



J. Maureen Henderson Contributor

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## Internships Aren't Worth It -- Here's Why

After reading a damning recent [New York Times piece](#) about perma-interns who drift from one unpaid post to another through their twenties, you should, like me, be asking yourself why college students and young grads are still buying into the notion that internships are the best way to launch their careers. Here are four reasons the internship era needs to end:

### **The work doesn't help you build useful skills**

Sure, we all know the jokes about making Starbucks runs or fetching the boss's dry cleaning, but even employers that boast about giving their interns useful, career-related skills aren't necessarily providing challenging tasks that will help young workers grow. Take a gander at [affidavits filed by Gawker](#) as part of a lawsuit brought against them by former unpaid interns. Tell me that the average college student doesn't already know how to "crunch numbers for fashion week, which consisted of counting the number of models of color who appeared in the fashion shows..." or how to "review and find relevant blogs, and how to research online to find interesting ideas from which the editors could possibly craft a post" and explain to me how practicing such basic numeracy and research tasks enhances an intern's skill set and future employability, no matter what brand they did it for.

### **Your rights (and your well-being) don't matter**

Maybe you've heard about [the case of Lihuan Wang](#)? Wang was a unpaid intern whose sexual harassment suit against Phoenix Satellite Television was dismissed when the US District Court for the Southern District of New York found that she couldn't bring a claim under the New York City Human Rights Law because she was an unpaid intern and not an actual employee of Phoenix. The lack of regulation around internships means that employers have little incentive to provide comfortable working conditions for their interns. For example, it took summer intern Moritz Erhardt *dying* of a seizure toward the tail end of a

grueling internship with Bank of America for the company [to pledge to examine working hours and work-life balance for entry-level staffers](#).

### You probably can't afford it

While internships in tech or big finance are [often well-compensated](#), good luck getting a pay check in a creative field. Increasingly, access to entry-level work goes to those with deep enough pockets to toil for [a dollar an hour at Conde Nast](#). With the average student loan debtload at graduation hovering around \$25K, many college grads simply lack the means to take on a full-time unpaid internship without outside financial help. [This means the signaling credential of name-dropping a big media company or fashion house is one that, increasingly, only the scions of the upper class – vs. the best and brightest, regardless of finances - can claim](#). A list of prestigious internships on your resume now says less about your skills and more about your socioeconomic status.



(Photo: Spencer Platt/Getty Images)

### Your internship won't lead to a job

Perhaps most damning of all is the reality that even if you do land an unpaid internship that burnishes both your skills and your resume and if you're willing and able to make the financial and lifestyle sacrifices it entails, there's no guarantee it will lead to a full-time position – in fact, it most likely won't. The NYT piece cited above is rife with anecdotes about interns on their third and fourth placements with nary a job offer in sight. As [The Atlantic reports](#), college students who worked unpaid internships were only a measly 1.8% more likely than those who had never interned to receive job offers upon graduation and their salary offers were actually lower than those who had spent their college years working at the campus bookstore, volunteering at a local animal shelter and starting their own plus-size fashion tumblr instead of itemizing pieces of photoshoot jewelry in the basement of the *Marie Claire* office.

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