

# Nafie Berisha-Latifi

Journalist and Editor



*In the photo: Nafie Berisha-Latifi  
From the personal archive of Nafie Berisha-Latifi*

I am Nafie Berisha-Latifi, born on January 20, 1950, in the village of Dubrava, Kaçanik. I completed my primary and secondary education in Ferizaj, where we later lived. I started my studies in '70, at the then Faculty of Philosophy, now Philology, in the Albanian Language and Literature, Albanology department. My entire interest since childhood has been reading, reading, reading, and apart from daily and school obligations of all kinds, I have tried to read everything possible. I mean, the school and city library of Ferizaj were already exhausted for me by the seventh, eighth grade. Later, I researched, books were barely available at that time, I read everything, even in the Serbian language because we had limited literature in the Albanian language. Foreign writers, well-known writers were generally translated into Serbo-Croatian, and I read them *[laughs]*. To be honest, for a 12 to 15-year-old to read a Freud or a Kafka, or a... well-known writer, a well-known philosopher, and even Hemingway, wasn't very understandable at my age. But I continued to read. I remember the first book that sparked my desire for reading was *Robinson Crusoe*, and I experienced that book in every movement of the

character, in every fear, in every existential, life problem, on that island where he was left alone and endangered, and I still remember that book like a film. I read it so much, experienced it so deeply, and so on.

<<<Classroom scene>>>

In high school at *Normale*,<sup>1</sup> I was a distinguished student in essay writing, and those essays then helped me even in subjects that I didn't know very well. For example, mathematics and others, they thought I knew everything if I could write a good essay, an essay that stood out in school, was read in all the classes... this came as a result of extensive reading of books.

It was an extraordinary joy to be accepted at *Zëri i Rinisë*. The only magazine that was distributed throughout Kosovo, and it had... it had writings that were mostly affirmative. We tried to, let's say, promote good cases, promote good students, good workers in factories, everywhere, in institutions, in schools, in... In a way that they would serve as good examples, for others to follow that path. I mean, that was our message, very positive. We didn't chase scandals, we didn't chase spectacles, but we tried to highlight every good thing about the people, every good thing about the country, and to contribute in that way, to do the best we could as journalists. I have continued the same passion even now, although now I no longer have the concentration to remember everything I read. Perhaps it's also the age, and the mind that gets scattered from time to time, flying somewhere, whether it's good or not... but life brings moments as it does.

At the faculty, from the first year I stood out, my essays stood out, my written works stood out, so they invited me to be part of the student magazine *Bota e Re*. And there I started working from the first year. Later, they called me to *Zëri i Rinisë*, which was then the only youth magazine where I started working with a salary. But to tell you, throughout this time I worked in two, three magazines, because in one I had obligations, while in the other I was working as a freelancer, as they called it back then. I worked at *Zëri* for five, six years, initially as a junior journalist, then as a first and second category journalist, because back then you had to go through a lot of experiences to reach the categories, to advance in the profession. I was also a contributor to *Kosovarja*, the only magazine for women and families, where I later became a journalist editor, and I worked there for a long time, though I don't remember the exact years now. I also worked at *Shkëndija* as an editor. *Shkëndija* was an education magazine, and at the same time, I worked wherever I had requests to send articles. In 2000, that is when we had many problems with publishing magazines, when half of the magazines were filled with information from *Rilindja*, because *Rilindja* was banned, and the journalists sent the information to the magazines, to *Shkëndija*, *Zëri*, *Fjala*, *Bujku*, and eventually settled at *Bujku*, because *Bujku* was registered but not active, and it remained under the name *Bujku*. However, it had nothing to do with either the naming or the purpose of the magazine's founding. It was a *Rilindja* with a different name. We would create half of the magazines, while the other half was done by

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<sup>1</sup> *Shkolla Normale* was a teacher training school in Kosovo that played a crucial role in educating Albanian-speaking teachers, contributing significantly to the development of the education system in the region.

the workers of *Rilindja*, the journalists. I can say that *Rilindja*, in general, since its founding, has been a school of journalism, of publicism, and also a school of Kosovo's intellectuals. Many notable names worked there from its inception, they were patriots, people devoted to the nation, who gradually started journalism and publicism in Kosovo. There were prominent names, such as Esad Mekuli, Tajar Hatipi, Ali Hadri, Mark Krasniqi, Hivzi Sylejmani as the first generation of magazine founders. Then came the next generation, Ali Sutaj, who is known as the founder, the father of the magazines. He had such a sense of finding the opportunity, the situation, to establish and place a magazine, which was extraordinary. Because certainly at that time, I mean, the government, the state, was not very supportive of the education and cultural development of Albanians. And this first and then the second generation did everything possible to find ways to reach the population, the readers, the youth, the educated, everyone. And I can say that the contribution of *Rilindja* with the magazines... because the magazine was a separate unit, was extraordinary.



*Fieldwork*

*In the photo, from left to right: Vahide Hoxha, Nafie Berisha Latifi*

*From the personal archive of Nafie Berisha-Latifi*

As a journalist for *Zëri i Rinisë*, I was young myself, a first or second-year student, and in every article we wrote, in every report, in every interview, we tried to deliver a message. A message that especially girls, at that time, were closed off, uneducated. The number of educated women was limited, mainly those living in cities. We went to every corner of Kosovo, to all the villages in

Kosovo, and we spoke to girls and women about the need for education, for schooling. We encouraged them to escape early engagements, which were a phenomenon back then. And girls, apart from the obstacles within their own families, also faced obstacles from their fiancé's family. We promised them a lot and fulfilled all of that, because simply by encouraging them to come to school, they managed to escape... and I still think about the terror it must have been to escape, let's say, from a village in Istog.

<<<Nighttime forest walking scene>>>

And to arrive at night, there were neither buses, nor did they know the way, nor did they have the means. The risk of losing the way, the danger of the forests... I mean, the problems they faced on those roads, through the mountains, fields, farms, and... who knows where. They all managed to arrive, they came and found *Zëri i Rinisë*. The editorial office of *Zëri i Rinisë*, which was back then, the magazines were situated here behind the police station. There were some small barracks, and they found a way to get there before dawn, at any time, and when we arrived, we welcomed them, fed them, and took them to the dormitories of the secondary schools, where AUK is now, it was the dormitory of the *Normale* school. We enrolled them in the school of their choice, mainly oriented towards the Medical School. We provided them with scholarships, supported them materially, and morally too. We took extraordinary care for them to truly complete school and be examples for the other girls who remained in the village. To be their example, that if they successfully finish school and do not change their path or purpose for which they came. They would be role models for other girls.





*30th anniversary of the founding of the magazine Zëri i Rinisë, 1975*

*In the photo: Nafie Berisha-Latifi and her colleagues*

*From the personal archive of Nafie Berisha-Latifi*

I was the only woman, with male colleagues who had great respect for me, extraordinarily so, they were well-known names in journalism, older than me, but they had a lot of respect for me, especially when they saw that I was truly very dedicated to my work. They appreciated my work, my behavior, and my personality, I would say. We used to go on the field with one car, three journalists, one photojournalist, the driver, let's say we would visit three or four cities within a day, one would stop there, another there, and so on, each completing two topics there. We worked a lot, and I don't think the work ever tired us, on the contrary. Every Saturday, when the magazine was published, I would take it and check every comma of my article, and in most cases, I was happy, but naturally, I also had remarks about something I hadn't included or had forgotten, or which I later thought was more important. I believe journalism is the most attractive profession in the world, because you meet many people, many places, many situations, many cases, and you get to travel the world. In 1973, I participated in the international festival in East Germany, where 140 delegations from different countries took part. At that time, I crossed the Berlin Wall three times. It was an extraordinary experience, one I wouldn't have been able to do privately or experience otherwise. Then I traveled around Europe twice, covering health,

education, economy, and all sectors, and I must say we weren't specialized in one field. So, we had to prepare specifically for each topic. If you go to speak with a doctor today, you need to be prepared for what you are going to ask, what you are going to discuss, if tomorrow you speak with a lawyer, a doctor of law, for instance, you also have to be prepared for that situation. We didn't have the internet, nor did we have access to many sources of information, but each of us grabbed whatever we could. Newspapers, magazines, in Serbo-Croatian, Macedonian, I also lived in Skopje for a while, and Macedonian, the Slavic languages, I mean, were easy to learn. In short, we covered everything that was needed. I was also the fashion editor, the cooking editor, and of many, many columns that interested young people. For example, we had questions about sexual education at that time, love letters, many things that preoccupied the youth of that era.

Due to this immense passion for writing, for magazines, for newspapers, in the year 2000, I founded this, my own youth magazine *Rreze*, with the help of the American office at the time, it was an office, not an embassy. I created a project and submitted a request that was immediately funded. And for four years, I published my magazine. I had colleagues who would finish an article in 20 minutes, while I would barely manage to complete it in two hours. And I would still go back... and in *Rreze*, in that magazine I had created, the young journalists used to say, "Don't let her read it a second time, she'll change it again, she'll make changes." Every time I read it, I would always find something new, a new idea, a change in approach, a different presentation, a... the possibility, the imagination of a person who writes, or who reads, is endless. No one understands a book the same way, no one understands a work of art the same way, so... maybe I am that kind of person who gives it my all, I give it my full potential.

In 2004, I got sick, I was diagnosed with breast cancer, and it was a shock for me, not that I thought I was going to die, I didn't think about dying, but about the magazine being left behind, and I had funding for two or three more issues to publish the magazine... and who would take over? My colleagues didn't take it, because the way I worked, even without a salary, I would give all the money I received to the journalists to motivate them somehow. My colleagues would say, "They should pay us for publishing their articles first, and you, are you in your right mind? You're spoiling these kids." Anyway, that was my way of behaving, and some of them are now editors in TV stations, in the media.

I loved journalism, I loved my work.



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