The Life and Legacy of Kadir Natho

Written by Bater Kadkoy

One of the greatest and most inspiring figures in modern Circassian history was none other than the Circassian author, playwright, and community leader Kadir Natho.

Kadir was born in 1927 in the village of Hatramtouk, Shapsughia, near the Black Sea coastal city of Anapa. He was the son of Is'haq and Gueshmaf Natho who hailed from the prominent but now near-extinct Natukhay tribe. Kadir and his brothers Kimkery, Nagib, and Saleh were the only children of 10 to survive to adulthood. From a young age Kadir overcame great challenges that shaped him into the resilient and determined man our community knew.

As a young boy, Kadir experienced hardship when his entire village were forced to leave their ancestral home and relocate to the newly built village of Novo Natukhay. It was here that Kadir survived starvation, poverty, and malaria outbreaks as his village was forced to settle in a land that was surrounded by a swamp and lacked basic infrastructure. Within months, their difficulties grew as famine broke out in the Soviet Union and thousands of Circassians all over the region died from hunger and starvation. Despite harsh conditions, the villagers worked hard to support themselves and build a new community.
Traveling across the Mediterranean by boat, Kadir arrived in Jordan shortly before the 1948 war and settled in the capital city of Amman. Finding work in numerous areas, Kadir was one of the first Circassians in a long time to actually meet the diaspora after leaving the homeland. He lived there for a few years until he was almost killed in a train accident and he lost the use of one of his arms.

As the Middle East became rife with political instability, many Circassians began to settle in the United States and with them, Kadir arrived in New York City with no more than change in his pocket and the clothes on his back. Despite his crippled arm, Kadir worked hard with other Circassians to settle in his new home. Meeting with the first Circassian-American exiles such as Princess Fatima Natirboff and the many clans of New Jersey, Kadir began to divide his time between his community and his full-time job.

Eventually, with hard work and determination, Kadir became a successful businessman and began writing to promote the Circassian community. By taking courses at universities in New York City, Kadir mastered the English language and began writing on behalf of the community. At first, he wrote newsletters and magazine articles such as the Circassian Star and later on began to publish books and literature on Circassian people such as Nicholas and Natusha and Old & Short Tales of the Caucasus. In a time where such information was difficult to collect, Kadir was one of the first pioneers of the Circassian community who helped to publish and educate Circassian people about their history and culture.

As the famines subsided and the community began to grow - hardship fell upon the community again when Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler engaged in Operation Barbarossa and invaded the USSR in 1941. Within months, German soldiers occupied the nearby Circassian villages when Kadir was only 13 years old. As the war dragged on, Kadir lost his mother during the battle for his village and his father lost the use of his legs. By the time Kadir was almost 16, he was forced to flee and travel across Adygea alone with little support. After nearly freezing to death, and travelling through Soviet and German checkpoints, Kadir was introduced to the North Caucasian Refugee Committee. This committee was composed of other North Caucasian refugees fleeing conflict. Here Kadir found community with many other Circassians who were forced to flee the Caucasus once more.

Alongside many prominent Circassian leaders including Kuba Shaban and Koblev Baris, Kadir traveled on foot from the Caucasus through Ukraine, Poland, and all the way to Northern Italy. Along the way he traveled with people of many different nationalities and experienced bombings, raids, and the destruction and chaos caused by World War II. When the war finally ended in 1945, Kadir spent time as an IDP until finally he, and all the other Circassians, were granted asylum by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.
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Travelling across the world, Kadir visited many countries advocating and sharing the information and knowledge he collected. Giving talks and working with many accomplished professors, Kadir’s books began to have a profound impact throughout the Circassian diaspora and even among the Western Academic community. Through his time and dedicated effort, Kadir came to serve as a leader of the Circassian communities in New York and New Jersey and later became President of the Circassian Benevolent Association.

The Circassian Benevolent Association was founded by Kadir and many other refugees from the Caucasus whose sole purpose was to preserve Circassian culture. Utilizing their connections and resources, the CBA would help usher in the major waves of Circassian immigration to the United States. Along the way, the CBA created dance groups, musical associations, and activities that sought to preserve the Circassian culture and community in the United States.

As Kadir became more prominent in the Circassian community, he travelled throughout the Gulf Countries of the Middle East collecting donations and funds to erect the CBA building we use today. When he was elected president, he took out a massive mortgage to maintain and improve the CBA building by putting his entire fortune and savings up as collateral for the bank. Despite the massive personal and financial risk, Kadir’s leadership enabled the CBA to pay off its loans decades before they were due. Kadir’s commitment and generosity ushered in a golden age for the CBA.
Despite all Kadir’s personal, academic, and social successes, he never forgot to help those in need. He sponsored countless Circassian students to study at top universities, and funded numerous Circassian institutions. Whenever a Circassian needed help, Kadir would even go so far as to open his own home in Manhattan to anyone who needed a warm meal or shelter. With his lovely wife Soad, Kadir became the Grandfather of the Circassian community and a unifier of Circassian culture worldwide.

As Kadir got older, his commitment to the Circassian cause never faltered. Through his 80s and 90s, he published one of the first Circassian History anthologies in English as well as his own memoirs. When he finished those, he worked day and night to share the history of Circassian literature and publish one of the first modern books on Circassian traditions. Whenever he sold books, would often donate the entire proceeds to the CBA. In short, until his dying day, Kadir spent his life writing, traveling, and advocating for the Circassian people.

For the worldwide Circassian community, Kadir Natho’s legacy will live forever. Whether it was his work in education, philanthropy, leadership, or just hard work - much of the modern Circassian world both in the homeland and diaspora today owes its foundations in no small part to him. From surviving famines, collectivizations, Nazi occupation, and war to travelling the world and finding great success, the life and work of Kadir Natho shall never be forgotten. All Circassians should aspire to work for our people as Kadir did, giving so much of his life and energy to help the Circassian people. Thanks in part to him, the 12 stars and 3 arrows will forever fly as a symbol of Circassian people.

May God Bless Kadir Natho and may The Circassian Nation continue to grow and flourish atop the foundation he built for us.
My Fellow Circassians,

I send you all my warmest of greetings and regards. I am happy to introduce the Circassian Times. My hope for this newsletter is to be the way to unite and serve our community.

As we look to the future, I would love to see more of our community engage in this newsletter, where we can learn from and inspire one another.

My goal in my office is to pave the way for future generations. I want to stress a crucial point— the importance of learning our language. There is a Circassian proverb, "If the language dies, we will be extinct." If we don't work on this now, I fear for the future of our nation. Being Adighe is also about Xabza and character, my administration’s primary objective: maintaining our Xabza and connecting people. With our youth strengthening their Xabza and language, they will forever be connected to our homeland. It has been a challenging year for many of us. I hope this newsletter’s initiation will be the beginning of our community reconnecting and, hopefully, coming together again.

I would not be here without your support. Thank you, and let us continue laying down the foundations of a close community and making way for a bright future ahead for all of us.

-Circassian Benevolent Association President

Quasbic Kaghado
The Circassian Benevolent Association (CBA)

The Circassian Benevolent Association (CBA) is a non-profit, cultural organization located in Wayne, New Jersey. The organization was founded on June 19, 1952 by members of the Circassian Diaspora. We provide a variety of social and civic services as well as programs such as traditional dance, sports and classes for children. As of today we serve a local community of about 5,000 members.

We pride ourselves in our purpose and overall goals for the Community. To study and foster all matters pertaining to the welfare of the Circassians in America. Focusing on religious, cultural, creative, athletic and benevolent fields. Giving aid to the Circassians residing in the United States and elsewhere. Providing voluntary services to those members who need assistance in sickness or distress, as well as proper and decent interment in case of death.

Located on: 383 Oldham Rd, Wayne NJ 07470

We maintain the interest in civic affairs and to instill in our members principles of the United States Constitution and to encourage naturalization and the acquisition of citizenship. All funds that are received, held for, invested in go towards the facility exclusively for religious, charitable, literary or education purposes.

Our main goal for the organization is to connect the Community together. We want to ensure our youth can grow up to stable and successful members of society. Teaching, guiding and encouraging our Community in our cultural ways and history.

Please visit: www.cbaamerica.org
Follow our Instagram: cba_america

The Circassian Times Newsletter

This is the first issue of The Circassian Times Newsletter in many years and we want to dedicate it to the memory of our dearly departed Kadir Natho. Mr. Natho always wanted to bring the newsletter back to life and we are dedicated to making that a reality. This newsletter’s goal is to connect the community and to bring everyone together. So, we want The Circassian Times to be as accessible as possible to the community to ensure that we achieve that goal and keep Mr. Natho’s memory alive.

We created an Instagram account as an addition to post questions and polls to hear what you have to say as well as answer questions you may have for us.

Be a part of the newsletter and participate by joining the newsletter or by sharing your ideas, businesses, news, and talents and we will give you the latest scoop on the circassian community. All you have to do is subscribe to our newsletter @cbaamerica and follow us on our Instagram account @thecircassiantimes
Sarah Eshak is a Circassian who was born in New Jersey and lived in Syria before moving to the US again due to the ongoing war. She is currently studying Education in liberal arts, social work and counseling. Sarah is fluent in both Arabic and English and helps her teach both languages. She also translates for doctors and patients. In her free time, she assists in planning small events and parties. Sarah also enjoys painting, photography and learning about different cultures.

Sarah Frey is a New-Jersey born Circassian hailing from Newton, NJ. Sarah received dual BA's in English, and Women's and Gender Studies from The College of New Jersey in 2017. After college, Sarah worked for members of Congress both in-district and in Washington, and for multiple non-profit organizations focusing on grassroots organizing and lobbying. Sarah is currently a second-year law student at Rutgers Law School in Newark, pursuing her J.D. and focusing on corporate practice.

Pre-COVID, Sarah loved travelling and enjoyed practicing her Arabic with her family in Amman, Jordan. She hopes the opportunity to travel safely will return soon! In addition, Sarah enjoys hiking, and is a second-degree black belt in Tae Kwon Do.

Janset Paret is a New Jersey born Circassian, aspiring to be a media producer and writer. She is currently studying at Passaic County Community College (PCCC), with a major in Communications in Digital Media. Fluent in English and Arabic, spending many years living in Syria as well. She is also in the process of learning Chinese, Japanese, and Korean in order to further her career. Janset hopes to become part of the Media industry in the U.S for Asian productions such as Anime. Her passions include: music, writing, anime and media/music production. These days she is working as a medical secretary at a Psychiatrist's office in Wayne, as well as a receptionist at Stumpy's Hatchet House in Fairfield.

Liza Tehawkha was born and raised in New Jersey. She's fluent in Circassian and English. She's currently double majoring in Accounting and Finance at Rutgers University-Newark and hopes to obtain her CPA licensure in the future. Liza has loved music and dancing her whole life, and she was part of Narts Dance Ensemble for almost 14 years. She's also a lover of animals and nature. She's traveled to over 10 countries around the world and would love to travel to more. Liza loves puzzles, crosswords, and word searches.

Janet Sabak Kaghado received her BS degree in Communications in 2003 and her MA in Higher Education Administration from Caldwell University, NJ, USA in 2019. She is a certified mindful Leadership facilitator and life coach. She held a position as Editor in Chief at a tourist magazine while she lived abroad in Jordan. After returning to the states, she wanted to move onto the Education Administration field, and finished her MA in the field she was passionate about. She was the executive administrator at the Institute for Mindful Leadership for two years. She is currently working on her small business. Janet is currently serving as a board member at the CBA. She also is on the board of Voices of Circassia. One of her passions is to deliver the story and history of Circassians to as many people as possible. During her free time she loves to read, hike, and write. She loves to visit the homeland when ever her schedule allows her. She is working on a book that will give us an insight of love, war, and history of Circassia.
Every year many Circassians gather to celebrate the new year for our community. This year will be the year 6230 which indicates the years of recorded Adyga civilization. Each year on March 21, Circassian New Year represents one of the two days a year where the day equals the length of the night. This day is considered the beginning of spring and when nature begins to flourish, as our people were always connected to nature and land.

Back in ancient times this day was to celebrate good versus evil where many would join together. During these gatherings ceremonies were held where people gave their offerings, sacrifices such as black hen or black sheep. The color symbolizes darkness and evil at the time.

Many would come together in song and dance specifically beginning the ceremony with a dance called Djaku. They would form almost like a Joug where they would hold hands. The last dance being Wejj or Dance of Spring.

The gatherings began as a family-oriented celebration but have now expanded to a world-wide event. Upwards of over 1500 people gather in different regions of Kavkaz to spend the day together. The days are spent in dance, song, a ritual tree as well as sharing different Circassian national dishes. This day each year brings together many of our Circassian brothers and sisters in celebration of our culture and community.

By Janset Paret
As a Circassian-American, I often contemplate my connection to my homeland. I was born in New Jersey, in yet another land my people migrated to. But here I was born into a new kind of community—a diaspora. A community that adapts to any place it exists, but one that is ancient in its inspirations.

I have lived on a farm in Northern New Jersey for my entire life, nestled in the Appalachian Mountains. Sometimes I look at these mountains and long for the Caucasus. But at the same time, my reverence and respect for these mountains is informed by my people's respect for land. Whether it is the Caucasus or the Appalachians, I feel the same awe when I look upon these western wooded mountains, waterfalls, and rocky slopes.

My grandmother’s grandparents were born in our homeland, members of the Shapsugh tribe. After the Circassian Genocide, our family was relocated to the ruins of an ancient city called Philadelphia, which would eventually become the capital city of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Amman. My great grandfather, Ahmed Shupash (renamed "Ahmed Khatib") was the second mayor of this great city. My family lived in the "Circassian quarter," next to the statuesque ruins of the coliseum. Whenever I visit my family in Jordan, my Uncle Blan pulls out Ahmed's traditional Circassian dagger to pay respect to our sacred ancestry.

In 1956, my grandmother and her family immigrated to the United States with the help of the Tolstoy Foundation, joining a new and robust community of Circassians and other migrants from the Middle East. As we celebrate two Circassian holidays: Adiga Language Day and Circassian New Year, the generations separating me from my homeland do not seem so expansive.

To me, Circassian values can be summed up by three principles: honor, hospitality, and respect for our homeland, which has sustained us for thousands of years. While I have been away from my homeland for generations, I still find passionate resonance in the opening lines of the Nart Sagas:

“The Narts were courageous, energetic, bold, and good hearted. Thus they lived until God sent down a small swallow.

‘Do you want to be few and live a short life but have great fame and have your courage be an example for others forevermore?’ asked the swallow. ‘Or perhaps you would prefer that there will be many of you...that you will have whatever you wish to eat and drink, that you will all live long lives but without ever knowing battle or glory?’

“Then without calling council, but with a reply as quick as thought itself, the Narts said, ‘We do not want to be like cattle. We do not want to reproduce in great numbers. We want to live with human dignity.

Although I did not read these words until I was well into my twenties, I found it astonishing that a transcription I have never read could sum up many of the choices I have made in my life, my career, and my relationships with others. I continue to make the same choices as my ancestors: to choose human dignity over numerosity, to choose honor over weakness, and to choose acceptance over discrimination. These choices represent not only my will, but my heritage. And they continue to guide me on the right path, as a proud member of my culture.

**By Sarah Frey**

Note: If anyone would like to submit a literary piece speaking to their connection to the homeland, please submit to jkaghado@cbaamerica.org for the next issue!
Featured Circassian Recipe

Dalen (Circassian stuffed pizza)  
Makes about 10 pies

Ingredients

Dough
- 4-5 cups of Flour
- One cup of Yogurt
- One cup of warm Milk or water
- One pack Yeast
- 3 tsp Sugar
- 1 tsp Salt
- One egg
- Stick up butter

Stuffing (you can do half potatoes half cheese mixture or all cheese with dill)
- 4 cups of Circassian cheese or you can use farmers cheese (I prefer this one)
- One sprig of dill

Or
- 2 cups of fresh mashed potatoes and 2 cups of cheese

Directions - Dough
- Prepare dough few hours before you want to make the Dalen
- In a mixing bowl mix the yogurt, milk or water, and add yeast
- Next, add sugar, salt and egg and beat well
- Add one cup of flour at a time while mixing and then begin to knead the dough mixture
- Keep adding one cup of flour at a time until the dough is in the form of pizza dough
- Set aside until it rises

Directions - Stuffing
- To prepare stuffing make sure the ingredients are shredded and soft and make them into 10 compact balls
- When dough is ready make 10 round dough balls
  - cheese and dough balls should be almost same size
- Open the dough balls and add the cheese balls inside to cover the ball evenly around the cheese ball. I like to prepare all balls first and set aside.
- Put ready ball and flatten with hand on a floured mat and then roll out evenly into a circle.
- When the circle is around 1/8 of an inch thick, put on a heated pan and cook for about 2 minutes. Flip and cook on the other side for two minutes.
- When cooked on both sides, remove from pan and spread a little butter on top.
- Repeat steps and stack them on top of each other.
- When ready, cut through the stack and make four even pieces.

Enjoy!
Janet Kaghado
He began with small tasks such as plasti dipping and adding accessories to his friends' and family's vehicles.

In 2018 Murad decided to transform his dream into a reality, studying at Lincoln Tech Automotive. He graduated with a certificate as an Automotive Technician and continued his studies to obtain an ASE (Automotive Service Excellence), which empowered him to work on different types of car systems. Mr. Kashoqa gained a lot of experience studying at Lincoln Tech, describing his studies as “very hands on, with well informed and experienced instructors.”

He continued to describe how his instructors took the time to share their personal experiences to better advise him in the industry. For every subject, students spent large amounts of time on practical work such as rebuilding engines, working on brakes, suspensions, and learning about different components of several types of car systems.
After he finished school, Murad gained experience in the field working at different independent shops. As he continued to work in the automotive industry, he realized his passion and interest for auto detailing. During that time he learned tasks such as sanding, preparing, and finishing car paints and other details. While Murad enjoyed working with other professionals, his end goal was to start his own small business, the Murry Method. He went from small detailing jobs for friends and family to professional prevention maintenance, tune ups, and suspension needs. The Murry Method has progressed into a professional business providing services to many locals in the Passaic County area and beyond. Mr. Kashoqa is a fantastic example of a local, professional, and experienced young Circassian who is devoted to developing small businesses within our community.

Mr. Kashoqa now offers the following services at The Murry Method:
- Full brake systems
- Full suspension components
- Tuneups
- All fluid changes
- Detailing such as paint corrections, wet sanding, headlight restoration, and ceramic coatings
- Full interior cleanings such as steaming and carpet extractions

You can reach Mr. Kashoqa at The Murry Method here:

kashoqamurad@gmail.com

By Janset Paret

If you would like to advertise your business on the Newsletter please contact:
jkaghado@cbaamerica.org

Each month a business will be selected at random to be highlighted!
Dear Circassians

Dear Circassians is a podcast created by two Circassian women, Yasmen Bagh and Laura Karden. Being born and raised in New Jersey, they not only had an interest but saw the importance of preserving the history of our people. This podcast was created to help conserve the history of the Circassian people coming to America and highlighting the present day challenges in hopes for a better future. The way our early history is captured on Dear Circassians is through story telling of those that have lived it. The earliest story that has been captured was on the arrival of the "Old Immigrants" coming from Constantinople in the Roaring 20s.

Each episode is filled with wonderful stories and memories from the past. The stories will connect the Circassian community to their roots of settling into New Jersey and forming our current cultural center. The founding fathers of the Circassian Benevolent Association had great hopes of having future generations to grow the community and move it forward with the times while teaching our beautiful language and heritage.

In the first episode, "Our Sacred Duty", features the late Kadir Natho and the story of how the first Circassians, or "Old Immigrants" first came to the United States in the early 1920s. The episode also explains who Kadir Natho was, why he came to the United States, and gives us an insight on how he and other founders started their journey on building the CBA. This episode was one of the last interviews that Kadir Natho had done and leaving all of us with his final message that it is "our sacred duty to preserve our language and traditions."

The second episode, "Never Forget You're an Adigha," Lena Khumush takes us back to when her father, Obaid Molamusa, one of the founding members of the current CBA and the early start of building the association.

Dear Circassians sheds light on the details some may take for granted and reminds all Circassians about their roots. To listen to Dear Circassians, subscribe through any of the following app: Apple Podcast, Spotify, PocketCasts, Google Podcasts, Radio Public, and Breaker. You can also follow them on Facebook and Instagram at @DearCircassians. If there is a story that you'd like to tell, email them at contact@dearcircs.com.

By Sarah Eshak
Crossword Puzzle

Down:
1. Argentinian cactus
2. Venezuelan body of water
4. moon
5. a small, spring-blooming perennial
11. group
13. American publishing company
15. preservation of culture

Across:
3. African river
6. living together
7. spice blend
8. a small citrus tree fruit
9. a lily found in the Caucasus region
10. extremely tasty
12. countries in the world
14. shade of yellow
16. Circassian instrument
17. animal breed found in Switzerland
18. penguin breed
19. Circassian horse
20. a region between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea
Thank you for reading our first issue of the Circassian Times!

We hope you enjoyed this newsletter and learned more about what's going on in our beautiful community! We are very excited to continue publishing more stories and also want to have our subscribers contribute.

Do you have any topics you want to read about? Do you have a specific piece you would like to submit? If you do, please don't hesitate to submit your topics of interest and piece(s) to jkaghado@cbaamerica.org. Submissions can be of written articles, photographs, or a combination of both!

Businesses that would like to advertise in our next issue can also email jkaghado@cbaamerica.org.

Don't forget to follow us on Instagram @thecircassiantimes and subscribe at cbaamerica.org to make sure you never miss our community news, here and around the world.