

In her own words, alumna shares unique Tulane experience

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Tulane alumna Madina Papadopoulou is a lifestyle writer by day and a fiction writer by night. She returns to New Orleans often to visit her father, Kyriakos Papadopoulou, a Tulane professor of chemical engineering. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Editor's note: This article was written by Madina Papadopoulou, a 2006 graduate of the Tulane School of Liberal Arts.

“Laissez les bons temps rouler,” the familiar Cajun expression that translates to, “Let the good times roll,” drips in every drop of the New Orleans humidity—it might as well be the city’s official motto. Upon first hearing it, it sounds hedonistic—even

decadent. But on the other side of that rolling coin is a relaxed, resilient and resourceful approach to life. It's a philosophy I learned as a New Orleans native, and as a Tulane student during Hurricane Katrina.

While many universities are microcosms, functioning apart from the city they are nestled in, it's impossible to separate Tulane from New Orleans. The city's culture of hospitality, curiosity and joy permeate through the old hallways. Tulane holds in its balance a hunger for life with an appetite for intellectual curiosity. As the daughter of a Tulane professor, Tulane was as much a part of my childhood as the city, a home away from home. And during Katrina, Tulane literally became my home as we sought refuge there when the storm hit.

From Freret Street, I looked down to a campus drowning in water. When we finally left, I bid the city farewell, not imagining that it could ever bounce back. Many of my local friends lost their homes, their pets. Some even their family. My Tulane classmates were temporarily transferred to other universities around the nation. Whichever classmate I would talk to on the phone and ask how they liked their temporary school, I would hear the same answer: "It's not the same here. It's cold. It's uptight. I want to get back."

Adding to the deluge, I cried myself to sleep every night until finally, in December 2005, we went home. The city, usually so vibrant and bright, was dark and quiet. But then, in stark contrast to an otherwise empty neighborhood, one house was lit up for Christmas.

Before the spring semester started, I met with my thesis adviser at Newcomb—who put me straight to work so that I could complete my honors thesis by graduation. That semester, every Tulanian, every New Orleanian, committed to making it work.

And like that one house with the lights on in the darkness, they found resilience through rejoicing in the little things. That *laissez les bons temps rouler* perspective fed the rebirth—a reminder to take part in any small joy life has to give you. And while the waves might roll over our city from time to time, we always ride the wave.

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