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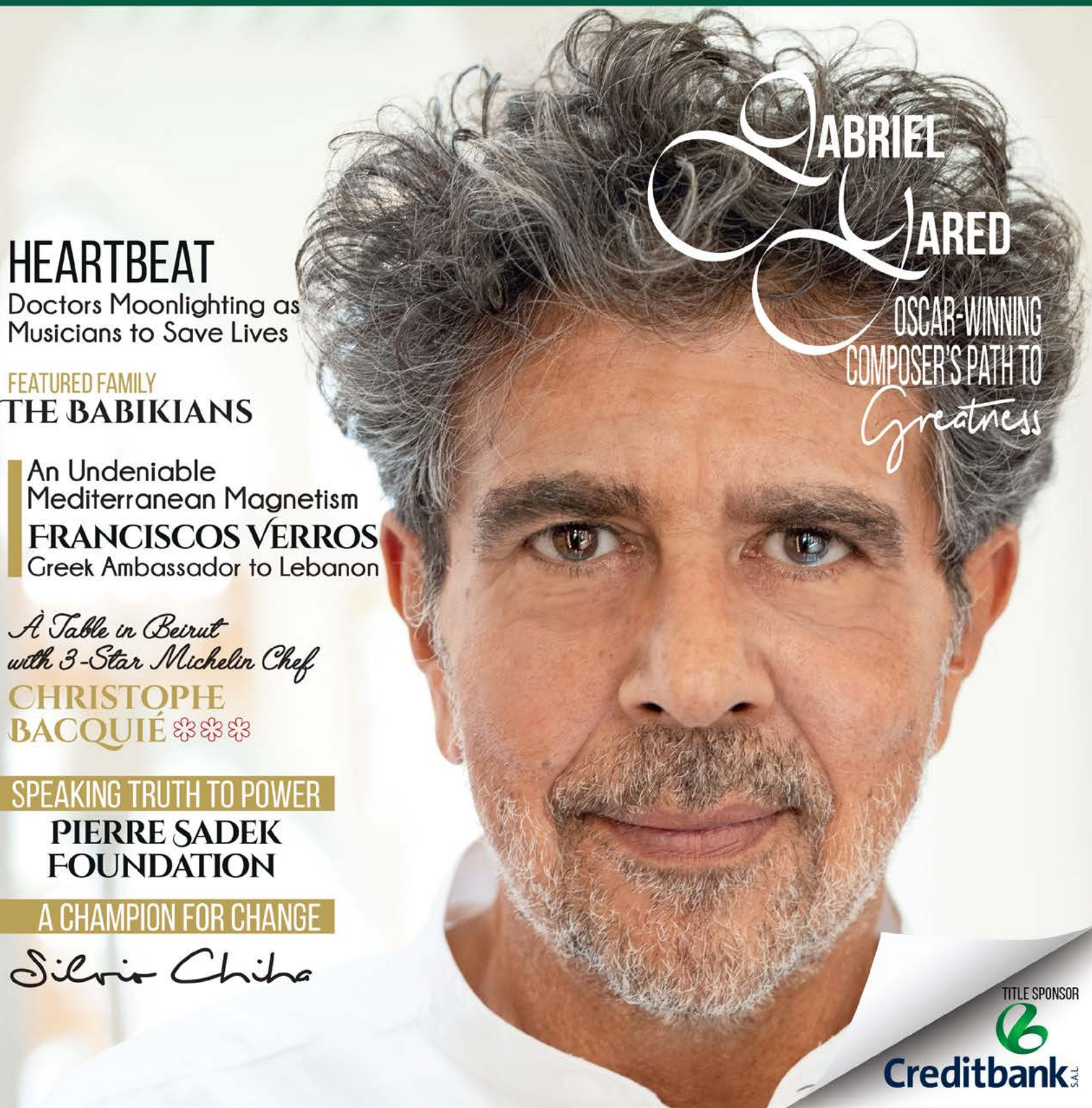
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# GABRIELA TAFUR NÁDER

## COLOMBIA'S BEAUTY QUEEN WITH LEBANESE ORIGINS

**W**inner of Miss Colombia 2018 is set to compete at the 2019 Miss Universe pageant.

Tafur Náder was born in 1995, in Cali, Colombia. The recently crowned queen has been modeling since a young age and playing the violin since age four. Her maternal grandfather, whose surname is Nader, was born in Chartoun, Lebanon, and immigrated to Colombia at 18. The Tafur side of the family also has Arabic origins, but the exact geographical location remains unknown.

The young beauty queen visited her country of origin for the first time to attend the Lebanese Diaspora Energy (LDE) conference, which was held in June 2019. During her brief stay, she passed for a local, and people often spoke to her in Arabic.

### **How was it visiting Lebanon for the first time?**

It was definitely emotional, especially that I had a member of my close family also visit. So it was very magical, and very moving.

### **Were you familiar with all of the family members that you met?**

I knew some, as a large number of them had lived in Colombia for years before moving back to Lebanon. However, I did meet a lot of members of my extended family whom I had never known, and that was really nice, even though it was sometimes hard to communicate with the language barrier. But I felt that our traditions were extremely close, and that was beautiful to experience.

### **What were your expectations before arriving to Lebanon? Were they met?**

I imagined it to be how my grandfather remembered it to be before he left it — old, and very different than what it is today.



Photos by Courtesy National Beauty Contest Colombia



I was amazed by how modern it actually is. What I loved the most is the wonderful coexistence, which we in Colombia don't really have as we all have the same religion.

**What did you think of the LDE conference?**

I think it was a great initiative. It was an excellent platform for all the attendees to discuss Lebanon, its people, and their impact all around the world.

**Would you consider coming back to visit again?**

Definitely, and I plan to stay for a longer time.

**In Colombia, what is your relationship with the Lebanese community? Are you in touch with your origins?**

Yes, I have always been very close to my origins. My Colombian grandmother actually learned to speak Arabic for my grandfather. That automatically drove my family to learn more about its origins, and to become part of the Lebanese community. On a larger scale, Lebanese are entrepreneurs, smart, and have really contributed a lot to the growth of the country. There is also a social Lebanese club in Bogotá.

**What makes you most proud of having Lebanese heritage?**

Definitely family values, which defines my family's tight-knit relationship. Also, food! In my family, we show love through food, which is something that is definitely Lebanese-inherited rather than Colombian.

**How did the Lebanese community react to your Miss Colombia win?**

Essentially, I am Colombian — Colombian-born to parents who were also born in Colombia, and that is what mattered the most here. But the fact that I am also Lebanese is a fantastic addition to who I am. My origins are seen in some of my features, and it's

great having a mixture of Lebanese and Latin American. On the other hand, my brother is actually very Lebanese-looking.

**Tell us more about your Lebanese touring experience.**

I went around as much as my time had allowed me. I visited the Bekaa, Beirut, Byblos and more, but Chartoun meant the most to me, because of my family history. It was a very special visit as there was a big welcoming that was held for me with music and food. The mayor was there, too.

**On another note, is it true that you're a lawyer?**

Yes, I am. However, I cannot practice right now because of my preoccupations and commitments toward my country as Miss Colombia. Nonetheless, my background in law, and my acquired skills come in handy a lot with all the humanitarian and social work I do.

**As the winner of Miss Colombia, are you advocating for any causes?**

Yes, absolutely. The sole job of Miss Colombia is to travel around the country to do social work. The Concurso Nacional de Belleza de Colombia [the National Beauty Contest of Colombia], the institution that produces the Miss Colombia pageant, supports more than 80 social causes across the country. Consequently, I travel around the country supporting and working on those causes, with the aim of a better Colombia.

**If you were to work on a cause in Lebanon, what would you pick?**

Violence against women.

**What do you think can be a solution to violence against women?**

It varies from country to country, but generally speaking, the solution — for me — is to work on obtaining equal opportunities between the sexes. That said, once equal opportunities exist, women would stop being very dependent on men in order to survive. In addition to that, women would also be automatically perceived as men's equals, which will lead to less violence against them.

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**What do you think is the most beautiful thing about any woman?**

**Her voice. Her ability to speak up for herself.**

**Do you get a sense of how Colombia is perceived abroad? What can you actually tell us about your country?**

Colombia is a very big country, and with every big country comes a set of problems. But right now, there are many peace attempts, as well as a lot of security measures improvements, which have made Colombia safer and safer every year. Unfortunately, sometimes it is still perceived as a dangerous place because of the media and its history of drug wars. However, in reality, Colombia is a very progressive country, known for great coffee, beautiful women, sports championships, and great music.

**Did you feel safe in Lebanon?**

Yes, absolutely. I felt very safe, and very welcome.

**What do you think is the most beautiful thing about any woman?**

Her voice. Her ability to speak up for herself.



By Maria Sakr





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## MAGAZINE

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