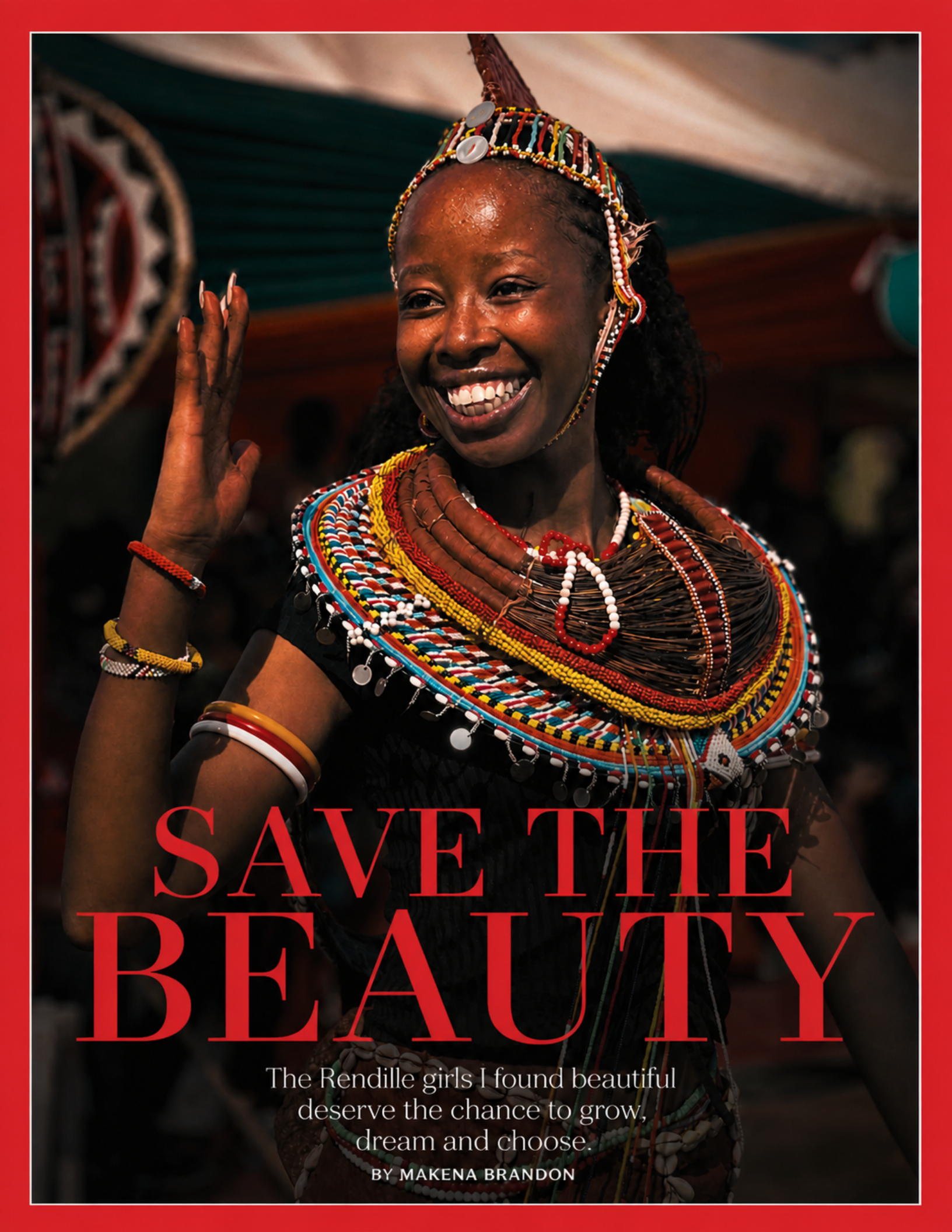


A portrait of a young woman from the Rendille tribe, smiling warmly at the camera. She is adorned with extensive traditional jewelry, including a tall, pointed headdress decorated with colorful beads and a large, multi-layered collar made of intricate beadwork and cowrie shells. She also wears several beaded bracelets on her right wrist. Her right hand is raised in a gesture, with her fingers slightly spread. The background is softly blurred, showing hints of a traditional setting with a patterned cloth.

SAVE THE BEAUTY

The Rendille girls I found beautiful
deserve the chance to grow,
dream and choose.

BY MAKENA BRANDON

A PERSONAL DISPATCH FROM MARSABIT COUNTY

SAVE THE BEAUTY

by Makena Brandon

We arrived in Marsabit County on the 7th, at night, so there wasn't much to take in that first day. But when morning came and the Rendille Food and Cultural Festival began, I started to understand why people had told me this place was different.

I was there for the second edition of the festival, organized by Margaret Lesuper, and I want to write about that properly another time, because it deserves its own telling. But there is something else that has stayed with me since I left, something I did not expect to find, and I have to write about it now before it settles into something smaller than it is.

That morning, I watched Rendille women move through the festival grounds, and I found myself struck by something I have rarely felt so plainly. They were beautiful. Not one or two of them. All of them, in a way that felt unusual to say out loud. There was no makeup, no performance of beauty the way I've come to expect it. Just women being exactly who they are, dressed in their culture, carrying themselves with a kind of dignity that didn't need an audience to be real.