

A piece On the Power of Optimism and Generositiy

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I believe in optimism and generosity. These two have influenced me more than anything else, and they were seeded in me as a kid in Morocco.

Where I grew up, I noticed that giving was not the exception, but it was the standard. People didn't wait until they were rich before giving. They gave through habit, through love, and even just out of trusting nature. In Fridays, there's this ritual where my family's doorbell rings and the neighbor stand right next to the door with a platter of couscous or fresh Moroccan bread. It was always because: "We made extra." No sense of "favor owed," but only the unspoken notion that goodness was to be shared like air.

There is one memory that comes to mind. I must have been about 13 years old when a fruit vendor's cart was standing outside our house. The cart was old, rusty, and loaded with fruits. The man was pulling forward, using all of his energy, but the cart stuck halfway up the slope. Drops of sweat were streaming down his face, and his voice trembled as he swore, "Ya Allah, help me." My father did not hesitate to dash out of the door. I trailed behind, afraid but refusing to hold back. We both tried to lift the cart, but the cart was too heavy. A neighbour walked past, then another, until there were four sets of hands straining and pushing the cart along.

When we were finally able to bring it to the top, the seller stood up and kept repeating again and again, "Allah yjazikom bikhir" which means in English "May God reward you with goodness." My father just smiled and said, "We help because sooner or later we'll need someone to help us too." Those words gave me goosebumps. I realized that giving was not about showing off or hoping for something back. It was about hope, the hope that the good you had sent out into the world would return to you, though you might not be able to observe how or when.

That small act put me on a path I would take. In Morocco, hope and charity were not concepts, they were experienced through gestures and mutual suffering. People hoped for a better future and acted toward one another in such a way that the future became possible.

Years later, when I came here to the United States, I was in another world. Everything was huge: the cities, the opportunities and even the difficulties. At first, it overwhelmed me. There were times when I doubted myself, doubted whether I was meant to be here, whether I would make it. But when those times arrived, I learned by the lessons of hope and compassion back in Morocco.

When I was lost, I reminded myself to be optimistic, to have faith that hard work pays. I smiled at strangers even when they didn't smile back, and to my surprise, many of them did. I discovered that optimism is contagious. It's not blind hope that everything will somehow magically get better but instead, it is a daily choice to have faith that even small actions matter.

Generosity followed me as well. I learned that being generous didn't have to be about giving money or large items. It was actually being there for another student who needed help on homework or looking for rent, offering food to a starving friend who forgot to eat his lunch, or just sitting and listening to someone who needed to talk because maybe he doesn't have someone to talk to. Those small things reminded me of Morocco, of neighbors stopping by to deliver couscous just because, and of my father's words that doing good is an investment in the future.

Moreover, optimism and generosity aren't always easy. There are days when I've given my time or energy and received nothing in return but there will be a time when I'll see those actions that I did for the future. There are moments when optimism feels like nothing, especially when faced with disappointment. But Morocco taught me that generosity

is not about keeping score, and optimism is not about ignoring reality. They are choices. I can decide that being generous is worth it, even if I never get to see the fruit of it. I can decide to go through trouble with hope, even though I have no idea what will happen.

Furthermore, I realize that optimism and generosity go a long way together. To be generous is to hope that what you give will count, that the next day will be a brighter one because of what you did the day before. It's interesting how the Moroccan culture and my religion literally encourages each of us to smile and give charity because God will never disappoint human beings, if you think that you are out of luck just remember that your time hasn't come yet.

In school, I was feeling nervous to respond to the questions the professor asked even though I was confident with my answers and also found difficulties to understand the instructions that the professor gave me because I'm still new to the American education system. However, optimism helped me push these challenges and I remember that a lot of people back in Morocco that would die for this opportunity that I have. What I did to counter these problems is by using the campus resources

such as the tutoring center, advisors and the library also talking to classmates and that's how I started making friends.

Also, I started seeing generosity being given in different ways. In Morocco, it's usually hospitality and food, but the United States was more about giving opportunities such as this business professor who spent extra time with me and we discussed about how she would help me get into this prestigious university because her friend is the president and they can help me through the application process and also this classmate who invited me to study with him and his friends and share our ideas.

In addition, optimism plays a huge part in my life and how I see my future with it. Especially when I encountered this new education system which was totally different in my home country, but I didn't give up. It reminded me to forget about the cons of it but rather focus on the pros and the possibilities to achieve academically. Every time I work on a tough assignment or exam and get a good grade, I start celebrating and this shows that if you stay positive and being consistent you can achieve anything.

Generosity on the other part is a good way to connect with other students by sharing my home-made meal and my Moroccan pastries, or by tutoring other students in French lessons since I'm a French speaker. Even if I couldn't recreate the same generosity as in Morocco I learned how it is to carry it in small personal ways.

Overall, I believe in generosity and optimism. I think one of the greatest investments is to believe in these ideas because you will grow spiritually and stay positive, the action you make will have consequences in the future. So, even if you make a small generous act, God will reward you and will send you someone to help you someday. The reward could be the insurance that paid for your hospital bills or car accident, also could be that you found other alternatives to save money or someone helped you out or did you a favor, could be anything.