

145. Letter from Harnng Luh Sin



Dear Ladies,

When I was pregnant with my first child during the final year of my PhD, I was told/warned/advised/woefully sympathized on – I was never going to complete my PhD now that I was going to have a baby. “Such a pity”, I once overheard. And indeed, I too knew of too many examples of derailed PhDs even without all that negative commiseration. Surely, this must be the end of my academic career.

But. I did complete the PhD. I submitted my thesis for examination exactly one year after my child was born. Within that same year, I received two scholarships from my alumni, National University of Singapore (NUS). The first was to sponsor the rest of my PhD, and the second was to sponsor my postdoctoral fellowship in the following year. These also assured that a tenure-track job awaited me at NUS upon the completion of my postdoctoral fellowship. For these I am grateful, for I was given the shelter and stability that allowed me to tide through the roughest years when my children were little.

But the roughest years are still these that we are now in – these covid-19 pandemic years. And again, I am grateful, for throughout this all, my wonderfully nurturing, supportive and understanding colleagues and students from Sun Yat-Sen University, School of Tourism Management sheltered my heart and showed me the magnitude of graciousness and togetherness that an academic family can be.

To those that believed in me, urged me on, gave me support, never let me give up, and always had a kind word or some chocolates to share – you are why I am still here. Thank you.

And to everyone reading this:

Seek those that allow you to stand tall and raise you up to become more than you can be.

And when you grow to become a pillar in this academic world – become the mountain other women can stand on, become the shelter for other women in stormy seas, become the reason why other women persist and prevail, and become the kindness the world needs.

A long time ago in one of my last undergraduate examinations, I wrote in an essay about how I believed that the Geography (my home discipline) and the Social Sciences is about critically studying and teaching issues that were socially relevant and addressed social justice. Now, almost two decades later, having been thoroughly grinded by academia and challenges in life, I would say,

I am not done yet.

You and I.... we, are not done yet.

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the Chinese characters 'Harng Luh Sin' written in a cursive style.

Harng Luh, Sin

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