



# UBUNTU

VOLUME 2

AUSA'S INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS MAGAZINE

AUG 2023



# MEET YOUR CANDIDATES

HERE IS YOUR CHANCE TO MEET YOUR  
CANDIDATES RUNNING FOR  
THE 2024 AUSA EXECUTIVE  
AND THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL STUDENT REP  
POSITION IN PERSON.

## **CANDIDATE FORUM #1**

**TUESDAY 8TH AUGUST, 1.30PM, STUDENT KITCHEN**

FOR THE POSITIONS OF PRESIDENT, EDUCATION VICE-PRESIDENT,  
AND UNIVERSITY COUNCIL STUDENT REPS.

## **CANDIDATE FORUM #2**

**WEDNESDAY 9TH AUGUST, 11AM, STUDENT KITCHEN**

FOR THE POSITIONS OF TREASURER/SECRETARY,  
ENGAGEMENT VICE-PRESIDENT, AND WELFARE VICE-PRESIDENT.

## **CANDIDATE FORUM #3**

**WEDNESDAY 9TH AUGUST, 1.30PM, STUDENT KITCHEN**

FOR THE POSITIONS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS  
OFFICER, POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS OFFICE,  
QUEER RIGHTS OFFICER, AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS OFFICER.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE CANDIDATES AT  
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# UBUNTU is I am because we are.

UBUNTU has been founded by a woman who believes in this word to be more than just a word. It has been an absolute privilege to compile the second edition of what is not just a few pieces of paper but a collection of our hearts and souls. I can feel the energy bouncing off the pages as I make this because I believe in our community. I believe in us. And if I have learnt anything in my time here, it is that I know I am because we are.

So instead of writing a dedication to the hundreds of people who have got my back here (which I will in a couple of pages anyway), I want you to take the time and fill out this dedication to the people who have made you you. Be it the family back home or the family you have made on the way, a little honest piece of your hearts for people who have always got you through life.

*A Dedication...*





Aloo wale parathe :(((

Chennai and chel before marriage

THANK YOU



# Kia ora and Namaste!

Tell of this to no one.

I am not crying. My eyes are sweating. No, they are. I just completed my anxious laps around the living room and now I am tired. If you have picked up or have had this magazine shoved in your face (probably me), I just want to humbly say thank you. Thank you for picking up what contains traces of a community, a family that works so hard to establish itself away from home. To build a home away from home.

To say that I had an absolute plan in place as to how I would go on about as your International Student Officer would make the me of eight months ago laugh out loud. I've packed three big suitcases, flown 18 hours, saw my twelve-year-old brother hold back his tears, got a stamp on my passport, moved into my student accommodation, started showing up as the AUSA ISO a month later than when I was supposed to and forgot my electric toothbrush. Now, eight months later, the suitcases are tucked under my bed, I see my friends off at the airport, my younger brother is somehow even more shameless with his jokes, the only reason I need my passport is to get into a bar, the student accommodation is my home, and AUSA has been family. And I bought a new electric toothbrush. I did not even know what I was capable of until I became this role. And I don't think I would be where I am now if not for the people around me. Not just physically. Whenever I sit in a room and speak on behalf of us, I can feel everyone coming together. The cultures, the traditions, the languages, the places and with it the discrimination, the injustice and yet, the perseverance to push through it all.

If there is one thing I know when I speak for us is that we may be with accents that take a little getting used to, with features that for the first time in our lives seem alien to the people around us, and as an Indian, with a spice tolerance that no chicken curry in this city has matched up to, we are the strongest of them all. And to my International community, the ones who I have seen shine brighter than them all, don't ever let anyone dull your shine. We have a long way to go, and we are just starting to put our foot down.

Yours Truly

Mahek

I would like to dedicate this Issue to the man himself, the legend, the greatest, the weirdest, the asshat. I hope you're having as much fun up there as you taught me to have down here. Till I see you again champ

Kiddo

To Mumma, Papa and Mahir, for being the crux of who I am today. I could be anywhere in the world, but I know my home. And it is wherever you guys are.

To Niral, for being the most willing to jump off a bridge with me and then kill me in the afterlife friend.

To the friends that I have gained here, the experiences have made me who I am.

To the AUSA executive, I have probably annoyed every single one of you way more than you get paid to deal with but I probably maybe love you guys more than the llamas and the iced chocolates.

To the AUSA staff, you hold this place down. We'd be nowhere without you.

To my subcommittee, the clubs, the associations. You drive me to be better.

And to the entire student community, I wouldn't have this story to tell if there wasn't anyone to listen.

So, thank you.

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UBUNTU is the annual International Students Magazine published by the Auckland University Students' Association. To get involved or contribute to next years issue email [ubuntu@ausa.org.nz](mailto:ubuntu@ausa.org.nz)



# THE BROWN KID

**That is it.  
That is the  
question. The  
article. The  
story. Who in  
the actual f\*ck  
do I think I  
am to pack up  
my bags and  
travel across  
the world to  
a country  
that half of  
my family  
still confuses  
with the  
Netherlands?  
(No disrespect  
to the  
Netherlands,  
I think you're  
higher up than  
all of us).**

I am writing this with a meek hope in my heart that there will be someone somewhere who relates to how embarrassing it is being a 19-year-old fitting into another country. Let me repeat myself for emphasis. Nineteen years old. Legal. All by myself. In a place where my brown parents need an eighteen-hour notice before they can come and physically whoop my ass. The reason why this article is anonymous is not because I am here on a visa but because I am the brown kid. That is right. Singular. THE brown kid.

THE brown kid sounds humorous but the humour gets darker the closer you get. THE brown kid laughs off casual discrimination but then sits in silence wondering why did they have to? Where do they draw the line between defending themselves and being an uptight ass? THE brown kid has to be attached to their culture enough to not be labelled a coconut but never be too traditional because that is too hard to relate to. THE brown kid needs to have enough brown friends to be connected to where they come from but not too many that they cannot accept where they are now. THE brown kid is used to respecting elders but shouldn't overdo it because here people mistake it as complacency. THE brown kid is trying their best to grow out of the innate generational patriarchy. THE brown kid is still struggling to recognise toxic traits. THE brown kid sees other brown kids putting each other down to not be one of the brown kids. THE brown kid sees those other kids laugh a nervous laugh when they see them realise they aren't cool enough to fit in. THE brown kid doesn't mean to be rude. But we aren't made to fit in. The constant battle between being brown enough but not too brown. Fitting in but still holding on. Catching up to accents. Slang. Phrases. Culture. Methods. People. And then get blamed for losing themselves within all of that. THE brown kid left their home in search of a greater perhaps. Not because they left a weaker one. Home is wherever they carry it. THE brown kid apologises for ever looking down on other brown kids. After all, THE brown kids need to see each other too. THE brown kid realises that maybe it is not as deep as they think of it to be. But then again, nobody should ever get to tell someone how to feel. THE brown kid feels. It just does.

Who in the actual f\*ck do I think I am to pack up my bags and travel across the world to a country that half of my family still confuses with the Netherlands? A f\*cking fighter.  
THE BROWN KID.

EAT LIKE YOU GIVE A F\*CK

KIERAN TAIRI

CARU

bRave 25.08

HASJI

MONGA.MY

LEFT HAND LOZ

BIRKENTHOT

From 10pm @ The Mothership

95b FM

5F

KIERAN TAIRI

CARU

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# NZISA PRESIDENT VIKRAM SELVARAJ: In words

**So, what made you want to come to New Zealand as first and then after that, what was the entire journey into becoming the NZISA president?**

Okay, so I'm originally from Singapore and I came to New Zealand in 2018 and I didn't intend to study in the first place. I was trying to explore New Zealand and just see how the lifestyle is. My girlfriend at that time, she came here to study. So, I tagged along to see how New Zealand is. And then while she was studying, that particular year there was a new course in University of Canterbury, and it was called Bachelor of Criminal Justice. And I am passionate about the justice system. I want to become a police officer. I'm not sure I will still become a police officer now, but that was my dream when that course came up. I was very intrigued by that course. So, the following year, I enrolled myself with UC. I became an international student officially after a year. And three and a half years later, I've graduated with a bachelor's. It is a journey that I was a student pre-COVID, during COVID, and post-COVID. So, the whole transition of adapting to online studies, adapting to the world circumstances, and uncertainty was a big challenge for me. The whole idea of even having Zooms were very new to me. I know we didn't use Zoom like three years ago. No one would have even talked about Zoom three years ago, but now it's used everywhere.

**And what made you, I mean, from being a student at UC, what made you hop onto NZISA? Was it the university committees first or?**

I'm passionate about the justice system. I'm passionate about voicing out concerns and providing feedback so that we can improve ourselves. That's how I started in a small space where I talk in the classrooms, I talked in a big orientation and gave feedbacks and everything. That's when I started realizing that I love to talk to people, I love to advocate, and I started taking up initiatives and roles in the university itself. I became a student leader, I became a mentor, not just for university students, but also mature students and secondary school students. And I started loving giving back to the community, giving back to the students and everything and knowing that we all are on the same page of navigating our life to become successful. It's never easy, but you just want to have meaningful relationships and connections. So that was how I initially

started, and I started advocating for international students in UC and that's how I got to know about NZISA, and I was, okay, what's NZISA? And then when I went to see what they do and what kind of lobbying they do, I was more intrigued, knowing that it's more exposure with the national body and I applied for it. And here I am, second term president, which I never thought that I would become in the first place.

**I just wanted to tap into how you said you've been a student through different stages of a global pandemic. How was it being on a visa status in a completely different country away from home with thousands of other students stuck here and how do those pre and post covid experiences compare with each other?**

So as an international student pre-covid was full of excitement and just fun. During covid was just frightening and to be honest I was scared. What was going to happen? Not just to the country or to the people but to the world. When it dawned on me that the whole world was shut off, I wondered if I would be able to go back to my own country to visit my family. Post-covid I believe the one word for it is adaptation. The world just became a place where I saw a lot of adaptation and a lot of kindness. Where people started spreading love. And that is my mantra. When I started advocating it was just to show the love I have for my community. Leadership is one chunk of it, but I think spreading love is my mantra.

**I'll just go in a little bit deeper on how student life was. You've been there pre-COVID, you've been there during COVID, and you have after COVID to compare it to. Do we embrace the change? And what are the few things that we still need to hold on to, to retain our identity from before the world shut off?**

It is a very important question. I think when the government decided to focus on their citizens and their residents as a priority during COVID, which is fair enough because they have a responsibility towards them. But also, I think post-COVID they realized that because of the neglect of international students' well-being and understanding their conscience, their recruitment has hit hard. Right now, New Zealand is not the top universities to attend. Wherein a few years ago a lot of students would like to come to New



Zealand. But now New Zealand is not the top choices for a lot of international students.

And they realize it is because the marketing was just focused on promoting how New Zealand is good.

During COVID, if they showed that they cared for us international students, it would have showed us that, hey, you know, if I'm going to go to a country, this is the country I want to go to because they care for their international students. And another thing is that for international students, I think it's important that we embrace a new change, and we can't, no point holding back to anything that we used to have anymore, because it's different. And I think it's all about adapting, I said from the start, it's all about adapting and more on what is it called, creating new opportunities. Now, I think the biggest conversation that the world is having is AI. Everyone is talking about AI, chat GPT, so many things that have been happening. There are people who are reluctant to use it and there are people who are using it and enhancing themselves. And I think it's important, vitally important for our international students to know how to use them. You know, whether it's for academic, whether it's for their career, it is all about embracing those new changes, but also understanding the nuance and making sure that they do it the right way. So, it's a challenge. It's always a challenge when we face a pandemic, when we face a new cultural shock for international students. But one thing I would always tell my friends or the people that I know is to be never afraid to seek help. It's important to say, hey, I'm struggling, I have no idea what I'm doing here. I've decided to come to New Zealand to study, but I'm not enjoying it. It's okay. There are people make those decisions. People who were interested or the way they were sold, the idea, the dream that they were sold was something very different when they came and everything. But I think it's important to realize those concerns or issues in an early stage and ask help as an international student rather than just deal with it because your parents have paid \$30,000. As an Indian, dealing with it is the normal way of how we go about in life, but I think it must change. Because at the end of the day, it's still your life. And if you regret your choices, it's on you. It's like you had the opportunity to stop it within the first year or the last year.

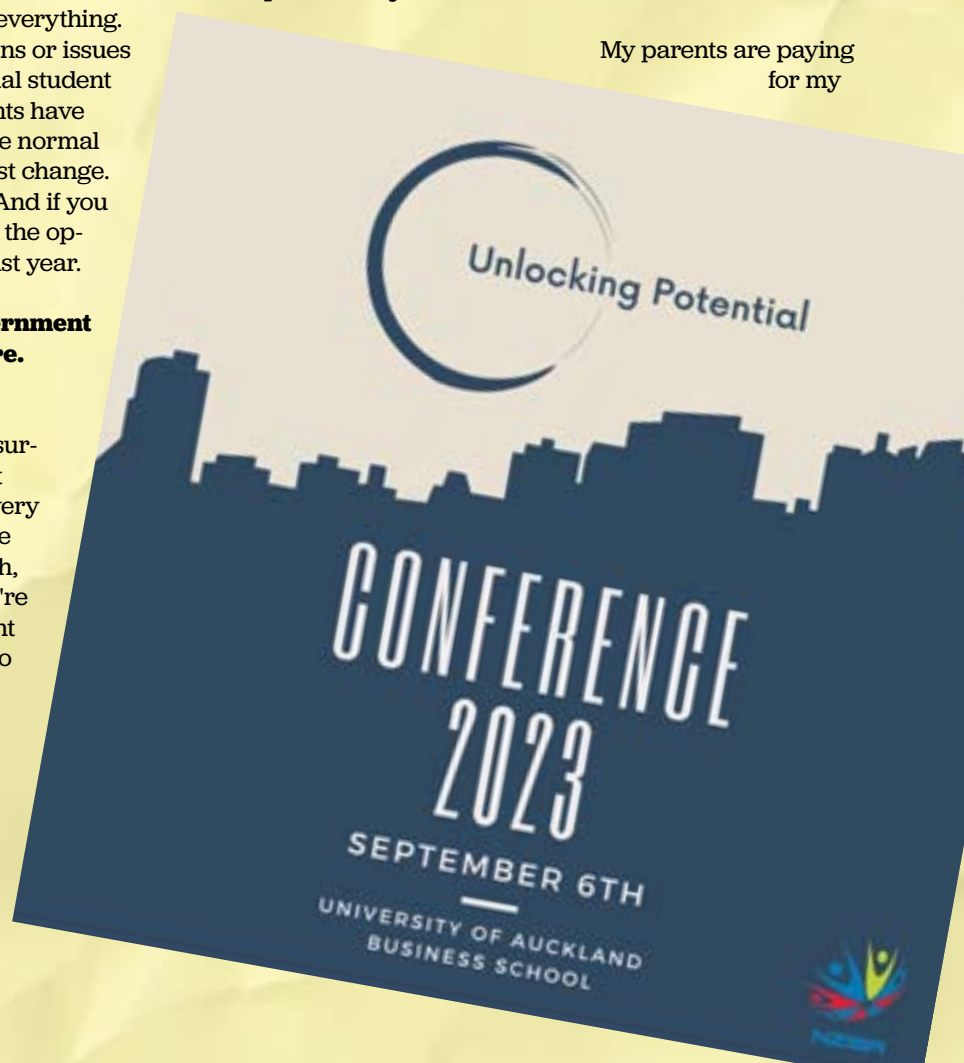
**When you said they could do more, the government could do more, the institutions could do more. What it is, can they do now?**

The first one is our insurance coverage. The insurance coverage that we have been advocating. It has been a very slow process, but I think it's a very important conversation that people need to take seriously. And when we talk about sexual health, we're not just talking about one component, we're talking about the health system overall. We want international students to be safe, and we want to make sure that the New Zealand health system is also protected. So, it's a win-win. And I think another priority is the mental well-being of international students. Although they do say that you guys are welcome in New Zealand, there are so many incidents of racism, discrimination, scamming happening right now. And it's alarming, to be honest. And this is where the government and the universities

can put in more funding for initiatives to create awareness or whatever it is to bring more international students to understand what the government is doing. Because when international students suffer racism or discrimination, all they do is just talk about it amongst their friends without knowing where to go and what to do. And that is very sad to see. The government must step in and show that they recognize that is happening. And the third one would be having more empathy. I mean, I think right now with the government structures in terms of the post-study work visa or even the tuition fees, the tuition fees have been increasing in the recent times. And the estimation is, to be honest, is just ridiculous. I know someone who had to pay an additional five grand when they were planning to pay \$30,000. But then when they asked, why is it \$35,000? The staff said that, oh, we did inform that it's an estimation. But how can an estimation change 30 to 35 thousand dollars. You didn't give us a warning, at least give us an estimation number or at least a percentage, okay, the estimation could be up to 2.5% or even 5%. Those are the top three places where I feel for international students, there needs to be more support.

**You mentioned how international students, they shouldn't be afraid to ask for help. There's some part in the back of our minds as an international student just conscious of paying so much more money. Is there a feeling of a certain responsibility that you must just deal with it. Come what may, you need to make sure you get this education. What would you say to those students? With your experience, what would you tell them if a kid just comes up to you and tells, I have so many problems, these people are not helping me, this is not working out, but I just must go with it because I paid for my education.**

My parents are paying  
for my





education. I've been through that, and I think at times you feel you're unheard by the people that you're talking to, but the biggest support system that you can create for yourself at that stage is your family and your loved ones. I think if they understand what you're going through, that will elevate half of your problems. If they understand where you are standing and what is your struggle, what are your thoughts now, being open with them would really help you navigate a lot of things. Because often when I talk to students, they are very afraid to talk to their parents as in most cases they are the ones who are paying 30, 40, 50 thousand dollars for them to be there. But yes, I understand it's a big responsibility to make sure they are using the money properly and making sure they are happy. But at the same time any parent who is paying 50 grand a year wouldn't want the kid to be not happy. You know, they are paying that 50 thousand dollars so that the kid will have a better future and a better career. What can we do? And then of course the second stage is where if you feel the people you are talking to, for instance, the university advisor's city advisors are not helpful, there are a lot of non-profit organizations that you can actually reach out to, for instance, like Asian Family Services or even NZISA. Although we might not have the right answers, I think it's important to reach out to someone and ask, hey, I talked to them. What can I do about it? And then we will be able to give them the right tool and the right people to navigate the whole situation. So, like I said, it's very important to communicate. It's okay to feel vulnerable, it's okay to feel overwhelmed, it's okay to feel you are down, you can't take it anymore, but don't keep it to yourself. You know, talk to someone, ask for help, and it's okay to get help.

We are not superheroes who can get everything done by ourselves. And I think that is something that I as a brown person, with this innate grit I have been born with has a hard time digesting. It's not you are dumb, you are stupid, or you can't make it if you're going to ask help. I think that narrative must be changed. We are no more in that generation where we need to deal with everything on our own.

**We come as people who speak different languages, a huge chunk of us are not used to speaking English as a first language. There is wall of inequity and a language barrier that almost every International in this country must break through. What would you say to how we currently approach this issue? How could they better accept us? How could they better, not accept us, we don't need the validation. How could they better just embrace us as we are?**

I think there are two things for the providers and for our international students. One, I would want our international students to challenge themselves, never back down, never be afraid to make mistakes. When I go to meetings, when I hear those Kiwi accents going full on, I'm like, what did they just talk about? I'm like, oh my god. But then I took that as a challenge, and I was not afraid to say hi guys I'm sorry can you repeat what you just said because you're too fast for me. It is okay to ask but at the same time I would want the providers to know how crucial it is to be patient sitting on the other side of the table. It's not we cannot communicate. It is just a language to communicate. English doesn't show our intelligence English doesn't show my personality. English is just another form of communication and people need to understand this. And I think it's just having

patience. Often, I've seen that they lack the patience and empathy for students who are struggling to communicate. And I think, just having that patience and empathy towards us, towards students who are not used to speaking a language as a native, will really go a long way for students to learn and grow and feel motivated.

**My next question to you is what are the bare minimums? I mean, when a university invites international students onto their campuses and hopes for them to get a good education, asking them to pay what should be four times or five times the amount a domestic student is paying, what are the bare minimums an international student without a doubt should be getting during their academic journey?**

Very good question. That has been something that I've been asking all the institutes from the start. I think the bare minimum any university should have is an international student space, an international student hub, a place where they walk in, they know that they can get answers, whether it's about academics, whether it's about financials, or just the daily jargon of being an International. Right now, I can say this, a lot of universities do not meet the pre-requisite of having an international student space. And because of that, students are being bounced everywhere. You know, oh, I'm sorry, we can't help you. You need to go to the financial team, or you need to go to the other team. They are new to this place. They are here because they have an issue, you need to bring them, you need to guide them, you become the mediator, bring them along and say, hey, this is where we can help you. If they can't do that, then I think the bare minimum is having an international hub, an international hub where we have international student graduates who are staff there would really benefit the structure. The one biggest thing is that when we bring this up to the universities, that when you tell them that, oh, can we have an international hub or international space? What happens is that they often bring in, no offense, more culturally incompetent people. The jobs are given to more of those people and it's no offense to them. But I think that when we say we want an international hub, we want to see international people. I don't want to be specific but to put things into perspective, whether it's from China, India, Vietnam, Philippines, America, just having a diverse profile in the international hub will enhance the feeling of international students walking in. I think that's very important. Recruitment of culturally competent staff in the international space is very, very important.

**I just want to bring the conversation to a lighter side. What are the few things that you're happy about? Things you're happy about when it comes to the government, the institutions, and just life here as an international student. You've been here for so many years. What are the few changes you're happy to see?**

I think for me, I really like, I really love that we can have these kinds of conversations. Whether we are talking about mental health, whether we are talking about sexual health, and even being in the same table with providers. That is something that I can't see being done in my own country. I can't talk to a university in Singapore, and they say, hey, we should talk about sexual health, hey, we need to talk about mental health. They were like, what mental health are you talking about? So that narrative is very



different in this country, and I really appreciate it a lot. Although there's a lot of racism and discrimination, on the other hand, there are a lot of people who really want to understand our culture, understand our values, and they are here to embrace us. And when I talk to those people, I see there's this opportunity to evolve into a multicultural country. And I just love the people. And I love, in terms of the government, it's always hard for them to lead a country, especially leading a nation after a pandemic is never easy for any country. A lot of countries are still in struggling to be where we are so there is also that moment of reflection and gratitude.

But just to give an overarching answer. I love the people. I love the people who are advocating, even people like yourself, Varsha, like the people that I'm working with in their advocacy, they are all, especially leaders who are in their own journey, especially the people that I'm inviting for the conference, a lot of them are leaders in their own journey. And it's so exciting to see what they have done in their past and how much struggle they have gone through. And that has motivated me to know that life is not easy. Life is always all about going through ups and downs. It's all about having the persevere and determination.

**I want this question to be about the NZISA conference. How excited are you for it? If you had to just give a small brief on what's going on, why do you think this is important, why is NZISA holding it for international students?**

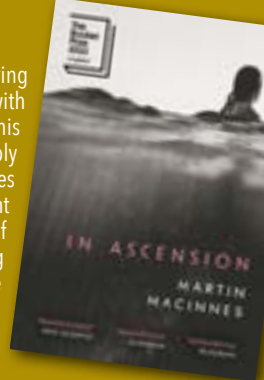
More than excitement, I'm nervous and stressed, just because from someone who is trying to organize this event for our international students. I want to make it work. I want to make sure it's meaningful for international students and it meets their expectation. But overall, it's an exciting opportunity for our students to not just understand what leadership and gain employability skills is, but also create opportunities to network with others within workshops that will give them a lot of different skills. This is all credible preparation for their future. And I think the main theme was to enhance their leadership and employability skills. And I think why we are doing this is because last year when we had

our roadshow, a lot of students came to us and asked, are you coming back next year? So that kind of made us compel. It's like, okay, we didn't expect that. But because that was the first time, we were doing a roadshow, and then they were all so eager and excited to know what we were going to do next is when we sent out a survey and got to know that most of the students would like to build their rapport in two things, which is leadership and employability skills. And that's why we are coming up with our conference on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September at University of Auckland. There's a lot to look out for but for as an international student what to expect and what I want them to do on that event is just have fun, see opportunities and grab those opportunities. Don't let go of them. Grab those opportunities and make the most of it.

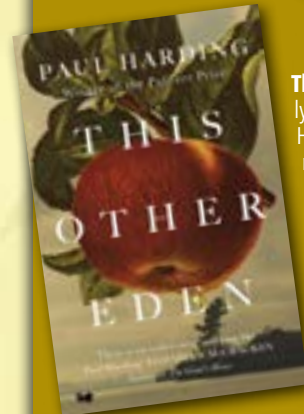
**Finally, you've been a student here for so many years, what is the one mindset that has kept you going? I find it a little difficult to hold on at times. Balancing being a student and advocating for one. What is that one piece of advice you'd give to somebody who is just like you, but five or six years younger. What would you tell them to just hold on, just keep going?**

Yeah, I think that my mantra, love yourself, love others, love what you do. I think it can be used for anyone, whether five years younger or five years older. I think that's the most important thing for them to know in life. There are always challenges, but loving yourself is very important. And one thing that keeps me pushing, that's a personal story that I would like to say, it's my mom's dream for me to come over to a foreign country to study and even though I lost her 19 years ago, I kept the dream alive, and I fulfilled the dream after 19 years. So that is my personal touch what motivated me to push me to this to the final stage. So yeah. That's a beautiful dream become and just a really nice way to end this interview.

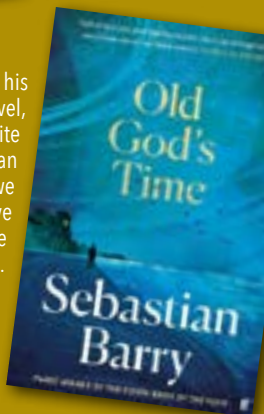
**In Ascension** - Exploring the natural world with wonder and reverence, this compassionate, deeply inquisitive epic reaches outward to confront the great questions of existence, while looking inward to illuminate the human heart.



**This Other Eden** - Full of lyricism and power, Paul Harding's spellbinding novel celebrates the hopes, dreams and resilience of those deemed not to fit in a world brutally intolerant of difference.

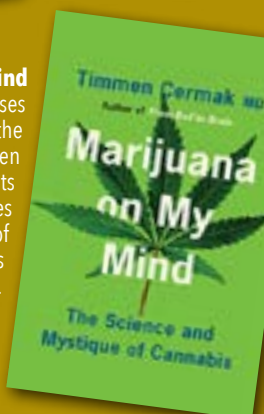


**Old God's Time** - In his beautiful, haunting novel, in which nothing is quite what it seems, Sebastian Barry explores what we live through, what we live with, and what may survive of us.



**Heat: Life and Death on a Scorched Planet** - A searing examination of the impact that temperature rise will have on our lives and what we can do to stop it.

**Marijuana on My Mind** - Dr. Timmen Cermak uses science to make sense of the endless debate between advocates and opponents of cannabis and provides answers to some of the greatest mysteries surrounding marijuana.











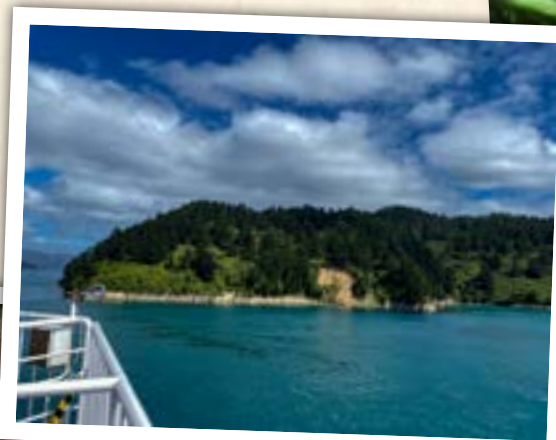


# Dear New Zealand, this is my love letter to you.

I was just a little girl when I first heard your name. I was told that your beauty is unreal and that you held so many wonders to see. After hearing about your gorgeous land, all I could dream of was seeing you. But sadly, I lived on the east coast of America and so you were too far away. While I longed to visit you, it seemed impossible, so I gave up on seeing you for a little while.

A decade went by and during that time I grew a passion for travel. I was eager to explore the world, so I looked at all the study abroad programs my university offered. There on top of the list, it said "Auckland, New Zealand" and my dreams of seeing you came rushing back. I knew right then without a doubt that I was picking you to spend my semester abroad. Then, before I knew it, I was on an eighteen-hour flight coming to see you. I was beyond excited but could not fathom that the farfetched dream I had as a little girl was turning into a reality.

I will not lie, when I first landed, I was overwhelmed and scared. I was nervous that I would not find my way around or that you would reject me. Everything was so new and daunting, and I did not know how to introduce myself to you. But I took it day by day and then I slowly got to know you and let me say, you are more than what I dreamed of. I found myself slowly falling in love with you and you made me the happiest I have ever been. Your people are so kind, and your cities are buzzing with so many cultures and food. But I truly fell in love with your natural beauty. Your air is so fresh, and your waters are so blue. Your beaches are magical, and your mountains are so powerful. Every week you display magnificent rainbows and at night you light up the sky with brilliant stars making you even more ethereal.







Those five months I spent with you have changed me for the better. I have laughed and cried and created so many memories that I will cherish for the rest of my life. I am so thankful for all the experiences you offered. I took many adventures and risks, such as bungy jumping, sky diving, and scuba diving to name a few. I grew confident in my place and was happy with the life I had made for myself here. Most of all I am so delighted that I can tell that little girl who dreamed of you that you are more than what she imagined you to be. While I do not know when I will see you next, I am determined to come back and see you again. A couple of days before I left to go back home, I was sitting in church when I wrote you this prayer in the form of a poem. For now, I shall leave you with this until we meet again.

Lord, I thank you for leading me to this place  
 A place that filled my heart with so much love, joy, and grace  
 A place where your creation and beauty are so evident and profound  
 A place where I finally learned how to forgive and love myself  
 My God, I do not understand why I must leave  
 Or what your plan is for me  
 But I trust you with all my soul  
 Because you led me to this place I most  
 Very happily called home

With All My Love,  
 Melissa Jacob













# Auckland Straight from my Diary

I am pretty sure people might think recording memories in dairies is old-fashioned. I couldn't find a more comfortable way to do that than my journal diary. I have been keeping a diary ever since I was twelve. I have continued to do so since I have been here in Auckland. I am pretty sure everyone comes from different places, which makes them face different situations. But I believe if you are trying to build a life far away from home, you might find yourself relating a little. I don't keep a good grammar check while writing my diary, so I hope you can all move past my mistakes.

## Extract 1

I can finally say I survived here, even though I didn't believe I could. It's been a short time, but I feel this place is survivable. It was strange how I travelled miles away from home alone but didn't feel anything was different

roads, shops, and people all felt similar. While returning from the grocery, I cried a little but the reason, it was so stupid. I was carrying this big heavy bag and just saw a family putting away their groceries in the car and driving away. I still couldn't figure it out. Was it because I had to use public transport and they had a car, or I just missed my father, who wouldn't have allowed me to carry that heavy bag all alone?

## Extract 2

I made it through the exams. I can indeed say it was a challenging semester. My mom still video calls me every day, and it's something I am very grateful for. Before coming to Auckland, I had a chance to share some unsettling emotions with my best friend. I told her I was afraid that everyone would eventually forget about me since I won't be able to visit them as often as I used to ( friends and family). I know I should be more happy about the chances. I have been travelling a lot alone, but still, I feel lonely as due to the time difference, it is also hard to reach out to my friends back home.

## Extract 3

A birthday away from home - how sad. Well, not I had the hype for my birthday. There were multiple reasons for it. Firstly it's shared with New Year's. Secondly, people would wish me a happy new year and forget to wish happy birthday. I went to watch the fireworks, and of course, I cried a little. I didn't miss my home; I just missed the dessert my grandparents would make for me on my birthday and the meals I would have with them. It's hard when I FaceTime and see that they are growing old; wrinkles appear more defined since I have been here. Well, I couldn't express my homesickness to anyone since I was the one who insisted on moving to another place to complete my degree while everyone advised me against it. I just wanted to be on my own and see things differently. But that's the thing about the goals when you finally achieve them, you become lost since you don't have anything else to chase now, and it felt that void as well.







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# *Sitting down* *with* **SEXUAL HEALTH**

**The sexual health insurance project is the brainchild of three amazing students. Brandon, a law student having been worked with Rainbow Law, this is his story to tell. Varsha, the wonderful Education Vice President of AUSA and a sixth-year law and global studies conjoint student and Viha, an International Student studying Medicine at UoA and has been heavily involved with NZMSA. Mahek took this opportunity to write down a conversation that she had with Varsha and Brandon about their journey.**

**Mahek:** Thank you for coming. I'm trying to make this informal but informative. I'm just going to run through a few questions and record this conversation because I have no doubt this is going to be insightful and deep without any prompts.

**Mahek:** Starting off with, if you had to explain the entire sexual health insurance project to a casual student on campus, how would you?

**Brandon:** Well, in one sentence, it is to ensure that international students get fair healthcare outcomes. That is really the main goal of this project. And seeing that international students are not eligible for public healthcare; their student insurance is the only way they get their health needs get funded.

**Varsha:** And if you had to just go on a bit more about that, it is common knowledge that for international students at the University of Auckland, the services provided at the university are probably one of the only

services that the students are used to because that is all they have during their entire existence on here. And this procedure is not limited to UoA or New Zealand. It probably holds true for any university that accepts International Students in any country. So not having sexual health covered into our insurance is one of the most mind-blowing things that is there.

**Mahek:** How did you get started? What was your "this has happened to me, and this is not okay" moment that triggered the entire domino chain?

**Brandon:** Where should I start? It's a very big topic.

So basically, there is a drug out there in the healthcare system that prevents HIV infection. It's like 99.9% effective. It's a foolproof kind of medication. And looking back at history, gay and bisexual men were disproportionately affected by the AIDS epidemic in the 80s and 90s. And so, this drug came about to prevent that kind of healthcare disparity for gay and bisexual men.



Obviously nowadays, anyone can get HIV, but there is still that historical link towards what happened before and what is happening right now. It is well known, especially within the queer circles and health messaging that obviously encourages you to take preventative measures to keep yourself safe, to keep people around you safe, to keep the community safe. It's a collective responsibility. I tried to get this medication, but I had to pay out of pocket, it is about \$800, for a three-month period. And for me, like most international students, your parents would fund your fees here, tuition fees, living cost fees. It's the way the system works. You can't fund it yourself, it's impossible. No one has that kind of money. The money for the medication would have come out from my parents' allowance that they gave to me. But I didn't want them to know that the money was going towards this medication because it would pretty much out my sexual orientation. Coming from a country where it's illegal to be gay, this can be a problem. This is a problem.

Say if I were to get infected, then I wouldn't be able to stay in the country anymore because at the time, immigration in New Zealand would pretty much kick you out if you have HIV infection. You can never, never be a citizen or permanent resident because of this condition. So that's why I felt like it was unfair because it placed, what do you call it, it put vulnerable people in vulnerable situations. You had to out yourself, you had to keep yourself sexually repressed, and there's not many people you could speak to about this, because it's a very niche experience.

**Varsha:** Brandon and I, at two different levels, different extremities, have experienced some sort of discrimination when it came to accessing sexual health care. And I think all of us have experienced it at different levels and have been able to cope with it at on our own. Some of our experiences have been worse than others. Brandon started this initiative off originally because he had some personal things that he wanted to ensure would take place in terms of regional and global reform amongst policy. And through his story, Viha and I were like, oh, well, we don't have sexual health care either. We're all international students. We all have struggle accessing sexual health care. when we say sexual health care, people think about access to protection. Access to condoms and the pill, protective prescription and STIs and not being able to have sex. That is what people assume immediately, which is not wrong to assume but there's a whole world beyond that. There's so much more that's involved. there are pap smears, there's hormone replacement therapy, there's so much within this big package of sexual health care. And each of us that identify differently get affected differently.

Like myself, as a woman, I'm encouraged to go regularly to get pap smears. But the reality is, pap smears are not covered under our current sexual health policy. So, imagine having to spend my own money to ensure that I don't develop cancer while I'm here because if I

do, I burden the public system here. And if I burden the public system here, I will get kicked out because I've crossed the 46k limit. all these conversations really triggered all of us, and Viha, which I quite much mention at this moment, she's a medical student, and she's got an undergrad from Boston in biomedical sciences. So, she's got a lot of knowledge in this area from a scientific perspective. And her ethos is care. She's sworn to protect and care. Brandon and I are law students and Brandon was very involved with Rainbow Law at the time. He championed the initiative through Rainbow Law and Viha championed it through the Auckland University Medical Student Association and then me as ISO and now EVP through AUSA. Which is cool, we were kind of like the Holy Trinity meeting every month or so to discuss these issues and that's how it started, it's just sharing each other's experiences and relating to the discrimination we had all felt on different levels. Brandon's part of the reason why both Viha and I strongly agreed to be a part of this process because Brandon's experience was so distinct, it was such an uphill battle and like seeing the way he persevered through it really motivated us to do something collective together for international students.

**Brandon:** Even though it's a unique experience as Varsha said, it's still going to happen. Because there are going to be gay and bisexual international students coming here, and they're going to be sexually active. And what are they going to do? It's going to be the same thing over and over. It discourages young people and vulnerable groups of people from finding jobs, from being able to explore what this country has to offer, and what this country promised to us.

**Mahek:** It's almost like a disgusting loophole. You couldn't get access to the medication if you are financially strained because insurance did not cover it. And as a result, if you do get sick, you get kicked out of the country because there is a limit to how much you can burden the public system.

**Brandon:** So, it's a catch-22 kind of thing.

**Varsha:** It really is. And when we originally started the campaign, the campaign had two prongs. The first was this sort of reformist policy where men who have sex with men can get free access to PrEP, which prevents us of Pre-exposure. The second part was to change the coverage altogether for sexual health for international students. But a couple of months into us embarking on this campaign, there was a policy change that happened which benefitted our campaign where all individuals regardless of what your visa status in this country was, was allowed subsidized access to PrEP, which meant that part of the campaign that we were fighting for had been already alleviated. So, then we redirected all our efforts and time to that one other area, which was to rebalance coverage, to ensure that sexual health gets more coverage, so that students in our positions don't face the same difficulties that we had to.



**Mahek:** So, as of this day, if I go in and ask for subsidized access to PrEP, I won't be denied that as an international student?

**Brandon:** I think we've got mixed messages. I think some institutions, some dispensaries will not deny you, some will. I think again, it's one of those grey areas where change is halfway. So, it'll take a good few years for us to solidify that this is a new norm, that regardless of what piece of status you are, you will have access to this. But that eventually will be the case.

**Varsha:** But I think we're confident it would go through. It's a commonsense policy.

**Mahek:** My next question is, after you got into these conversations and all of you decided that this is something that you wanted to go on with, what was one of the biggest roadblocks, which I presume is sitting in a room as just students in front of all these senior officials from insurance companies. On a table with all these big senior scary people and just having to talk about your experiences, your personal experiences, what was that experience like?

**Brandon:** Well, I mean, I think the biggest roadblock was in terms of the fact that discrimination was okay. I mean, policy-wise and legally, we've said it's okay. They have the government backing them in what they do. And I feel like, morally as well, they're kind of like, oh, it's all right. I mean, it's not going to affect anyone.

**Varsha:** I found it blasphemous how they didn't think this was an issue until we brought it to the table. And I don't know if it's this ignorance or what it is, but you could see that there was this common sentiment or common perspective amongst the room, where they just assumed international students either did not have sex coming to the country or if they did have sex, it was only with other international students. So, Kiwis were not in danger at all. You know, and I think if anything the biggest learning experience for me has been realizing how insurance as a market, as an industry works. I think even for Brandon as well, we've gained a lot of insight as to how as an industry insurance works and as student leaders, as student advocates, as activists, you know, on the ground who love shouting and screaming things out loud, we take a very proactive stance with the way we do our work, but insurance as an industry is very reactive, so they need a triggering event to happen for them to then put policies in place so that when it happens again, it's protected and it's covered for. There needs to be that one guinea pig, the one goat that gets slaughtered prior for them to realize that this is hazardous, this is a health issue, this is a safety issue. And then they'll take it seriously. And for them, because this country has ACC, insurance has been so lucky with some of the biggest sexual health claims that international students have had, whether it be rape or assault. ATC covers most of the accidents, crime-related injuries, workplace injuries. Sorry, we went on a massive tangent, but I think to answer your question, Mahek, I

think the entire experience negotiating with them in the room has been incredibly humbling at the same time. It's easy to walk into a room and demand things and complain about them and say, fix the problem and bring the problem to the table, but we're not really coming with solutions. We're coming with the problem and identifying the problem and raising awareness about the problem. And from their perspective, they want to try and address it to find an amicable solution. And as law students, people would assume Brandon and I are very well-rehearsed for this kind of negotiation. But I think it's a lot harder because you're not sitting across people who take you seriously. You're taking them very seriously, but they do not look at you in the same manner, which is disappointing to say the least. But after a couple of meetings, I think that rapport finally got built. And I think they eventually started to look at us seriously and the tone started changing.

And so, I think we are making progress, but it's not at the pace at which we would like to be working at. And I think we're pressured for time because of how short our roles are. But progress is happening. I just think the pace upon which these bureaucracies move is incredibly frustrating to be a part of.

**Mahek:** My next question, from hearing your answer, it just popped into my mind. Like you said, your roles are short, you don't have a lot of time, there's going to be more people into your roles, more people feeling passionate about the same issues that you have and are going to be sitting at the same tables, maybe much younger than you, advocating and negotiating for the same things. Do you think that the people you speak to, maybe at the university level or policy level, have a lack of cultural competency? This is their job. Their job requires for them to be concerned about these things. This is a much broader question, but there's not enough people who can ever say, oh I relate to this. If you had to speak something about the very root of that problem, to absolutely look at the way this country works in a different way, going forward, because you've got so many people, so many immigrants, so many young kids coming in trying to establish themselves, and because it's supposed to be a developed country, which it is, technically, what would you have to say about that? This entire fact of somebody who makes these decisions for us sitting across the table, has a hard time even recognizing us.

**Varsha:** I think you're right; I think you're absolutely right, in the sense that the people in these roles, the ethos is not care, their ethos is, this is my 9-5, bread on the table and that's it. These people don't get paid enough to be thinking more than they should be thinking, or caring more than they should be caring, or being more culturally aware than they should be, than they are, you know. And this is not to justify the way they are. It's more to just say that, like, I'm happy to give them the benefit of the doubt, but I agree that they're super culturally unaware, and I agree the root cause of any prob-



lem is this large systemic misunderstanding, or this large lack of systemic representation to provide space for understanding, which I very much see in these spaces for sure. Because if somebody had approached this entire concept of international student insurance with duty of care or duty of, you know, like who the onus is on or what sort of priority health care needs minority communities desperately should have access to. If those were the primary questions asked, maybe we wouldn't be sitting at this table right now needing to advocate for these things. But those were not the primary questions asked because those are not the foundations upon which this industry functions on, or the university functions on, you know? And so, I feel like it's easy to sit across as people of color and complain saying you don't understand me because you're a white person, but like, we have to work amicably with them at the end of the day, and I think there's always space to grow and learn and change from things and I really hope these experiences are as learning and eye-opening and insightful for them as they are for us you know in terms of gaining administrative skills but like for them as well culturally being more aware of what student issues are, what POC student issues are, what international student issues are, you know like yeah I think there is there is that massive hole it's very evident.

**Brandon:** I think empathy is kind of like the key here. In our first meeting, the people sitting across the table, they couldn't give two cents about what we had to say. We had a very nice presentation, and it was an appeal to the humanitarian kind of instinct.

And they just kind of shot it down, and it's like, we don't care. But essentially they said, we don't really care. But as we kept grinding and grinding, and we kept, what was the word, like, whatever statements that they made that were inaccurate or that were misleading, we had to quickly, like, you know, educate and correct them, say, no, that's not how it works like that. You can't say, you can't do this but do that at the same time. That's hypocritical. We don't say hypocritical, but along those lines. And slowly, I feel like we saw more results in terms of them coming around to our understanding.

**Varsha:** It's tough, but it's something that I think we all just grow up and face, navigating a wide world. Like, I love to call New Zealand a third world country with a first world mask, because as much as people think it's a developed country, they are still functioning in certain ways like a third world country. You know, I hate those terms, I come from a third world country, but when I come here, I'm like, the whole world loves New Zealand, but when you only, you know, the grass is always greener on the other side until you move there.

**Mahek:** I'm bringing it back to this university. You started on with this entire project, if I'm not wrong, the beginning of last year, all of you got together. I just want to bring this back to how- I don't know if I should put this in my article, if it will get me into trouble, but this entire conversation really is driving me, and I am going

to bite the bullet and go for it- how has the university been? Because going back to how students don't have negotiating power, you must speak up to the university. What has their response been like? Have they taken this seriously? Have they not?

**Brandon:** Indifference is the best word.

**Varsha:** Yeah. I would agree.

**Brandon:** Stoic is the correct term.

**Varsha:** Stoic is the right term, yeah.

**Brandon:** Indifference and stoic. Yeah.

**Varsha:** Well, you can't be indifferent and stoic, but I would say stoic. Yeah.

**Mahek:** And going forward, you want this place to be better, more welcoming. What would you, as people who have spent so much time advocating, if you had to say something to the university, for your future students, your future representatives, people who will be sitting in your chairs in a few years and would be advocating for the hopefully not the same issue. If you had to say one thing to this university from your experience as people of colour and as international students, what would you?

**Varsha:** It's a very loaded question. You go first.

**Brandon:** I think accountability is something I feel like is important here, because the university says that they are an inclusive space, they are a diverse, they are deprived of diversity, and we want to keep you to your word, because you have a policy here that is neither inclusive nor diverse. And we want you to change it. Live up to your promise.

**Varsha:** I think I would tell the university to stop being so reactive and be proactive. I say these two words all the time, but I think it's because I genuinely believe it so much. I wish the university, if a student comes with an issue, don't just react to the issue of providing a support service right there. Think beyond it. Think beyond it. Be like, oh my god, so that's one international student that has the courage to come and report this. How many haven't? Why is this issue even existing in the first place? How do we avoid this from happening in the future? You know, like, I think the university needs to start taking more of a responsibility, share more of the onus, you know? You don't need a pastoral code of conduct to be there to remind you of what your obligations are. I mean, I think that document should hold you to it and students should use it to its advantage, to push the uni, to do what they need to do, but regardless, this should have been the uni's position in the first place. And it's to be more proactive so that you can change culture and not just change one situation for a student. Yeah.

**Mahek:** I'm making this quick. This is a bit of a factual question. Since I'm putting this in a magazine and people are going to be, okay, so this has happened, where



are we now? So, if you would like to give a brief update on what's going on, what's the future of this project? Where has it been? What is the time frame within which we can expect change?

**Varsha:** Time frame is always a hard one. And I really want international students to understand this because this project has been going on for a year and a half. The goal was to finish it by the end of this year. But we only have quarterly meetings scheduled with insurance providers. We've done two this year. One at the start of the year and one in the middle. So we have two more left. The stage we're at currently is Allianz, which is the parent company of StudentSafe, have for the first time in their existence, created a survey. Because of the way we have been pushing this campaign, and what international student priority is when it comes to access to healthcare.

The survey was sent out to better understand how international students would rank their priority needs. Because regardless of what Brandon, Viha and I have been advocating for, we are three opinions. And we are three collective opinions speaking on behalf of international students, but we would still like to consult with them. So, this was us pushing the insurance company to consult with the larger group, and that's what the survey has done.

Moving forward from this is to analyse the data and results of the survey and try to see a way to rebalance which other area of healthcare we can dip our money in to rebalance money for coverage for sexual health. Because at the end of the day, again, it's a balancing act. As much as I would rather get international students to pay an extra \$100 or \$200 a year to cover sexual health insurance, the reality is there's money allocated to certain types of coverage that barely get used. So how about we try to rebalance first before we add on more money? that's the next step based on the results of the survey, and those are the next steps in terms of negotiation to see where this goes forward from there. so even if this doesn't get finished within this year, and that's why I mean like timeframes are so hard to monitor, I think Brandon, Viha and I would love to see this to the end, and so we'll see how we can keep our hands on this project throughout the next year. But it's nice that we have Rainbow Law, NZ MSA, NZISA involved and AUSA involved because that means we've got lots of organization input which means that regardless of how committed we're to this, there are organizations that can sustainably carry our work.

**Mahek:** If you guys had to say one last word to the students here, if you had to say one last word to international students to tell them why you do what you do, why you're so passionate about it, and why should they, even if nobody is obligated to, why should they care? If there is even a little fight in them saying this is not right, what would you say to those students to build that fire up and go for it?

**Brandon:** I think the thing about especially international students is that they prefer to hunker down, keep their head down and just get on with life, you know. I think that's a good thing. down, keep your head down and just get on with life. Honestly, I wouldn't like that too, but the reality is you're always going to be faced with different challenges. And I think the key here for international students and migrants is to have the moral courage to advocate for what they think is right, to pursue something better for their own life, right? It's, what do you call it? It's, you took the risk to come to a new country because you wanted a better or a different, diverse experience. Why stop there, you know? You've already done the first step, taken the hardest step, coming to a new country. Why are you stopping there? You have to just keep going. The journey is not going to be easy, but that's what life is, isn't it? Life is not perfect, but you always strive.

**Varsha:** Yeah, I fully agree. I think my advice to international students would be don't be shy to ask for help. I think we all come from cultures where we struggle to raise our hand and say, I need help, but we're so ready to give out our hands to offer help. So I think my advice to them would be ask for help when you need it, don't wait until the last moment, rely on AUSA, rely on the support structures available here. And more than that, if the university is going to treat you like a consumer, behave like a white Karen consumer. That's my advice to them. You are paying \$60,000 a year for your education, you get your dollars worth. And that means in insurance, in access to health care, in access to the service you get, like standing in line at student hubs, whatever it is, if the institution is going to be charging you these ridiculous amounts because you are a consumer using their product, you act like a consumer. You know? You are here for your rights, which are to get educated, and anything and anything that comes in discrimination for you accessing that, you make noise, you ask, you shout, you raise your hand, ask questions, ask for help, because if you don't do it for yourself, in all honesty, nobody else is going to. And I genuinely mean that because we are like the last thought of the last thought on our, on anybody's head, on anybody's thoughts, on anybody's agenda, even though we are the backbone of this entire university being able to stand on its two feet every single day. So, I think that's what I would tell my international students.

**Mahek:** And that was amazing, thank you!



### 1. *When We Meet Again*

I've been longing to write something,  
Lengthy drawn-out lines or a few tender words.  
Was it after I heard someone unknown randomly mention your name on the radio  
Or was it after listening to that you song you used to sing for me.  
Could it have been after reading the poem written as an ode to a lover  
Or was it not? Because we never were lovers.  
Maybe it isn't any of those things and all of them too.  
I don't know when, where we will meet again  
But we, for sure shall meet and then  
The silence between us will be little less deafening.  
The scars in our heart a little less deeper.  
And the distance between us a little less farther.

BY ANJANA S

### 2. *Lustfully Yours*

There was something appeasing about this newfound passion.  
This electric energy between you and me.  
The pounding of my heart when talking to you, that I was used to  
But this quivering of lips and fluttering at my navel is new to me.  
The love I had for your being, that I was used to  
But this pining for your body and the touch of your skin is new to me.  
The longing to have you around, that I was used to  
But this burning desire to have your sweat on me and this dewy warmth between my thighs is new to me.  
And so I wait for your return in fortitude, when I can hold you close  
To lose my entirety in you and find that, what I was used to.

### 3. *Mental Mirages*

All the places, beaches and mountains, rivers and valleys,  
everywhere you went you left a piece of yourself. A piece,  
broken from your aching heart, trembling fingers, teary eyes,  
each of it searching, waiting in a long motionless stance for my arrival.  
Walking through the same paths as yours, they are now emblazoned in my soul.  
Even though we never met, long before nature decided the rendezvous, I knew you.  
Through those fragments. With each piece I deciphered a little more of that long-forgotten cryptogram.  
It is still defective and only half done, but I trust my intuition,  
to treasure and protect those bits of you till we meet, my love.







## *Voyage of Dreams – An Indian Student's Tale*

JIYA DUTTA

Oh Delhi, the heart of India's embrace,  
A city pulsating with vibrant grace.  
Where ancient tales and modern life stand.  
There lies a culture, diverse and grand,

The spicy bhelpuri, oh how I miss,  
The flavours of golgappas, a tangy bliss.  
Mouth-watering momos, steamed to perfection,  
And refreshing lemonade, a sweet connection.

The busy street markets, with their vibrant tapestry,  
Where life unfolds like a kaleidoscope of diversity.  
I yearn for the hustle and bargaining uproar,  
Where shopkeepers and buyers strike deals galore.

And oh, Delhi Metro, the lifeline of the city,  
Carrying dreams and hopes, oh so swiftly,  
"Next station is..." echoes through the train,  
As I reminisce about memories, mingling with the rain.

Now the land of the long white cloud, I tread,  
As an Indian student, with dreams widespread,  
The first semester unfurled, a voyage untold,  
March to July, a story yet to unfold,

In the hallowed halls of Auckland's domain,  
I delved into Commerce, a path to gain,  
Lectures, the symphony of wisdom's flow,  
Engulfed me, as seeds of knowledge they sow.

Meeting people diverse, from lands unknown,  
Stories unveiled; emotions sown.  
New faces, new cultures, a tapestry so vast,  
Each encounter, a chapter, a memory to last.

Canvas heart attacks, deadlines prevail,  
Stress and triumph, an intertwined tale,  
Assignments and exams, a rigorous storm,  
Navigating academia, with resilience in form.

When the weekends arrived, a treat awaited,  
Auckland's beaches, where serenity abated.  
Up high, the Sky Tower stood tall and grand,  
Auckland's skyline, a masterpiece, hand in hand.

Bubble tea's sweetness, a delectable treat,  
Sipping exotic flavours, my senses replete.  
Cafeteria's aroma, a warm embrace,  
Savouring Needo pasta, a tasteful grace.

Through words arcane, I seek to impart,  
The essence of my journey, etched on this chart.  
First semester's saga, adorned with complexity,  
A symphony of growth, my academic legacy.







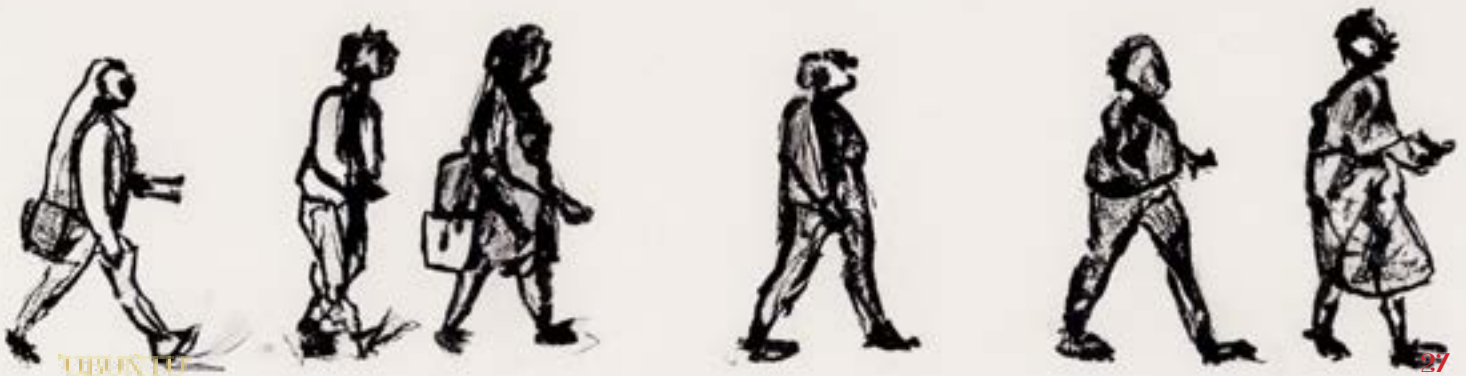
## Home

ISHIE SHARMA

home  
That's where I am now.  
But after 18 countries & 45 cities  
home doesn't quite look the same  
It's still south Auckland, rich with culture and courage  
but between the eastern line trains & the Auckland airport planes  
I seem to have lost a sense of security  
Security in the concept of what home looks like  
because home was my whānau out for a Saturday morning drive  
home was my friends having pres with some music  
what a vibe  
home was the bits of te reo that I didn't speak for a while  
home was all the kind strangers that offered help, always with a smile :)  
home was tesco meal deals & trams to lace market  
home was writing poetry, sitting on my carpet  
home was seeing old friends in new places  
and home was taking thousands of pictures but leaving no traces  
Yet after 178 days away, I've come to realise  
That home, is me  
& I am home.



THE QR CODE AS IT IS A SPOKEN  
WORD POETRY





## Homesick Toast

FRANCINE KATE MULA

It is with great *pain* for me to  
offer this toast regarding my  
wearisome yearning to return to  
my land of origin.

I have no rue departing  
motherland, but I do regret  
leaving behind all my paisans and  
the affiliated memories.

The familiar smell of home  
cannot be found anywhere else.

The everyday sight of compatriot  
custom and beaming faces has  
become something I wish to see  
daily or at least occasionally.

That well-known jargon that  
everyone else uses is all I long to  
hear and speak without being  
compromised by the terrorizing,  
coerced universal language.

Maybe *one day*, I'll wake up to a  
panorama filled with a  
ubiquitous multitude of  
electrical cables and masses of  
habituated units. One day, I can  
finally say –

I'm home. Cheers.









# What Bollywood Movie you should watch this week based on your Zodiac Sign



**Aries:** Agneepath. The 1990 one. Or the 2012 one. One of those remakes that did the original justice. A son avenging his fathers death? Seems like the kind of ruthlessness you guys would like. Matches with your weird driven energy.



**Taurus:** Aaah the way too optimistic ones. I think the entire Golmaal franchise. Go binge watch it. And even if the jokes are too cringe for you, laugh out loud anyway because I told you so.



**Gemini:** Badla. Without a doubt. Just screams Gemini energy. A shout out to you for never actually being the way that you seem. And yes, that was an insult hehe.



**Cancer :** I have a bone to pick with you guys. No I wont. That'll just make you cry. I will give you the iconic. The masterpiece. The stunning. DDLJ. Dil-wale Dulhania Le Jayenge.

Just go ask the nearest Indian what they thought of the movie because I won't bother with a brief.



**Leo:** Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara. Because you know you won't get a second chance at life. So pack that bag. Board that flight. But first, befriend the richest rich kids you know who can fund your bachelors trip to Spain.



**Virgo:** Andhadhun. I challenge you guys to figure this one out before the movie ends. And don't come looking for me if you still don't get it.

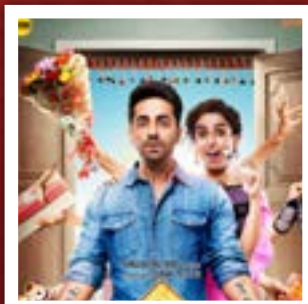


**Libra:** You sweethearts. Eh. Koi.. Mil Gaya. Because you keep running into your exes at every corner. Bad joke. And not related to the film at all. I just have some history with Libras.

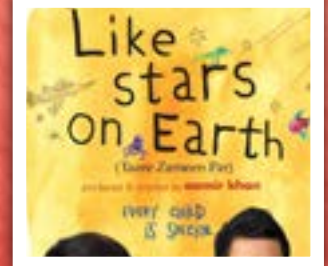
But because that was in the past, I submit to you, Koi.. Mil Gaya. A childhood favourite.



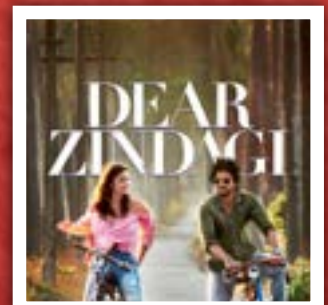
**Scorpio:** Ouch. Your words hurt even before you utter them. NH10. A personal favourite. And the cause of my nightmares all throughout 8<sup>th</sup> grade.



**Sagittarius:** I'm trying to combine out there and elegant. I know. Badhaai Ho. A hilarious rib tickler that still satisfies your need to be socially aware.



**Capricorn:** I want to hug a Capricorn even before I meet them. I submit to you, Taare Zameen Par. You should come find me if this movie does not move you.



**Aquarius:** Totally biased. I am one. Dear Zindagi. Feel good but out there. One of my go-tos on any day. A little basic but there is a reason why it is that good.



**Pisces:** Queen. To deal with your moodswings. And your midlife crisis. And your frustration. And the fact that you want to stay but leave all at the same time.



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