

# TELEVISIONARY

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCER DENISE HENDRICKS PICTURED EXACTLY THE CAREER SHE HAS, AND SHE LOVES EVERY JAM-PACKED DAY.**

WRITTEN BY KATIE GRANT

Denise Hendricks always wanted to work for Oprah. She still has a book she made during her senior year of high school in which she pasted pictures of where she wanted to work. She wanted to go to Florida A&M University, which she did. She wanted to work at CNN, and she did. The book also contained a picture of Oprah—and Hendricks became a producer on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* for five years. “It was like graduate school for television,” she says.

In case you’re wondering, no, Hendricks never told master maniferter Oprah about that vision. “Everything in that book happened,” Hendricks says. “It’s crazy.”

Hendricks is now the executive producer of *The Katie Phang Show* at MSNBC. Her favorite part about the job is feeling like she’s a part of history, informing people about what’s going on in the world.

“I’m part of an organization that values truth, getting to the truth and telling the truth,” she says. “I think that is the most rewarding part of it, even though sometimes it can feel daunting and heavy.”

How does she feel about the pressure of producing live TV?



Hendricks field producing for CNN/HLN in 2019.

"I love, love, love the energy of it," she says. Here is how she applies her energy on a typical show day:

### Morning

*The Katie Phang Show* airs on Saturdays at noon Eastern time on MSNBC. On the show day, I'm up around 5:30 a.m. I set an alarm, but I'm usually up before that. I have to settle myself when I wake up. I usually read scripture, meditate and pray a little bit to center myself and get ready for the day. I'm a big water drinker, and I try to get in 100 ounces a day. So once I come downstairs, I'm drinking my water, sitting at my desk plugging away at getting the show ready.

I go over the final plans for the show, make sure the guests we have booked are ready to go, the segment producers' scripts are in, and check if any last-minute or major breaking news happened overnight or early that morning.

At about 7:30 a.m., my son, Luke, wakes up, and that's a good break for me since I've been going for a couple of hours. I stop and cook breakfast and make sure he's good to go. Then I start getting dressed so I can go in to the office in D.C.

I commute to the NBC bureau in Washington, D.C., from 8:30 a.m. to about 9:15 or 9:30. I listen to our network and sometimes to our competition, the other cable news networks. I flip around to see what everybody else is doing.

Once I get in to the office, from 9:30 to 11:45 a.m., I make sure the script is ready, see what needs to change, and make tweaks according to what a guest might have tweeted out, for example.

### Afternoon

I'm usually in the control room about a half hour before the show starts. I like to get in early because I am talking to people in two or three different





Hendricks with son Luke on vacation.

locations. Our setup is very different because I'm in Washington, D.C., in a control room, a good portion of my team is at 30 Rockefeller Center in New York, and my host, Katie Phang, is at the Telemundo NBC studios in Miami.

I have my headset on and I like to talk to the director to see if she has any questions about graphics we're using, anything special we have in the show, or something we're monitoring that might happen during the show. I like touching base with the production and the crew.

We start the show at noon. If at 12:05 something happens and our senior executives say, "This is happening; we need to get this in the show," then that's

when my wheels will start turning. I'm in the control room, and everything is crazy.

We'll try to get a guest on the show to report on whatever the breaking news is. We need to make sure everything we have is right, and prep our anchor. Sometimes we'll get it in right at that moment as long as it's vetted and everything is cleared. Otherwise, if it's still a little shaky, I'll wait till the commercial break.

After the show, we have a virtual post meeting. We go over what we liked about the show and ask what we can do better next time. We talk about what we're going to do next week. That meeting is 10 to 15 minutes.

After the debrief, I do administrative tasks and check in with my booker and the host about things we're thinking about for the weeks ahead. Then I go home.

### Evening

When I get home, I might take my son to the pool in our neighborhood. Or I'll have a relative take him to his soccer game, and I'll meet them there.

Dinner is around 6:30 p.m. Sometimes we go out and sometimes I cook. Then we watch a little TV. We're big on movie nights. Saturday is usually movie night.

I try to get Luke to bed around 8:30 or 9 p.m. We have a bedtime routine because he's very structured. We usually do some schoolwork, even on the weekends. Then he takes a bath and we read a story. Then it's lights out.

My nighttime routine is to shower and get ready for bed. I try to read at least 10 pages of a book a night, so I'll read if I'm not deliriously tired. I say a little prayer before I go to sleep and then I go to bed. ■