The University I Arrived In, the University I Hope For

I have been thinking about hope as something that changes once we arrive at the place we once hoped to reach. Before coming to Canada, I had already begun a PhD in Nigeria. I was already becoming an academic. But leaving Nigeria and continuing my doctoral journey in Canada changed my relationship with the university. I began to experience academic life as an *international* student, an *immigrant*, a *Black* scholar, and someone trying to *imagine* whether there was a place for me within the Canadian university. Eventually, the thing I had hoped for happened. I became a professor. And yet becoming a professor has left me with a question I did not anticipate. What happens to hope after arrival?

I once understood hope largely as aspiration—the possibility of becoming something that I was not yet. But now I wonder whether hope in higher education has to become something else. The university I encounter as a professor is changing rapidly. Artificial intelligence is transforming how we think about writing, knowledge, teaching, assessment, and even what it means to think. At the same time, I worry about the conditions for intellectual disagreement. Universities rightly care about inclusion, accountability, and creating environments in which people can belong. But I sometimes wonder whether we are becoming less capable of sustaining the difficult conversations through which intellectual life actually develops. This is where I have become interested in the idea of conviviality.

I do not understand conviviality simply as harmony, friendliness, or everyone getting along. Scholarship on conviviality in education has increasingly treated it as a question of how people live, learn, disagree, and make intellectual life together across difference. Work on "fugitive conviviality" in higher education, for example, imagines spaces where curiosity, vulnerability, care, study, and counter-expressive thinking can survive within—and sometimes against—the institutional logics of the university. This makes me wonder whether one of the things we need to protect in the contemporary university is not agreement, but the possibility of remaining in relationship through disagreement.

Can a student say, "I don't know"? Can a professor say, "I was wrong"? Can a colleague say, "I disagree with you" without the disagreement becoming a reason to end the relationship? Can we encounter an idea that unsettles us without immediately treating the person who expressed it as someone from whom we must withdraw? And perhaps most importantly, can we still believe that people can change? These questions matter to me personally because my own academic journey has depended upon the possibility of becoming otherwise. I left one intellectual world and entered another. I changed as a student. I changed as a scholar. I changed through encounters with people and ideas I would not otherwise have encountered. The person who became a professor was not just the person who left Nigeria years earlier. So I find it difficult to imagine education without some faith in human transformation.

This is also why I am cautious about both technological optimism and technological pessimism. AI may change the university significantly, but the overarching question is what kind of human relationships we want education to preserve when more of our intellectual lives become technologically mediated. Perhaps hope in higher education is therefore not the belief that everything will turn out well. Perhaps hope is the willingness to remain invested in the possibility

that the university can become otherwise. A university where intellectual courage can coexist with intellectual humility. Where accountability does not eliminate the possibility of growth. Where disagreement does not necessarily become exclusion. Where technology can assist thinking without making thinking unnecessary. And where people from very different places and histories can encounter one another not merely as representatives of categories, but as human beings still capable of learning from one another.

I once thought that hope meant making it into the university. Now I wonder whether hope means helping to make a university worth staying in. Perhaps that is what a pedagogy of hope requires of me now—not simply to hope for the university, but to participate in making the conditions under which people can continue to think, disagree, change, belong, and become.