



Aislin Sheldon (2017, DPhil Clinical Neurosciences; Women's Leadership Programme Co-ordinator) reflects on the challenges of conducting her DPhil work remotely, her investigations into current politics, including the #BlackLivesMatter movement, and the beauty and serenity of the College gardens.

I have been carrying on with DPhil work remotely, which took a while to get used to, but I'm managing to stay productive. The challenge of editing code and fixing analyses over Zoom has been quite an experience!

The pandemic has slowed my life down and given me time to appreciate the little things. I have been exploring more of Oxford, in particular the College's gardens. I've been struck by the fleeting nature of the beauty there and the ever-changing landscape of flowers. I appreciate the work that has gone into our garden even more; the purple and white Wisteria have always been my favourite, and I only realised now that it's the white variety that smells so fragrant. I have also used the lockdown to explore new hobbies, including embroidery, making my youngest sister a gift for her birthday.



This period has also challenged many of us to learn more about the Black Lives Matter movement, racism in academia, white privilege and what we can do as white allies. I recently attended a talk on racism in science by Angela Saini. Angela is the author of *Inferior - How Science got Women Wrong* and *Superior - The Return of Race Science*. As we know, academia is dominated by people who identify as white, but what surprised me most about her talk is that research into genetics and the disadvantage faced by non-white communities is continuing. Even now, throughout the pandemic, well-meaning scientists are looking for a genetic explanation for the disproportionately high mortality rates among the black community, all the while forgetting that they are at heightened risk of dying from nearly all non-natural causes, and for a variety of societal and environmental factors that are unrelated to genetics. I would recommend listening to any of her future talks!

