

The Learning Platform by Rev. Dr. Nikitah Okembe-RA Imani

My ideal university would first and foremost be free of economic barriers and the specters of grades and admission processes. Disciplines and colleges and other formal academic area divisions would be dispensed with. Instead, students and faculty would be encouraged to use all realms of study including the traditionally “non-science” ones like spiritualism to explore questions.

The architecture of the new campus would be focused on ecological balance as well as general aesthetics. The goal would be to create as many representations of the human environment as possible. One could envision open air coliseums in the Greco-Roman style, rising outdoor pyramids and temples in the indigenous American or African motif or outdoor conferencing areas emulating the minimalist style of Stonehenge and the Druids. I see lots of fountains and areas to commune with plants and animals.

As I think more about this idea, I think about the kind of people one would want to have involved in planning this “platform of learning.” I think one want to have the expertise of those who design amusement parks and centers of leisure. Such experts have proven their capabilities for fusing educational, interactive experiences with relaxation and the psychological sense of play. Next, I would like to have expertise from those who design retreat sites, particularly spiritual ones, as they are masters at creating human spaces that combine activity with sensitivity for and preservation of the land as well as the sense of quiet and meditation. The material assets of the platform must be malleable and light. While a campus made of Nerf may overstate the point, I do like the notion of

the giant fake rocks of Hollywood, which look imposing but may be hurled about like paper. Thus the physical structure would be as dynamic as the instruction itself.

Use of technology would be limited to those genres where technologies were essential for matriculation into the respective fields. The emphasis would be on personal journals, service-learning, field research and self-reflexive critiques. We would reintroduce elements of primary education, particularly ones like the “field trip” the “show and tell” and the “guest speaker.”

In order to create humanistic civilization, education must itself be civilized and humane. The focus of the “platform of learning” shall be “live in the world you want to create, not in the world that is.”