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“IN OUR HANDS”

Gazmend Ejupi

University for Business and Technology - UBT, gazmend.ejupi@ubt-uni.net

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Abstract By Gazemend Ejupi

"IN OUR HANDS"

The immigration period affected many lives and many people from all walks of life, the most vulnerable were women;

"Hyjnesha" an archaeological artifact that dates centuries back, the icon and representation of the city of Prishtina (the capital) is the image of a woman. Living in Kosovo has its challenges, especially when you are a woman. Being born in Kosovo as a girl means having had a set of expectations before you even learn how to walk. However, despite the obstacles Kosovar girls and women face on a daily basis, giving the opportunity Albanian women excel, whatever the circumstances may be, they make the best of it. Be it education, work etc. Albanian women are thriving both nationally and internationally.

In the past few years we have seen women from Kosovo excel in all ranges of life: from Majlinda Kelmendi, to Atifete Jahjaga ; the first female president of Kosovo, to our pop icons Dua and Rita. The scene for women is exponentially expanding in all fields from photography to the arts to sciences to education and so forth. Kosovar women are becoming our very own milestones as a country and they go on to make history for our very own movement of gender equality pushing us towards a more fruitful future.

But the idea of womanhood is often taboo ridden enough, although we are in a state of constant progression, a woman on her own was seen as a scar and shame to society earlier on. The concept of these women being "superhuman" is that they defy every social standard that has been inflicted on them. Even to be a woman in today's society is to live, with some sort of backlash of everything and anything. The judgment is still somewhat present. The mentality that has been embedded for years has started to shift, but we cannot leave behind a past that has contributed highly and has pushed so much change to the womanhood we see today.

During the immigration period of the 70's up to the late 90's so many women raised families on their own without men or male figures in their lives. Our aim is to empower women with these stories, to show what power is. We will be interviewing 5 of these women, where they will share details of their personal stories of how they had to raise their families alone, without their husbands being present. The idea of these women being alone back in the day was absolutely terrifying but also inspiring at the same time, it's a mentality that has hovered for years. Kosovo still holds issues like female unemployment rates, unpaid maternity leave, and traditional values as arranged marriages and gender roles. This project would provide the adequate representation that women from Kosovo need.

Kosovo's female empowerment movement still has a long way to go even in the year 2020, but with progressing on to the future we must observe the past and only imagine what the 70s, 80s and 90s were like for the Kosovar woman in the immigration era. During that bleak period many women were left hopeless without their reliable spouses to raise families.

The very idea of a single mother in Kosovo still remains a taboo, the concept of it is still unfamiliar and for a woman to raise a child on their own is preposterous to our people. These women have fought their own fight in the fight for women's rights without even understanding their contribution towards it. It's important for us to

tell their stories, to teach generations young and old about the endurance of these women. These women are a landmark and a turning point and they deserve to make history. To be shown as they deserve and to hear out their struggles and victories, and for us to make history alongside them.