

# THE SIDEWALK

The student magazine for Texas  
Lutheran University  
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## **Get to Know Your City**

Discover the hidden secrets and shops that Seguin has to offer

## **A New Hope**

Students from Kosovo discuss their time at TLU and their plans to help their home country

## **Goodbye Mary Lou**

Hein Dining Hall won't be the same without Mary Lou, learn about her retirement plans



# *A New Hope*

by Naomi Urquiza



*Under the administration of Barack Obama, U.S. Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton, met with the President of Kosovo, Fatmir Sejdiu, and Prime minister, Hashim Thaci, to reaffirm the United States' full support of Kosovo on Feb. 26, 2009.*

*Lawmakers first announced the independence of Kosovo on Feb. 17, 2008. The people of Kosovo celebrated the end of the long road to independence that was paved with a separatist's war with Serbia for decades. Independence for Kosovo had been the hope of generations.*

*Now that Kosovo has officially been recognized as its own country, a large population of the country's youth has an incredible influence setting the foundations of education, leadership and prosperity.*

*The continued support of the United States has helped to influence a more optimistic view about their next steps and development in areas such as education. Currently there are 11 students from Kosovo attending TLU. Each year three students are selected from all of Kosovo, whose youth makes up more than half of its population, to receive a full scholarship to TLU. The students who are selected have demonstrated remarkable qualities and a desire to pursue a higher education in America and are expected to be the next leaders of the country.*

*TLU has been a part of building the future of Kosovo through the Education for Peace scholarship program created by Faton Tony Bislimi, a TLU alumni who attended Harvard University upon graduation and now works at the United Nations Developmental Programs (UNDP) in Kosovo.*

*Some of the current Kosovo students shared some of their aspirations, motivations and general perceptions of the University and the United States since studying at TLU.*





photo by Liz Clark

*"My country needs a new spirit...  
My country needs change."*



photo by Charla Bailey

Students from Kosovo and other international students who studied at TLU this semester gather in President Ann Svennungsen's home.

**Name: Drilona Aliu**

**Major: Finance with International Business specialization**

**Classification: Sophomore**

**Age: 20**

**Q: When did you first arrive at TLU?**

A: January 2008.

**Q: Was this your first time traveling abroad?**

A: Texas was not my first experience in the United States. I graduated from high school in Albany, New York, so I graduated from over there. That was my first experience traveling abroad and also being more familiar to American education even though I was already familiar because back home I was in the American School of Kosovo. So since high school, I have been more informed and more exposed to American education.

**Q: What have been some of your past memorable experiences?**

A: Well, I've lived in different countries and I am trilingual. I was born in Kosovo. I lived in Tirana, the capital city of Albania. I lived in Macedonia and then lived in Switzerland and then from there back home and from home to New York and New York to Texas.

**Q: What would you say are the most evident differences in your experience with the U.S. and Kosovo?**

A: The biggest difference is speaking English all the time. The other difference is I have to do everything on my own. If I don't do it then technically there is no one else. Back home I have my family and my best friend so I could have a little bit of support from them, but since I'm here everything is on my shoulders. So, that's the biggest difference, but I think that difference makes you more mature and gives you a deeper understanding of life.

**Q: Do you think you'll go back to Kosovo?**

A: Yes, I don't even think twice about it. I really want to go back. It's a definite yes.

**Q: What are you hoping to do when you return?**

A: When I go back I believe I can give my own experiences since I have experienced different things throughout my life. I am 20 years old but I've lived in so many different places, met with so many different people and been exposed to a lot of stuff and trying always to observe the good sides of things. Going back I know that my country needs a lot of help because it's a new country and needs people who are well-educated. They cannot do anything to make us go there but we have to go there and I believe that it's our responsibility as a citizen to go back and contribute to our country.

**Q: What role do you think the Education for Peace scholarship plays with the youth in Kosovo?**

A: Bislmi has done a great job. I really admire him and I personally value him a lot because there are a lot of other students who graduated like him. He took it one step further. He graduated for himself but he didn't think only for himself. He wanted other Kosovo students to come over here and have this experience and I really admire that.

**Q: What is the need that you hope to contribute to upon your return?**

A: My country needs a new spirit. It needs new people to contribute because if you are born, if you are raised in a communist country how do you expect that person to be democrat if he was raised up in those manners? He was raised up doing certain things. My country needs change. People who have gone to other countries experienced and know the differences. You can't just think that you know about other countries. You have to go and experience it in order to know the difference and I think that's what my country needs from us. Young people can do it and I believe that we can since we got our independence.





*photo by Liz Clark*



*photo by Ryan Brown*

In celebration of Kosovo's one year anniversary as an independent country on Feb. 17, 2009, Mjeku (left) and students from Kosovo hosted a booth in the Alumni Student Center to share the history of the country with those interested.

**Name:** Getoar Mjeku

**Major:** Political Science with a Pre-Law concentration, Spanish minor

**Classification:** Junior

**Age:** 21

**Q: When did you first arrive at TLU?**

**A:** I arrived here in the fall of 2006.

**Q: Was this your first time traveling abroad?**

**A:** No, a year before I was actually in Houston for eight months attending high school. I graduated there. When I returned home I was trying to decide if I should stay home, come back to Texas or seek opportunities in Europe. I was admitted to a couple of schools in Europe too and in the United States. TLU was by far the most adequate choice for me.

**Q: What motivated you to apply for the Education for Peace scholarship?**

**A:** I realized it was different than other scholarships because it had the word "Peace" ingrained in it and it was designed to help students like me come in from a newly established country that had not declared its independence yet, but helping these kinds of countries educate their future bureaucracy, their future leadership. So I thought in terms of education it would emphasize the disciplines I would need in order to contribute to my own community.

**Q: What would you say motivates you?**

**A:** I am greatly motivated by my own family that worked hard to see me where I am today and to make sure that I have a bright future. To make sure that each individual in our country has the opportunity to enjoy freedom. This is what motivates me. It is the greatness of my people and it's also the honesty, the greatness of this country that has welcomed me and the community here at TLU. These are great motivations. As well as the professors and making sure that I can meet their expectations because they trust me a lot by allowing me to be here on a full scholarship. So that is an additional obligation for me to pay back with educational achievements.

**Q: What were some organizations or internships you were a part of in Kosovo?**

**A:** I've had a job with a national television as a sports reporter and sports announcer. I worked for the news section and other sports programs. I covered mostly domestic basketball. After basketball season was over I started with a program about handball which is widely played in Kosovo. This was during the time when we were admitted to the International Handball Federation for the first time in a period of 20 years perhaps under our own name, as Kosovo. It was a great achievement. I interned with the office of Prime Minister Hashim Thaci back home as well. I worked mostly with the deputy prime minister and the office of legal support services.

**Q: Have you discovered any peculiarities while here at TLU?**

**A:** Great things I've encountered. The peculiarity here is that people will try to respect your own identity here and welcome you, where as some other places you have to conform... that's something great that you don't encounter in other countries. There are a couple of students here who have learned Albanian words. There is one student who is now actually able to hold conversations in Albanian and whatever he knows in Albanian he is going to say it in Albanian.



**Name: Kade Leniqi**  
**Major: Political Science**  
**Classification: Freshman**  
**Age: 19**

**Q: When did you first arrive at TLU?**

**A:** The fall 2008 semester was my first one at Texas Lutheran University. I began classes on the 19th of August and it was a big change in my life, but I am really glad for it. In the beginning it was a huge social transition.

**Q: Were you there and what were your feelings on the day you heard of Kosovo's independence from Serbia?**

**A:** February 17, 2009 marked a new excited beginning; Republic of Kosovo became the newest country in the world. When Kosovo's parliament had unanimously endorsed the declaration of independence, I was working as a news reporter for the national television Kohavision (KTV) in Kosovo. Joy and happiness was on Kosovar's mind while we were celebrating our independence and free country. I was happy to become part of the reporting during the biggest celebration of Albanians throughout the world.

**Q: What motivates you?**

**A:** My parents, Gani and Nurie Leniqi, they are my motivation. They always supported me in everything and always are there for me.

**Q: Do you plan to return to Kosovo?**

**A:** The chances for higher success to develop Kosovo are to return and work for it. I am very glad that I will have the chance to help in increasing the development of my community.

**Q: In what ways has TLU been a part of the plans you have for your future?**

**A:** TLU is one of the essential building blocks to build my career and it is going to provide me with the experience that I need to see myself and my country in a place of prosperity.

**Q: What do you hope to do once your return to Kosovo?**

**A:** One of the things that I do hope to do is to create a non-profit organization and to work with young people, because in my country more than half of the population is made up of youth. I would like to help them be a more active part of the public policy decision-making in the areas that influence them. For instance, my work after graduation is going to be intertwined with the challenges and the circumstances that encompass the people in Kosovo.

**Q: Do you think the peace scholarship program with the Bislimi group has contributed to the future of Kosovo, if so how?**

**A:** The Education for Peace Scholarship Program, which was founded by Faton H. Bislimi, is helping to build Kosovo's prosperous future through an American quality education. The peace scholarship is a wonderful way of connecting students of both countries. It allows for the young generation from both countries to start developing the relationships that take place during the time that we are pursuing knowledge here. The first generation of peace scholarship recipients will be graduating this May and we will begin to see what kind of a difference the experience here will do for both the individuals as well as the country.

**Q: What are some things that you hope to share with this community about your home country?**

**A:** An interesting fact about Kosovo is it ranks as one of the most optimistic countries in the world.

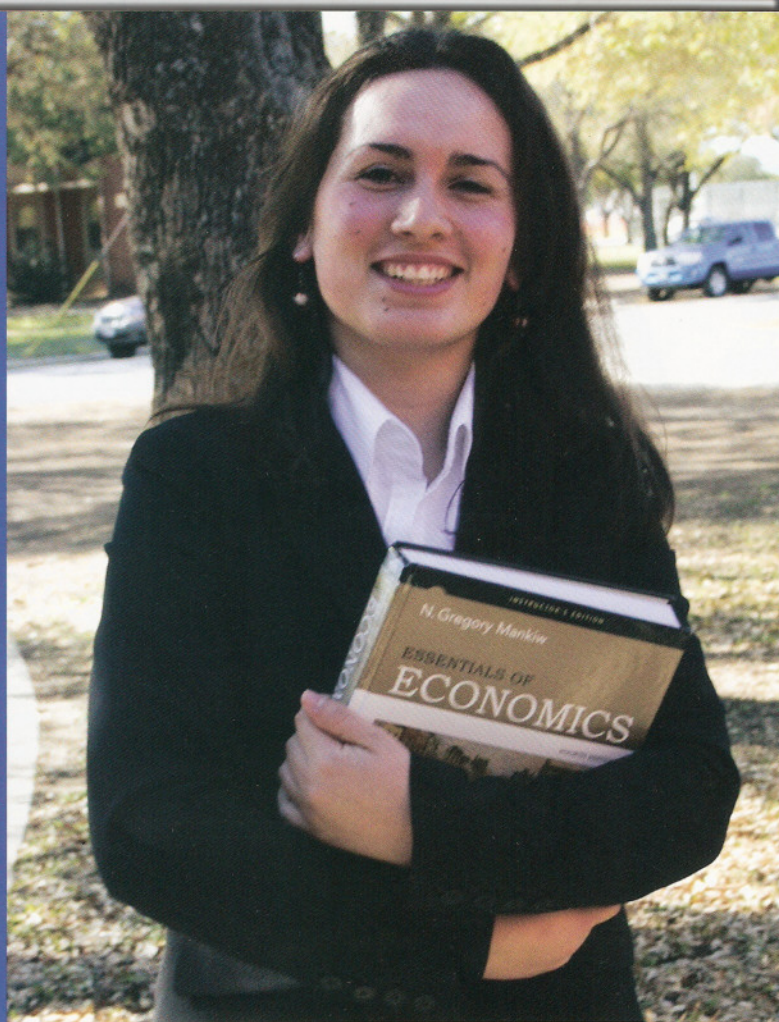


photo by Ryan Brown

*"An interesting fact about Kosovo is it ranks as one of the most optimistic countries in the world."*



photo courtesy of Kade Leniqi

Leniqi receives a certificate from the editor-in-chief, Adriatik Kelmendi, of Kohavision in Kosovo for successfully finishing an investigative journalism training program.