

## Global Grant Scholar Newsletter

Hello friends,

Happy April! And Palm Sunday for all those that celebrate! This will be a short update as nothing much has happened since the last newsletter - just lots of essays, assignments, and deadlines. April and May are typically the busiest times of the academic term in Oxford because it's when many of the summative exams and essays are due for students. For me, this includes a data analysis report examining how sodium intake and exercise affect cardiovascular outcomes, four essays on topics ranging from the impact of sugar-sweetened beverages on the risk of non-communicable diseases (diabetes, obesity, cancer, etc.) to the economics of COVID-19 vaccine distribution, and a four-hour examination on epidemiology and statistics.



Springtime views of Oxford (left) and fresh focaccia that I baked! (right)

With seemingly never-ending assignments and work, it can be easy to neglect the other aspects of life that are vital to not only maintaining balance but preserving mental and physical wellness and health. This includes exercise, taking breaks, meeting with friends, reading for pleasure, writing letters, and any other hobbies. Whilst these activities may not directly contribute to the progress of my assignments, I still make time to do them because indirectly, they help me reset my mental state and make it easier to tackle the numerous assignments that I have.

Lately, I've taken great joy to hand-writing letters to friends and family. I'm sure we're all bombarded with numerous e-mails day to day, but I find that there is something so personal, joyful, and special about receiving a handwritten letter. I've become a happy subscriber to a lovely small-business run by a husband-wife duo in the Cotswolds that makes fantastic, personalised stationery. Check them and their story out here if you're interested! With my fountain pens in hand and a variety of inks that are meant to mimic the colours we find in nature – from sky blue to persimmon orange – I've been sending out cards and letters to check in with loved ones during this time.



My fountain pens, inks, and stationery set along with a few plants I've adopted.

With so much going on in the world, I find it increasingly important to appreciate the small wonders of life. I was reminded of this in part through my reading of John Green's latest essay collection, *The Anthropocene Reviewed*. In his book, Green marvels and reviews everyday items (tangible and intangible) that have changed his and many others' lives: from Dr. Pepper to our capacity for wonder. He writes, "I was reminded that aesthetic beauty is as much about how and whether you look as what

you see...It is our attentiveness that is in short supply, our ability and willingness to do the work that awe requires.”

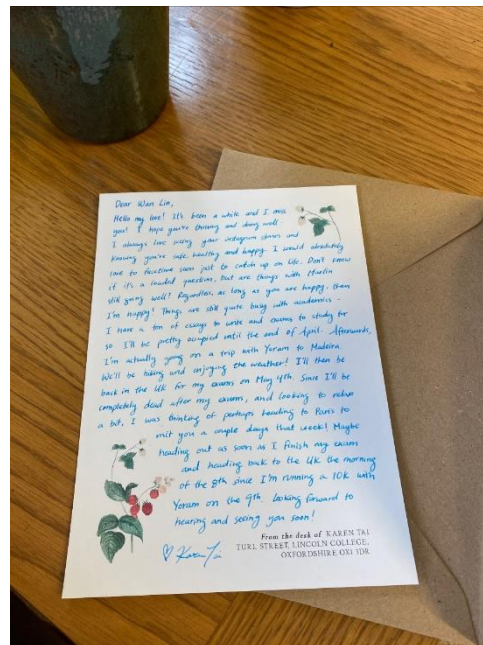
To me, some of the small wonders in life includes kindness and reading Green’s book helped remember that kindness is everywhere if we only stop and look for it. I imagine that if we start to look for kindness more often, and spread our net for kind acts more widely, it might be that we start to feel more inclined to offer more kindness out ourselves.

Hopefully this month, we can spread a little more kindness than we normally would! Whether that’s just checking in more often with your loved ones or even offering a baked good to a friend, Perhaps we could start a chain reaction that makes this world just a bit better, each act of kindness at a time.

Happy Easter to all and see you next month!

Warmest wishes,

Karen



Cat-sitting for a friend (left) and writing and sending letters to friends (right)

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