

In Memoriam:

A Tribute to Kendra Koivu

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Kendra was Everyone's Teacher

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Kendra Koivu was a phenomenal scholar. She was an even better friend. She was whip-smart and had a delightfully dark sense of humor. Kendra made time to help you make sense of a budding research project or to commiserate about a personal struggle. She set aside her own problems to help you with yours. Kendra was reliable, tireless, and uniquely brilliant.

Last fall, we lost Kendra and all of her gifts to breast cancer.

In the pages that follow, Kendra's friends, colleagues, and students remember how magnificent she was. You'll find that many of the reflections in the introductory paragraph above appear, over and over, in their words.

Before turning to them, though, I would like to share my own story of Kendra's lasting impact. As our readers will recall, Kendra and I began as co-editors of QMMR. She was my colleague, of course, but she was also my friend. We bonded over many shared experiences: graduate school, new jobs on the tenure track, our love of mixed methods, QMMR, and, eventually, cancer.

When I was diagnosed with breast cancer in February 2018, Kendra had already been living with it for some time. Her first response to the news was to ask a series of questions about cancer types, drugs, and treatment regimes. I stood, mouth agape, unsure how to respond. Like a first-year graduate student, I felt clueless about the world I was about to enter. Kendra was my teacher. As with set-theoretic logic (Mahoney, Kimball, and Koivu 2009) or illicit crime syndicates (Koivu 2016), Kendra had become an expert on breast cancer.

We ended up undergoing the same chemotherapy regime. Her twelve-week cycle began shortly after mine came to an end. During that time, we attended the QMMR Section Business Meeting at the 2018 Congress of the American Political Science Association (APSA). There, we officially assumed the mantle as QMMR co-editors. It was a quick thing, our introduction to the section. But to me it felt very powerful. We stood there as two women, two junior scholars, and two cancer patients. We were both bald, although Kendra wore a stylish headscarf.

Kendra took her cancer in stride—living and even thriving with it for years. I did my best to emulate her example. When I found I could not work, Kendra was there to pick up the slack of our shared responsibilities. When I needed to unload about my fears and my pain, Kendra was there to listen. I'd like to think I provided her some comfort as well, but Kendra gave so much more than what she asked for in return.

I will never forget standing with Kendra, on that evening, in front of our peers. It is, without question, one of my proudest accomplishments as a scholar.

Kendra's legacy to scholarship and to the academy, as our readers will see, is indisputable. What I will celebrate most and remember always are Kendra's gifts as a friend and a teacher. She helped to empower me as I took on cancer, just as she empowered her students (see the pieces by Calasanti and Vera-Adrianzén in this tribute); her colleagues (see the pieces by Nelson-Nuñez, Brookes, and Niedzwiecki); her friends and co-authors (see Day's piece); and even her own mentors (see Mahoney's piece).

I miss Kendra. I will never forget her.

References

- Koivu, Kendra L. 2016. "In the Shadow of the State: Mafias and Illicit Markets." *Comparative Political Studies* 49, no. 2 (February): 155-83.
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