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Around the World from Student to Professor

By E'Lisha V. Fogle, Ph.D., Assistant Professor,
The Collins College of Hospitality Management,
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

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About the Author



E'Lisha V. Fogle, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor in The Collins College of Hospitality Management at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. Dr. Fogle began her career as a Food Service Resource Manager with SODEXO, where she worked for three years aiding more than 20 healthcare systems across 13 states. She is certified by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council in Sustainable Tourism and has conducted research in the U.S., Central America, Australia, and Africa.

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Around the World from Student to Professor



The journey to becoming the first Black tenure-track faculty member in my current department has been an experience of global proportions. From international exploration to instrumental hospitality and tourism industry and non-profit experience, these opportunities have been propelled by enthusiastic mentors who have supported my creativity and scholarly development. It is through creativity in poetry which I will share my journey, passion, and coming into the professoriate. My hope for this poem is that it serves as inspiration to the minority hospitality academics of the future.

Army brat! It's in my blood – love for travel and adventure
Road trips, family vacations, and state parks were all inspiration
Over the hills and through the woods, I grew respect for nature
Understanding my passion came with time to consider my future occupation

Now off to college, an HBCU to discover in all its glory
Decided on hospitality at Virginia State for my bachelor's education
Trying out culinary, hotel, and events – they're all part of my story
Honing in on what I could manage best, with little complication

Ecstatic I was to work for the mouse where housekeeping taught humility
With a focus on an area of improvement, foodservice with SODEXO upon graduation
Oh the places from south to midwest provided learning experiences and opportunity
Realizing that sustainability in Hospitality was my true aspiration

Left corporate for a Masters to build respect between industry and residents
Down to UNTexas and Costa Rica – for Pura Vida, Eco, and green inspiration
Following no one's path, I was a black girl setting some precedent
Reading, writing, and research with great mentors to support my foundation

On to better things where I could put to work what I had learned
My internship with Ecotourism Australia led to my first publication
So thankful for time across the seas, where my academic spirits were churned
To continue the journey, a Ph.D. – the final step in my education

Undecided on where to study as the choice was not always evident
Determined to choose a best fit for hard work and great preparation
Ecstatic to join the Clemson Tiger crew even though I was initially hesitant
No clue the journey that awaited me was the best in fostering my transformation

The classes were tough, the days were long, and statistics I detested specifically
Tried my best, finished strong, and found qualitative research as liberation
Obtainable Fullbright fell out of reach, but I knew it wasn't – I thought optimistically
Prepared a grant with my chair and won ten grand – what a celebration!

Readied for a trip of epic proportions across the Atlantic to Africa's natural glory
Observing and talking to communities through participatory research and collaboration
Fueled by their passion for community and tourism and willingness to share their story
Experiences can't compare, nor can I express the depth of my appreciation

So now I'm a doctor, professor, researcher, and creator
Sharing these experiences with the hope that some find inspiration
On my path from student to professor, and now onto things even greater
Reaching back to pull others along – our academicians of future generations