

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS: TRAILER

[INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC PLAYING]

BRIDGET BARRY: Seventy years ago, politicians needed ways to spread international good will during a burgeoning Cold War. Amid this global instability, international scholarship programs served as a chance for soft diplomacy: returning students were viewed as ideal ambassadors for the merits of different lifestyles and political systems both in their host and home communities. The key feature however: they must, in fact, return home.

Design of these large-scale scholarship programs has since remained focused on foreign students returning to their home countries to not only serve as ambassadors but also to bring their skills back in order to avoid 'brain drain', the one-way trips of talented and educated individuals from a lesser economy to a more developed one, depriving their home communities of their innovation and production.

[INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC CONTINUES]

Today, this concept has been redirected toward scholars from the Global South and is baked into both international scholarship program design via visa return requirements, as well as perceived success of the program through scholars returning home. If scholarship recipients choose not to return to their home country, can they still be as successful as their peers who returned home? What does that potential success look like? Where should they be going home to?

[INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC STOPS]

RAMA: I do understand this whole thing about – I mean, that – the covenant that we all gave that we will go back to our communities to contribute. I somehow feel that our community is very – it is very restrictively defined. When we say communities, yes it's from where you came but also, if you are able to go beyond it and contribute at a wider scale, I think those best – those achievements should be captured, honestly.

[INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC CONTINUES]

[01:57] **BRIDGET BARRY:** That was Rama, a scholar from India who now lives in South Sudan. She is an alumna of the Ford Foundation's International Fellowships Program, or IFP, the Foundation's largest single investment in international education. Over four thousand scholars from marginalized backgrounds were selected to pursue graduate education abroad in their chosen field of social justice. I'm Bridget Barry, an Evaluation Specialist at the Institute of International Education. My colleague Nora Nemeth and I spoke to 60 such IFP alumni across the world who didn't return to live in their home community after their degree abroad. We asked them what their lives looked like now: Were they achieving the professional success they envisioned? Did they feel at home in their new communities?

[02:45] **IFP ALUMNUS:** It feels home, obviously, yes. But the time goes by. It's not just about homesickness, but it's about you're divided, you're split between two places, and you kind of

don't belong to any in a way...It's the confusion or frustration between going back home and staying there and staying here where you think maybe here a better quality of life, maybe there's better opportunity for my daughters when they grow up... and that sort of thing. I can't straightforward to say "Yes, it's perfect." So, it is but, it's still missing something. You know what I mean?

[INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC CONTINUES]

[03:24] **BRIDGET BARRY:** That was another alumnus who chose to remain in the U.K. after his master's degree. Although he no longer lives in his first home, he, like many of the other IFP alumni abroad, has not fully left his country of origin. Alumni continue to collaborate with, conduct research on, design programs for, and foster relationships in their home country. They exist between two worlds.

Join us over the course of this series as we explore what influences the decisions of IFP alumni to stay abroad, how they remain connected to their home communities, what role social justice continues to play in their lives, and what sort of impact they are able to have. We hope to tell the stories of those living Between Two Worlds. Listen wherever you get your podcasts.

[INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC FADES OUT]