Honoring Gulden Ozcan

Hope is political

Simten Coşar

ABSTRACT

SNAC+ (University of Lethbridge) Excellence in Equity Award Ceremony

HOPE IS POLITICAL

Thank you Mike for the opening prayer, thank you Caroline, the SNAC+, and thank you Gülden for making this ceremony possible. Thank you that I can talk with the honor to celebrate Gülden's academic achievements, activism, friendship, story-telling and every other aspect that she touched to my life since the very first day that I came to know her in a classroom in Ankara, Turkey two decades ago. This ceremony gives me the opportunity to express my appreciations for Gülden in public for the first time – since I missed all the past opportunities.

I need to be brief in my relation to Gülden – not an easy task. So, I wrote some moments that are marked in my photographic memory.

Moment 1: Second year students in the Political Science and International Relations department. Introduction to Political Science class. Two curious eyes, silently listening to my lectures; sits next by the door, at the corner – as if trying not to be noticed by the rest of the class. An impossible task for Gülden – no way, you are bound to notice her. She does not like to talk too much; gives brief but well-organized answers when I force her. (In the later years she teaches me how it is not that fair to force the silent students to speak… Long story.) Her answers to the questions are intelligent. I put a mark about her for the coming years.

Moment 2: We meet regularly to read Das Kapital – among other texts. She is now my undergraduate research assistant. I feel lucky to have her as such and to read with her. She is astonishing. Sometimes I feel embarrassed for not being ready enough for her insightful questions.

Moment 3: I invite her and a couple of other undergraduate and graduated students to dinner. Her close friend tells that she is afraid of dogs – since as usual there is a dog, name: Kizim, who owns me then. Gulden comes in; I tell Kizim to stay away from her. She does so. Then Gülden starts to pet her. And that's all. I very well know it needs courage and openness for someone who is afraid of certain non-human animals to get close to them. Gülden has the courage and openness – above all, the care and compassion to do so for someone waiting and asking to be loved by her.

Moment 4: I warn her about the elderly tendency in her friendships – the majority of her friends are way older than her. Including me. We are now friends, colleagues, comrades in activism – though oceans apart. Though she publicly tells that I am her long-time mentor, frequently I find myself asking for her advice, recalling her deeds and words in difficult times.

Mment 5: We write together. It is a teaching, enriching process. It is a process that helps you to come to terms with your doubts about what you are writing, to integrate the personal, emotional, everyday instants into cold academic patterns that warm up the texts.

Moment 6: We write stories together. Leyla is there, too. It is again a teaching venue, but above all a joyfully fulfilling process. Gülden, thanks for being a part of the Sewing Machine, thanks for adding your word to mine and Leyla's.

Moment 7: Ekim is born. I can observe her sensitivity in raising that beatiful child. I can observe the joy in his body, smile, looks and everything. Gülden and Özgür, you make his joy live and continuous.

Moment 8: We continue to write together after Gülden is diagnosed and starts her treatment. Writing is the bond that connects us; words are the magical rings that connect us; above all friendship in all its meanings is the name that I give to my relation with Gülden.

Thank you, canım Gülden for being on this earth, for finding me quite early in this life, for being around stubbornly, for being such hard-headed woman despite all the hurdles, and for giving hope. Thank you for being my memory.

You are the hope.

Simten Coşar

Feminist Asylum
Sampsonia Way Magazine
Sewing Machine