

# Kerry D. Johnson II

Gilman International Scholarship  
Alumni Ambassador  
Costa Rica, 2017



*“The Gilman Scholarship affirmed the sentiment that representation matters and profoundly impacted my humanity by tethering my education to my ancestral background.”*

Kerry completed an 8-week intensive Spanish and cultural immersion program at Universidad de Costa Rica during the summer of 2017. Upon his arrival in Costa Rica, Kerry consumed Latin American, Spanish-speaking media via various platforms to strengthen his ability to communicate while abroad. One common denominator rang throughout his experience of with these different platforms: a lack of diversity in these spaces. While visiting Limón, Kerry engaged in conversations with Afro-Latinos and Afro-Latinas. This rich cultural experience expanded his appreciation for the Spanish language and the profound reach of his ancestral background.

Kerry receiving the Gilman Scholarship served as the inspiration behind the Study Abroad Access Initiative, a partnership between the University of Memphis Center for International Education Services, TRiO Programs at the University of Memphis and the Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change. The basis of this partnership is to encourage student populations that are traditionally underrepresented in study abroad programs to participate in international education experiences by eliminating financial barriers.

Kerry currently works in broadcast media as a Digital Sales Coordinator for a local news network. He intends to pursue a master's degree in Global Media and Culture.

- Received the Gilman Scholarship while attending the University of Memphis
- Honed Spanish language skills via advanced Spanish courses at Universidad de Costa Rica
- Chose a career in media to expand awareness of the Black experience on an international scale

**20** YEARS  
with Gilman

