

GLO(B)AL CITIZEN PROJECT

Name: Sahar Born: 1978 Birthplace: Tehran, Iran



Iran's Islamic Revolution began in 1979, transforming the once modern, liberal Tehran into a conservative environment. The Iraq-Iran war escalated and my family emigrated when I was about 10 years old. Our escape route took us through Spain, Ohio, Los Angeles, California, and we finally settled in Denver.

I was very out of place in Colorado—they used to call me “Little Terrorist” in fourth grade. My mother, fully aware of the anti-

Muslim sentiments at the time, told me to hide my Iranian identity and language. It was very difficult; I began to feel ashamed of who I was.

Needing change, I moved to Florida during college. On New Year's Eve 2002, my friend and I engaged a conversation with a gentleman in Miami who needed someone to sublease his NYC apartment; we accepted, ready for the challenge. Six weeks later, I discovered it was tough living in NYC—I had nothing, not enough experience to be a waitress, and no money; determined, I spent hours in an internet café looking for a job. By the day's end, I had an interview and eventually a position with Citibank Private Banking. Admiring my favorite island, Manhattan, from my office window, I realized I came to New York for something bigger. After recovering from a tragic experience that put me in hospitals for six months, I saw the bigger picture: I could do anything—the stars were mine to reach; I was reborn in a way and decided to follow my passion. In 2005 Freedom Star was born.

I began classes at Manhattan's LIM College, where business meets fashion. Eager to make Freedom Star a solid reality, I accelerated my coursework and graduated in two years. Then Freedom Star developed into Accessories, Consulting, and Mentorship. Currently, I spread the word by making hand-crafted jewelry and mentoring young girls who need empowerment and the resources to carry out their own dreams (I hope to establish a community center for girls one day!). I've always loved to dance and find it an empowering art form, which I enjoy exposing to others by teaching salsa and belly dancing. Everyone deserves to discover and cultivate their talents. A bi-product of doing what makes you passionate will be the new plateau you stand on, one of confidence and focus.