

Circassian Times

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE
CIRCASSIAN BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION

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Majida al Mufti Written by Batter Kadkoy

A female pioneer in the Circassian community



There are many great Circassian women in our community who dedicated their lives to the cause of preserving our culture and nation - one such woman was Majida Al Mufti, remembered as a Circassian Activist, Educator, Philanthropist and Humanist.

Majida was the daughter of Said al Mufti, who served the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan as the first Prime Minister of Circassian descent, and was a prominent leader of Jordan's Circassian community. Majida was born in Amman in 1930, and was an avid student whose love for education and learning never wavered throughout her lifetime.

She completed her Primary and Secondary Education in Jordan, and after marrying Mr. Jawdat Hilmi in 1955, and moving to Syria, she continued pursuing higher education, receiving a B.A. in English Literature at Damascus University, and an M.A. in Comparative Literature at the American University of Beirut. All this while raising her four children. Majida always understood that the key to personal and professional development, particularly for women in her community, could be accomplished primarily through education. While pursuing her academic dreams, she also found time to become fluent in 4 languages, including Arabic, Circassian, French and English.



As someone in the role of a pioneer in women's educational development, Majida did not sit on her laurels, but made sure she could use her own accomplishments to provide others the opportunities to get an education and better themselves. In Jordan, she taught English classes at the Queen Zein School. She did the same in Syria at the Faculty of Engineering at Damascus University. Upon her arrival to the US in 1971, she pursued an advanced post-graduate degree (Master of Philosophy), while teaching Arabic in the Department of Comparative Literature at Columbia University. For over 30 years, she also taught Arabic, part-time, at the UN International School in New York.

One of the lifetime accomplishments that was a great source of pride for her, was when she established the Girl Scouts movement in Amman that later extended across Jordan. Perhaps the biggest and most effective product of Majida's life was her activism on behalf of all women and girls throughout the world. In this endeavor, she was a recognized member/leader in a long list of activist organizations, such as:

- Member of The Foreign Relations Committee of the Women's Union in Syria
- Member of the Arab-American Women's Association
- Member of the Steering Committee that helped revive the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee of NY
- Board Member of the Islamic Cultural Center of NY
- Helped found the Islamic Heritage Society
- NGO Representative of Islamic Heritage Society to the UN
- Supported the Circassian Benevolent Association
- Collaborated with the Circassian Education Foundation
- Member of the editorial board of the Circassian multi-lingual internet dictionary
- Recipient of the 50 year anniversary award of the World Circassian Organization
- Participated in many international humanitarian relief efforts
- Committee member of Women for Peace

Despite her many achievements, she never forgot her community and spent her entire life volunteering in Circassian associations in Jordan and later at the Circassian Benevolent Association in New Jersey. When she settled in New York City, she began to actively participate in Circassian society. She proudly included Circassian Dance performances on the international stage in New York and the United Nations. She held large fundraisers for the organization, brought various distinguished members and visitors from all over the world, and was instrumental in ensuring that Circassian women had an equal place when it came to decision-making.

As the CBA began to advance and grow throughout the 80s and 90s, Majida continued to work and serve in various councils and committees to help assist and uplift the community. In addition to her administrative roles, she also worked as a teacher to help educate younger generations about the importance of Circassian history and culture. During President Kadir Natho's administration, her leadership and fundraising enabled the CBA to pay off one of its most expensive loans for redevelopment, and due to her prominence in global and Circassian society, she helped connect Circassians all over the world.



Majida on Circassian Memorial Day at CBA

After nearly a century of Circassians being in exile, she was one of the first from the diaspora to visit the Circassian homeland, and was part of the international delegation that served in the founding of the Republic of Adygea, as well as the opening of the International Circassian Association in Nalchik, Kabardino-Balkariya in 1991. During the May 21st observance, her speech brought tears to the eyes of many Circassians from all over the world. Even in her later years, Majida traveled to many countries and continents including the Homeland, Europe, Jordan, and Turkey where she met and worked with Circassian activists all over the world. A very socially active and proud woman, she loved to sing and dance the traditional songs of Circassian people and she believed that no matter how successful or educated you are - you must always remember who you are--and that's to be an Adygha who preserves and maintains your tradition and culture.



Majida giving a speech on her first trip in the homeland in Nalchik, Kabardino Balkaria

For Majida, she dedicated her life to educating others, fighting for the rights of women worldwide, and representing the interests of Circassian people whenever possible. From meeting some of the world's most distinguished diplomats and leaders to helping support the Circassian community, Majida's life and dedication to helping others is a testament to the legacy that she left behind to the entire community. From the Khasas of Jordan, to the Khasas of the Homeland and the United States, Majida's work and influence has left behind a proud and lasting impact all over the world.

Thus, as young women continue to grow and empower themselves against the struggles that they endure today, Majida's life is a source of inspiration that reflects how young Circassian women can be leaders and educated activists, yet still preserve the traditions of our people.

May God bless her and may she rest in the highest places of paradise.



Message from the President



Dear friends, valued members of our Circassian community,

I send you my heartfelt greetings and warm regards. I am pleased to present the Circassian Times. This newsletter, in my perspective, has the potential to connect and serve our community. Looking ahead, I'd like to see more individuals of our community participate in this newsletter so that we can educate ourselves and encourage one another.

My office's goal is to open the way for future generations. I'd like to emphasize one topic in particular: the importance of our youth becoming educated about their culture. Circassian nationalism refers to Circassians' determination to preserve their culture and prevent their language from extinction all over the world. I believe that this newsletter will assist to inform all of our youngsters and educate them with these important and impactful topics.

One other aim I have is to connect with Circassian organizations all around the world and collaborate on projects when possible. This newsletter, I believe, will also contribute to the achievement of these outstanding projects.

Without your encouragement, I would not be where I am now. Thank you, and together, let us continue to set the foundation for the creation of a strong and vibrant community and a bright future for all of us.

Hakan Cinaz

Circassian Benevolent Association President



Community Events :

Adigha Day 2021



After a long year of social distancing, postponed events, and our community separated, the Circassian Benevolent Association hosted their yearly celebration of our Circassian culture on Saturday September 18th. The day began with vendors setting up, bouncy rides being inflated, food being prepared and volunteers setting up all the props, tables, chairs and more. As always the musical arrangements were in motion getting ready for the day to start.



It was a sight to see everyone gathering again at the CBA. Children and adults of all ages crowded the scene. How spectacular to see loved ones again in our Khase. The Prince Halal Food truck arrived on the premises with an arrangement of platters, snacks, and drinks.

The lovely women of our community also came together to serve coffee, tea, drinks, cotton candy, popcorn, traditional sweets, and soups. Our volunteers separated into sections; bouncy houses and a variety of fun games and activities. Diversions included volleyball, ping-pong, balloon fights, face painting, and deadlifting. The kids had a blast playing together while adults indulged in good conversation, shopping and more.



As always the night ended with a Jounge that exuded excitement, happiness, and delight. Not one person sat down as the Jounge began in full swing. It was a continuous flow of beauty, energy, and dance. How we long awaited to stand side by side embracing our culture.

Once the night was dimming the guests enjoyed a live performance by a local band from our community named Montage Montage.

Thank you to the CBA and all our volunteers for making this day one to remember!



PRESENTS
CARS COFFEE & HALIVA

AT THE CBA 12PM-4PM ON SATURDAY 10/30

**COME CHECK OUT OUR
FELLOW ADIGHE'S CARS
ALL TYPES OF CARS AND TRUCKS
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Circassian Benevolent Association
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October 30, 2021 @ 7PM

SPECIAL MUSICAL APPEARANCE BY
TAMBI CIMUK

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Tickets:\$50





ADIGHE FASHA

Written by
Sarah Eshak

Circassian dress is one of the most famous symbols of our culture, cognizable by people across the world. Our traditional clothing is called the Adighe Fasha. The Fashas are not just military outfits. They are not just simple clothes. They are everyday functional clothes with both purpose and beauty. The Fashas are part of Circassians' everyday life and represent a commitment to our traditions, philosophy, and lifestyle.



Circassians are known for our uniqueness and beauty. Our outfits became known for having a special cut and fit, functionality, and quality material. The Adighe Fasha has a tight fit from the top that is cinched by the waist before it extends and flows down smoothly. Fashas also have a low shoulder line as well as loose sleeves that give comfort in movement. This was especially helpful to those who fought in combat and rode horses. They also had the hazir (gunpowder) and bullets placed on the chest within small pockets alongside other small useful items. This gave them a great advantage in battle.



Circassians are very particular when it comes to choosing fabrics for our attire. We use Iranian, Sogdian fabrics, velvet and silk, and samples of Chinese and Byzantine fabrics. Over time, Circassians have updated our outwear in order to create Adighe Fashas that are timeless and will be appreciated and admired for generations to come. Throughout our history, Circassian men have considered wearing a Circassian coat as a symbol of brotherhood and solidarity. To them, it was like a second layer of skin.

The reason Adighe battle attire is always brought up in conversation is because, no matter how bad the attire was, the warrior's arms would always be protected and maintained in perfect condition. A Circassian warrior, whether on foot or on the back of a horse, will always be completely armed and ready in style. When marching, they wear a cloak that has a hood to fully cover their bodies. These cloaks were made out of camel or goat hair and they are called tchaouka. Lermontov's Caucasian, Kazbich, described Circassian attire as, "His beshmet [quilted jacket] is always in tatters, but his armament is in silver". The Cossacks adopted Circassian dress styles, dancing, and learned from the Circassian talent for horsemanship, as many others adopted traits and cultural practices from Circassians.



In 1841, the artist Grigory Gagarin was serving as a soldier in the Caucasus, yet he created many portraits of Adighe Fashas despite the war. In his paintings, it is clear to see the Kabardian orange and grey, vibrant green cartridge belts, the detail on the bottom of the dress, and the long Azerbaijani sleeves that are slit all the way up to the shoulder and go down along the trunk.

In the early 19th century, Polish writer and archaeologist Jan Potocki visited the Caucasus. He sketched a lot during his trip. Some of his sketches were of the Chechens with their knee length dresses and tight sleeves. Other sketches were of the Ingush Circassian dress with stand-up collars. He also sketched an Ossetian Circassian woman in a dress with three strings pulled by her side.

Edmund Spencer (1937), a British traveller to Circassia in the year 1836, left a vivid description of the Circassian male costume: "Circassian costume, besides being elegant, is, in every respect, well suited to the country: the lambswool turban preserved my head from the vertical sun; and by enveloping myself in the ample folds of the chlamyde, and covering my head with the capuchin on the approach of evening, I was protected from the nightly dews so pregnant with ills to the frame of man".

John Longworth spoke about Circassian battle attire, "In general the Circassians, when taking to the field, put on the worst and coarsest attire they can find; but many of their young heroes, out of emulation, a spirit of bravado or aspiring to the honours of martyrdom, render themselves conspicuous by wearing an entari [cherkesska] of the gayest colour".

Women's clothing was diverse, very decorated, and mainly depended on the region or the class of the family. Women's traditional Fashas are composed of a dress, shoes, and a belt. Holiday dresses were made from silk and velvet. Their Fashas emphasized their waist, posture, and elegant demeanour.

The traditional colors of women's clothing were mainly white, brown, and dark shades of red. However, on rare occasions, blues, greens, or other bright colors were spotted. Circassian outwear is embroidered with gold and silver threads, which require a lot of time to hand-make because the threading was so intricate. Women wore short coats, but were mainly known for wearing long dresses that covered their footwear to give the illusion that they were gliding or floating on the floor, especially when they danced.

Circassian women wore caps made of velvet. They were embroidered with gold or silver satin stitches that also had a transparent white veil. Married women wore their hair in locks traditionally called schhenschoqw to distinguish them from unmarried girls. Older women, on the other hand, used to cover their hair with shawls.



Circassian attire has a long history and has changed over time. The designs have changed slightly to fit the era and stay stylish up until the classic designs we know and love today. Adighe Fashas were created to highlight and enhance the body and its beauty. Adighe reputation precedes them for their beauty and elegance and that is why they were the ones to set standards for fashion trends in the Caucasus. People from all over the region were known to say, as a high compliment, that someone “dressed like a Kabardian.”

Visiting the Homeland

Written by Janset Paret



What could be better than stepping your feet onto the land where it all began. The place that will forever hold a place in each one of our hearts. Where tragedy, beauty, love and despair meet.

This year a group of Circassian men from New Jersey and California planned a trip to visit our Homeland. Yamiz Bachkaz, Nour Idris, Omar Muhajer, Narzan Ghesh, Berzaj Ghesh and Tamer Ghesh. Their trip was filled with mesmerizing sights, generous hospitality, and an immense feeling of home.

Yamiz Bachkaz was kind enough to share a glimpse into his view of the homeland with us at the Circassian Times. Every photo he shared was astoundingly captivating—beautiful scenes of the mountains, greenery and grand landscape. Yamiz explained the feeling of warmth he experienced when he landed in Nalchik “Incredible is the feeling of stepping onto our land for the first time. To know this is where we came from and where we truly belong.”

In Nalchik they visited many parts of the wonderful city and then continued their journey to Kabardino-Balkaria. There they visited Chegum falls and the famous Mount Elbrus, the highest peak in the Caucasus. Last, they travelled to Maykop and spent two days there with locals and friends. Yamiz described the scenery in Adygea around Lago Naki as something out of Lord of the Rings.

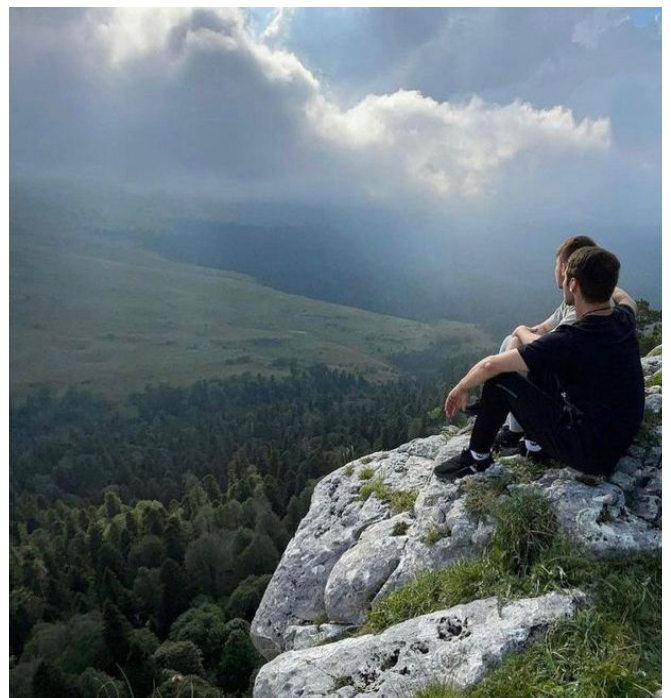
“As for the fashehs, well it’s a secret! Let’s just say Astemir Apanas invited us for something special and thanks to Aslan Nakov we were able to use the fashehs from his store.”

Yamiz continued to emphasize the unmatched hospitality and comfort our brothers and sisters in the Homeland provided. However, during their two-week trip there was an undeniable feeling of remorse. As much as they tried to be happy, a voice inside continuously said: “We lost this land.”



“We lost this land.”

Hiking near the top of Mount Elbrus and in the heart of Maykop, that thought never left their minds. Being able to associate, understand, mingle and connect with the people of our homeland was a reminder that we haven’t lost our identities. The group left that trip with a burning passion and a vast knowledge of our history as Circassians.



**“Visit the homeland and
rediscover your roots, because I
promise you that you will leave
with a fire in your heart,”
concluded Yamiz.**

MONTAGE MONTAGE

and the Great Rock Arrival of the 2020's

Written by: Janset Paret



Montage Montage portrays songs based on experiences or personal observation of value and the human condition. The theme is to portray world and social issues while always looking in.

“Something was missing and it needed to become this,” said Sami regarding the music industry and its misinterpretation of what music should be. He continued to state the importance of having a positive impact on society through music, explaining that it should be focused more on the authentic involvement in a live performance and sharing that moment with the people around them.

What started off as three friends sitting in their home discussing their want for more genuine and authentic music became the rock phenomenon they are today. As they sat together over and over again discussing their inspirations, they learned why they wanted to start their own band, and ultimately created a raw and organic form of alternative rock that came naturally to them.

Sami Hatqua (vocalist/guitarist), Rami Hatqua (drummer), and Beslan Gokeh (bass guitarist) created Montage Montage. The word montage is defined by the process of bringing together separate parts and creating a cohesive whole. It's to achieve something more than the sum of its parts; no matter how mundane. Creating what can be considered a magnificent mosaic through a moment-by-moment form of art.

Montage Montage portrays songs based on experiences or personal observation of value and the human condition. The theme is to portray world and social issues while always looking in. “Something was missing and it needed to become this,” said Sami regarding the music industry and its misinterpretation of what music should be. He continued to state the importance of having a positive impact on society through music, explaining that it should be focused more on the authentic involvement in a live performance and sharing that moment with the people around them.



Montage Montage's music is structured and composed based on a concept or idea. Sami develops lyrics, vocal phrasing and a demo to share with Rami and Beslan. Once the band goes through the idea, the song takes shape from there.

The process is organic and each member brings together a few beats or chords. Within moments the song is created; it's absolutely astonishing to witness. Beslan stated in reference to their process "As we come into ourselves we divinely create these songs," explaining that they have something important to say and they hope people will hear it. Music is the core of bringing people together in a mesmerizing instant.

Sami as a vocalist shares his vulnerability with the audience and dazzles them with his visceral riffs. Rami is the soul of the band, bringing everyone to their feet; at the same time sharing his passion with the audience. Beslan is the heart, sharing his love for music; with every beat he plays he captures your attention, almost hypnotizing. Together they form a tenacious band. But alone they share their inner selves with their audience and supporters.



Similar to how older composers would change a person or group's perspective just by their craft in order to achieve something greater than themselves.

As I sat with the band discussing their hopes, beliefs and dreams I gained an undeniable respect and sentiment for their art. They had something to say and they deserve to share that with the world.

"Any struggle or moment of a person's life permeates the human condition. On a blank expanse we are painting towards something. Let the chords rage on and on until it's transcending."
said Sami Hatqua.

Asiya Candle Company

Written by: Janset Paret

During the pandemic we struggled with change, depression, and distancing ourselves from those we love. Yansi, the owner of Asiya Candle Company, began giving candles to those who were lonely or in need of comfort. Asiya Candles developed from the concept of sharing with those around us; using the scents to calm the soul and brain at the same time.

By popular demand, Yansi began selling candles through her Etsy shop. Within the first few days it made an astonishing twenty sales. Asiya Candle Co. continues to grow into something even larger.

Yansi gained a passion for creating these organic and calming scents that made people feel good. Each candle is created with love and care. She hated the way normal candles contained chemicals and toxins that can harm the air and even plants around them.



Through her research, she found a wax company/lab in California that provided soy wax with no chemicals. Every candle is 100% all natural and made with natural ingredients; soy wax and essential oils. Everything is done through time, heat, texture and the wick. Every candle is hand-poured, and every label is personal. The candles burn clean and long, leaving no residue on the glass, and, and causing no failure after a candle burns halfway through- as some store bought candles do.

All together, Asiya produces over sixty scents, including lavender, limoncello, dried gin and cypress, and bamboo coconut to name a few. There are scents specifically concocted for male or female demographics. Every scent can also be purchased according to its purpose, such as kitchens, bathrooms, dinner gatherings and so on.





For inquiries:
asiyacandles@gmail.com
#: 201-396-2677

Nowadays, Yansi caters to events such as weddings, bridal and baby showers and more. She also provides activities for events like Candle Making Parties; where groups of friends or family get together to learn how to create their own candles. You can also find Asiya Candles at pop up venues and events such as the CBA Eid parties and Adiga Day.

Everything purchased from her shop can be customized by request through the label, scents and personal notes; for party favors or gifts for loved ones. The sizes range from 4 to 64 oz depending on request. Delivery is free if within the Passaic county area or delivered through Etsy.



What started off as a hobby became Yansi's incredible dream to bring light and solace into people's lives.

Book Review

Written by Leila Elashmawy



Nadine Jolie Courtney, a Jordanian-Circassian author, has crafted a beautifully written book, *All American Muslim Girl*. The story follows the main character Allie, otherwise known as "Alia" throughout her journey to find herself as well as her faith. Her father is an Arab-Circassian Muslim who had distanced himself from religion over the years, and her mother is an American woman who converted to Islam. Although her parents are both loving and supportive people, Allie begins to raise her own questions about Islam, and wonders how she can become closer to God. Living in an all white town, passing as white or non-Muslim made it easy for Allie to "hide in plain sight," however, she knew deep down that she wanted to embrace Islam and everything that it had to offer.

Eventually, Allie started to attend Qur'an study groups where she made new friends, and immersed herself in the beauty of religion. This story teaches growth, forgiveness, and determination. It is a story of finding one's true self, especially if she is not as connected to religion as she would like to be. In this book, Courtney emphasizes the fact that Islam is a religion with open arms no matter how old you are or how much experience you have with it already. Another plus to this book is that she mentions Arabic and Circassian culture which is very rare to find in Young Adult novels. This book could be the shred of perspective you are searching for.

I definitely recommend this read, and that we all support Circassian authors!

Featured Circassian Recipe: *Lagouma*

Written by Sarah Eshak

Ingredients

- 2 eggs
- ½ cup milk
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup corn oil
- Few drops of vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon leaven (yeast)
- 5 cups flour



Let's Begin

1. Whisk milk, sugar, eggs, corn oil, and vanilla extract together
2. Mix baking powder and flour
3. Gradually add powder to liquid until it becomes dough
4. Leave it for a while
5. Shape it to your preference
6. Fry it with hot oil

Enjoy!

Word Search

F R B Q P S H I N A S Y Q Y T Z X I M A Y K O P C Q S S P O
 J O L Z N V P V Y S W U F V C C L Q C I R C A S S I A N L L
 N P E B H C V V V C K A R A Y L V A P V I E R H U B N D C A
 P P D D U E C N K T Y Y H I J Y X Q W R I Z M K N I A J H N
 S I N I N Y D G A W A D Y G H A B Z E Q X Z B O N A T F E G
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 K G A Q L Q A K A W J E E C X W P O C Q I A R R O W S U R L
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 E M H C O M M P G Q K L R L A K R K L M Y H F F I C N K I X
 R A B D Z A K H S H O G F S S T U A E C E K A O F G X Y T Q
 U R G A Y M K O E U F M Q A H R N E N Y Z F V E J F X U E R
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 W J A D Y G H E A D V H T Z J B J D Y E O N N I L E F H M V
 A K O A F C F R M H C U K N O E L G N M E F W Y P K S P Q L
 I J K G J C O S H W P C P U J E H L O I R M A B Q F B H I N

Chemguy	Fasha	Yegeruqwai	Kabardino Balkaria
Pshina	Mamkhegh	Narts	Krasnodar Krai
Adyghabze	Diaspora	United	Zhaney
Preservation	Adyghea	Warriors	Haliva
Arrows	Stavropol Krai	Shapsugh	Kafa
Kavkas	Bzhedugh	Circassian	Khasa
Hatuqwai	Natukhaj	Kabardey	Ubykh
Khabze	Language	Culture	Abdzakh
Karachay Cherkessia	Maykop	Stars	Dance
Tribe	Besleney		



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IMPORTANT DATES COMING UP!

October 23, 2021- Purse Bingo

October 31, 2021- Virtual Orientation

December 6, 2021-Scholarship Deadline

November 30, 2021-College Savings Matching
Program Deadline

January 30, 2022- CEF Scholarship Awards
Gala



Dr. Muhammad Abey



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Thank you

for your continued support
and reading our third 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.