

# **The Story of a Third Generation Migrant**

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My name is Güler Yasemin Kilic, I am 18 years old and the youngest of four children. I am one among thousands and hundred of thousands of children of third generation Turkish migrant families. And today I wish to tell you about the story of my family, an example for many other families.

It all started with an opportunity given to my grandfather, a risky and frightening one. He was given the chance to go to Germany to find better work and ensure better living conditions and a more promising future for his children. The offer came even though he had absolutely no knowledge of the German language or culture. He left his home village, that was so small that until recently it couldn't be found on Google Maps, for a German city and he never really came back.

In the 1970s he started working for Daimler, the German car and truck manufacturer. And if one thinks about this for a moment, they might realise how much of a deal that is, considering my grandfather was a simple farmer living the simplest life imaginable. And that farmer now worked together with machines in industry. In 1990 my father who followed my grandfather to Germany together with his older sister and my grandmother also followed in his footsteps and entered Daimler. Nowadays my father often tells me how he regrets not having pursued a higher education, not having strived for knowledge but chose rather to work and earn money in his youth. My mother is just like the rest of my ancestors originally from Turkey as well and she too moved to Germany in her infant years. She is also the only one with a German passport among my elders.

Even though my grandparents have lived in Germany for decades already, they were never able to communicate in the German language. My father as well still struggles with his pronunciation and grammar while my mother fortunately does not face such difficulties. But that is the brutal reality for many Turkish families living in Germany. I consider myself lucky because I know very well about families where it is much worse. For example, the neighbouring children of my early childhood. Two Turkish families lived in the house next to ours and I befriended the two girls who were almost two years older than me. Nonetheless I started school the same year as one of them, because she had to go to a special language school prior to being able to attend a German elementary school. She unfortunately also had to repeat the first year just as I moved to the second grade.

All of my siblings and I were born in the same city in Baden-Württemberg and grew up there. We were all raised more or less as bilinguals, though my parents talked to my older brother and me particularly in German rather than Turkish, not wanting us to have problems later in life.

However, they could not protect us from having to deal with racism at school, often for the most absurd reasons. I still remember vividly the hurtful words thrown at me every so often. It got particularly bad during football championships. I remember one time Turkey played

against Germany and lost. But being the proud, Turkish girl that I was, I decided to wear a tricot of the Turkish team the next day to school, earning many hateful comments. The most popular one that day was: “Why don’t you just go back to your own country?” This sentence caused me to actually have an identity crisis for the next several years. I didn’t understand, was I Turkish because my parents come from there, or was I German because I was born here? And yes, we visited Turkey every summer during holidays for a long time, but I could never have imagined living there. However, I didn’t let the other kids drag me down and instead studied a lot, always being on top of the class and graduating with the highest and best marks from elementary school.

All of my siblings including me went to a Gymnasium, the elite academic high school in Germany, and we all have our Abitur. At this point I would also like to mention, that I certainly wasn’t the only one with a migrant background, but there weren’t too many other Turkish children next to me. We were a minority for sure.

All of my siblings speak at least three languages fluently: German, Turkish and English. I additionally also speak Italian and studied French for eight years and I took lessons in Spanish just for fun. At 17 I decided to study Korean by myself, out of pure fascination and passion for foreign languages.

All of us have experienced university life already, but my brother decided instead to follow in the footsteps of our father and grandfather and is now in training at DAIMLER. My oldest sister studied Mandarin, my second oldest German, Italian and Spanish. I got accepted to the University of Cologne for German-Italian Law in July 2018 and ever since September 2018 I have been living and studying in Florence. And the funny thing about that is that even though I now officially am an immigrant in Italy, most of the time I am not treated as such. Many Italians do not know that I am not Italian and have no Italian roots, except for when I cannot express myself well and ask for help. I overcame my identity crisis and feel at home now wherever I go. But I know well the difference between how rough migrating was for my grandfather and how smooth it is for me.

If I would be able to travel back in time to tell my grandfather what my siblings and I have achieved so far thanks to him, he would probably not even understand most of the things I’d tell him. To him, it would be unimaginable and yet, it is only thanks to his courage and Germany’s offer of work that we managed to make the impossible real.

Children of foreign families might always have struggles in life, be it linguistic or social, but today I can proudly stand in front of you and tell you how I made it. And I didn’t only make it for myself or my family, but for all of my second and third and every other generation of fellow migrant brothers and sisters.

Thank you for listening.