PROGRAM FOR LOS ANGELES-AREA COLLEGE STUDENTS

Leaders in Reality Television Establish \$1 Million Endowment to Promote Inclusion

Applications Open April 7, 2021

(NOHO ARTS DISTRICT, Calif. – Jan. 26, 2021) – The Television Academy Foundation today announced the official launch of its new Diversity and Inclusion Unscripted Internship Program for Los Angeles-area college students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds.

The program was established with personal donations totaling \$1 million from five leaders in reality-based television: **Cris Abrego**, Chairman of the Americas, Banijay, President and CEO, Endemol Shine Holdings; **Jim Berger**, co-founder and Chairman of High Noon Entertainment and Strategic Advisor, ITV America; **Rasha** and **Stephanie Drachkovitch**, co-founders and Co-CEOs of 44 Blue Productions; and **Jonathan Murray**, co-founder of Bunim/Murray Productions.

“About two years ago, Jon Murray first called me to talk about the lack of diversity in unscripted TV; and after talking with him at great length, we decided to do something about it and hopefully make a lasting difference within our industry,” said Cris Abrego, who was recently elected chair of the Television Academy Foundation. “So today we are thrilled that other unscripted leaders have joined us and the Television Academy Foundation to launch this unprecedented new internship program designed to give underrepresented groups an opportunity to work in the reality TV business. As a Latino kid who grew up just outside of Los Angeles, I know firsthand how important it is to get that first break and to learn directly from those who are developing and producing unscripted series at the top studios in this town.”

“Expanding inclusivity within the industry means we have to support those aspiring students who may not have the means or connections to fulfill their career goals in television,” said Jonathan Murray, vice chair of the Television Academy Foundation, who, with Abrego, spearheaded the fundraising for this initiative. “This program will prioritize internship opportunities for local students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds that may ultimately lead to full-time employment. Now that the program has been established, we look forward to expanding the endowment with the support of additional reality television leaders.”

Five students will be selected by Television Academy members and the Foundation’s board of directors to participate in the program each year. Eligible students from Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, Ventura and San Bernardino counties may apply for the 2021 Diversity and Inclusion Unscripted Internship Program from **April 7-May 5, 2021**. For more information, visit [TelevisionAcademy.com/internship/unscripted](https://www.televisionacademy.com/internship/unscripted).

Co-Founding Donors:

Cris Abrego is Chairman of the Americas, Banijay, and President and CEO, Endemol Shine Holdings. He leads operations in North America and Latin America for the world’s leading content producer and distributor with a diverse portfolio of companies that are behind hit television formats including *Lego Masters*, *Keeping Up With the Kardashians*, *Big Brother*, *MasterChef*, *Wipeout*, *The Real Housewives of Atlanta*, *Below Deck*, *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, *The Biggest Loser* and *Utopia*.

Jim Berger is Chairman of High Noon Entertainment and Strategic Advisor for ITV America. He is a Colorado-based show creator, writer and producer with an extensive list of credits including Netflix’s *Southern Survival*, HGTV’s *Fixer Upper* and *Good Bones*, TLC’S *Cake Boss*, Discovery’s *Dude* and *You’re Screwed*, Food Network’s *Ayesha’s Home Kitchen*, Animal Planet’s *Dr. Dee*, Discovery En Español’s *Mexicánicos*, and Nat Geo Wild’s *Dog: Impossible*. Berger has broad oversight over the company’s development slate and its current productions, including 15-plus television series and specials for more than 10 networks.

Rasha Drachkovitch is co-founder and Co-CEO of 44 Blue Productions, a leader in nonfiction programming. Drachkovitch’s creative vision has taken the company from its original roots in sports and action-adventure programming to the exploration of mass incarceration with the critically acclaimed, long-running MSNBC prison docuseries *Lockup* to A&E’s two-time, Emmy-nominated *Wahlburgers*, produced in association with Mark Wahlberg and Donnie Wahlberg, and genre-

busting, first-responder documentary series *Nightwatch*, produced in association with Dick Wolf.

Stephanie Drachkovitch is co-founder and Co-CEO of 44 Blue Productions, a Red Arrow Studios company. During stints as senior vice president of development for Warner Bros. Telepictures and Disney's Buena Vista TV unit, Drachkovitch developed primetime and syndicated reality programs including *The Bachelor*, *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* and *Ellen*. Her experience has helped shape 44 Blue's diverse slate from E!'s top-rated *Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry* and Oxygen's GLAAD Award-winning *Strut*, produced in association with Whoopi Goldberg's One Ho Productions, to the syndicated Emmy-nominated *Family Court* with Judge Penny; OWN's Gracie Award-winning *Married to the Army: Alaska*; and true-crime series *Twisted Sisters* for Investigation Discovery, produced in association with Khloé Kardashian.

Jonathan Murray

As co-founder of Bunim/Murray Productions, Jonathan Murray is widely credited with helping to usher in the modern reality television genre with his late partner, Mary-Ellis Bunim, when they launched *The Real World* on MTV in 1992. Murray has executive produced some of the industry's most popular unscripted television shows including *Project Runway*, *Keeping Up With the Kardashians*, *The Challenge*, *The Simple Life*, *Starting Over*, *Family or Fiancé* and *Making the Band*. He has won two primetime Emmy® Awards, one for *Born This Way*, a series documenting the lives of young adults with Down syndrome, and the other for the documentary *Autism: The Musical*. His most recent documentary titled *Transhood* premiered on HBO in November 2020.

The Diversity and Inclusion Unscripted Internship Program was envisioned in 2017 with initial gifts from Abrego and Murray to create a talent pipeline for reality television. Jim Berger and Stephanie and Rasha Drachkovitch joined Abrego and Murray as founding donors of the program later that year.

In 2018 the Foundation partnered with the California State University Entertainment Alliance, an initiative that aims to provide a competitive edge to CSU students entering the entertainment industry by removing some of the financial and structural roadblocks encountered while trying to gain experience and establish a career in the business, to conduct a pilot of the program. Through this partnership, nine local college students were recruited for two pilot seasons of the internship program in 2019 and 2020.

About the Television Academy Foundation

Established in 1959 as the charitable arm of the Television Academy, the Television Academy Foundation is dedicated to preserving the legacy of television while educating and inspiring those who will shape its future. Through renowned educational and outreach programs, such as [The Interviews: An Oral History of Television Project](#), [College Television Awards](#) and [Student Internship Program](#), the Foundation seeks to widen the circle of voices our industry represents and to create more opportunity for television to reflect all of society. For more information on the Foundation, please visit TelevisionAcademy.com/Foundation.

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Cris Abrego.



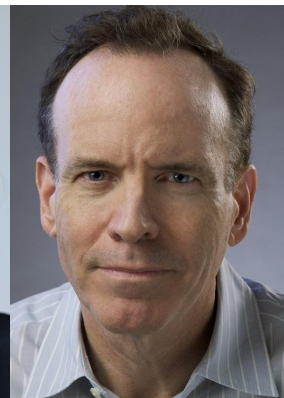
Jim Berger



Rasha Drachkovitch



Stephanie Drachkovitch



Jonathan Murray



Founding Donors with interns from 2019 pilot program for the Television Academy Foundation's Diversity and Inclusion Unscripted Internship Program.

(left to right) Interns William Walker Jr. and Daniel Rivas; Cris Abrego, chairman of the Americas, Banijay, and chair of the Television Academy Foundation; intern Caroline Buendia; Stephanie Drachkovitch, Co-CEO of 44 Blue Productions; Jonathan Murray, co-founder, Bunim/Murray Productions and vice chair of the Television Academy Foundation; and interns Deborah Ochei and Humberto Rivas at the Television Academy's Saban Media Center in 2019. *(Photo by Mark Von Holden/Invision for The Television Academy/AP Images)*