

Episode 0: Welcome to Grad-Post!

Welcome to the inaugural episode of Grad-Post! I'm your host, Brian S. Mitchell, and we're here to talk about life before, during, and after graduate school, and whether an advanced degree is right for you. That's a lot to cover! I'll draw upon my experiences as a graduate dean and research mentor, as well as my network of students, colleagues, and experts to bring you the most complete information on graduate education that I can.

I thought a lot about the best way to convey my approach to the potential panoply of topics, and I settled on a personal story to help set the stage for the types of questions we might explore. It's not my personal story – that's pretty boring, although I may draw upon some personal anecdotes from time to time. No, I thought I'd highlight a much more interesting individual to get this podcast off the ground.

When you have a chance, Google Hassana Alidou (H-a-s-s-a-n-a A-l-i-d-o-u). Aside from her Wikipedia page which isn't all that informative, you may find some tributes to her life from institutions like the University of Illinois, the Africa-America Institute, or the African Studies Association. You see, Dr. Hassana passed away recently at the young age of 60 after a noted career in education and international diplomacy. She and her twin sister were born in Niger and came to the United States for their graduate degrees, aka postgraduate degree in most other countries around the world. (But that's a topic for another podcast!) Dr. Hassana obtained her PhD in linguistics from the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign in 1997 and went on to a career that ranged from faculty member to the World Bank to the Republic of Niger's Ambassador to the United States and Canada.

I never had the pleasure of meeting or speaking with Dr. Hassana, but she is well-known in the academic circles I run in. Reading her tributes got me to thinking about how her career decisions and training are not all that different from some of the questions that may be rolling around in your head. For example:

Why would someone from Niger want to come to the United States to obtain an advanced degree?

What kind of barriers did she face as a woman of color not just in the United States but in her own home country and afterwards as a world citizen and scholar?

And she was a twin for goodness sake! What kinds of conversations must she have had with her sister and the rest of her family as she made important life choices?

What the heck do you do with a PhD in Linguistics, anyway? Do we even need these programs? Yes, we'll deal with difficult subjects like that, too.

Or, you might be asking yourself, "I'm an engineer. What does any of this have to do with me? Where's the podcast on how to get into MIT?"

Actually, there'll be episodes on preparing for graduate school. We'll discuss strategies for success in graduate school from selecting advisors and mentors to weighty subjects like socialization theory. We'll talk about career success, work-life balance and work visas, conflict resolution, Three Minute Thesis®, joy, and even regret. Some of these topics I'll explore based on my own experiences as a former faculty member and recovering university administrator, some I'll draw upon existing reports and literature to simply lay out the facts, and some I'll bring in the real experts to help me explain.

Either way, I hope that you'll make this podcast part of your busy life. My promise to you is to be succinct, relevant, and factual, and to try to keep the editorializing to a minimum. You'll know when that happens and why. Even if you're not interested in getting a graduate degree - or even going to college - you probably know someone who did. Or they're right next to you as you listen to this podcast. Isn't it worth appreciating the power of an advanced degree?

Thank you for joining me today. All of the links referred to in this podcast are available on my website at grad-post.com. There you'll find additional podcasts and resources to help you plan your adventure for an advanced degree.

Start your 360° analysis today! Every degree counts.

Links

<https://linguistics.illinois.edu/news/2023-06-19/memoriam-hassana-alidou-renowned-phd-alumna-leaves-lasting-impact>

https://www.aaionline.org/the-passing-of-hassana-alidou/?doing_wp_cron=1705926280.5739200115203857421875

<https://africanstudies.org/in-memory/hassana-alidou-1963-2023/>

<https://threeminutethesis.uq.edu.au/>