

Jennifer Mintzer
Temple University
Intercom Article

Sitting at a table by a lunch truck near Annenberg Hall, Kosovo native Naser Miftari enjoys a cup of coffee and reflects upon the past year of his life in the United States. Selected as a Ron Brown Fellow for matriculation in the Masters of Journalism program at Temple, the 26-year-old Miftari came to the U.S. for the first time in August 2000 to begin his graduate studies.

"I had the image of the United States somehow portrayed in my mind even before coming here. I have also seen bits of nice things in other countries that I have traveled to before, but I think that the United States has all those bits of things combined together in one land and that's what makes me like this country most," Miftari said.

Prior to coming to the United States, Miftari completed his bachelor's degree in journalism at the University of Tirana in Albania and worked for four years as a journalist for a daily newspaper in his hometown of Prishtina, the capital of Kosovo. It is this professional and personal experience that his current classmates and professors value a great deal.

Dr. Edward Trayes, professor of communications and director of the Master of Journalism program, appreciates the diversity that Miftari brings to his News Editing class. "Naser brings professional experience and insight that transfers directly into our classes," Trayes said. "He offers many opportunities for students to compare what happens with the press and journalists in the U.S. with what he knows about press coverage in the Balkans. Much of his work in class has provided new insights for his fellow students as well as his professors."

In the graduate editing class that Traves teaches, Miftari's knowledge was useful in discussing the situation in the Balkans, particularly, Traves noted "in regard to the Albanian and Serbian conflicts as well as the seemingly fluid political situation."

Miftari offers the class additional insights that included references to the multi-national peacekeeping force that is experiencing varying degrees of success in carrying out their respective missions.

Indeed, Miftari's experience as a journalist in his home country is a blend of professional and personal memories. He remembers having to stay inside to play most of the time when he was growing up because a tank was parked outside of his home. "The happiest day of my life was when the NATO bombings happened," Miftari remembers of the NATO bombing of the headquarters of the Interior Ministry building in Prishtina on March 24, 1999. The building was barely three miles from his home – a building that Miftari said was "considered the building of the evil, the building where the oppression apparatus was for more than 20 years."

Though Miftari described his hometown as being a nice, peaceful city, he noted that "the territory [Kosovo] has suffered a lot during the 1999 war, but gradually it's getting back into shape better than ever before and its majority population is slowly taking control over their day-to-day life after tremendous suffering that the Albanian population went through."

Upon completing his master's degree at Temple, Miftari plans to return to Kosovo where he will continue his journalism career. He extends his gratitude to the Institute of International Education, the State Department and to the Ron Brown Fellowship for making his study in the United States a reality.