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SUMMER HEAT
WHEN LUST IS BETTER THAN LOVE

JOY BRYANT WHAT I LEARNED FROM GROWING UP POOR

THE UNCONSUMMATED MARRIAGE (It's more common than you think)
9 FOR ALL MANKIND

This year ELLE honors nine women who are educating, rebuilding, doctoring, employing, and sustaining the world.

AMY LEHMAN, 38, FOUNDER OF LAKE TANGANYIKA FLOATING HEALTH CLINIC

THE PROBLEM: The remote Lake Tanganyika Basin, where 3.5 million people live without access to basic health care. BIG IDEA: A ship—a floating clinic—to provide medical services around the basin.
LIGHTBULB MOMENT: Lehman, a surgical resident on vacation at the time, got stuck at Lake Tanganyika in a typhoon and realized, These people need a hospital, but they have to raise $25 million to build it. (Lehman and her small team have already treated 300,000 people.)
GENIUS MARKETING MOVE: She tattooed a map of the region on her back. MANTRA IN A CRISIS: Never lose your sense of humor in central Africa. The minute that happens, you're toast. —ALLISON DAVIS

NINA DUDNICK, 35, FOUNDER AND CEO OF SEEDINGLABS.ORG

THE PROBLEM: On a Fulbright at the Africa Rice Center in Côte d'Ivoire, molecular biologist Dudnich was struck by the lack of equipment in the labs she visited. "You walk into a lab in a national university and there's nothing in it," BIG IDEA: Back at Harvard in 2003, she began sending repaired and unused microscopes, test tubes, and other equipment overseas. Four years later, Seeding Labs was born. MANTRA IN A CRISIS: "An Italian saying that basically translates, You asked for this bicycle; now ride it." I need to remember how much I really want to be doing this when it gets frustrating and hard. —UNEXPECTED UPSET: "Privileged U.S. scientists see how much can be done with little to no resources." —A.D.

ROBIN SMALLIEY, 55, CO-FOUNDER AND INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR OF MOTHERS2MOTHERS

THE PROBLEM: "We have medical interventions to treat AIDS, but African women don't know about them," BIG IDEA: Use her TV producer skills to scale up m2m, which trains and pays HIV-positive women to be "mentor mothers" to other affected women ("think Alcoholics Anonymous"); to prevent mother-to-child transmission; and to keep HIV-positive women healthy. HER MOST USEFUL SKILL: "From working in TV (Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous), I knew how to sell a story." WHAT STORY DID SHE SELL? "Fewer babies are born with HIV in the U.S., U.K., and Europe combined than in some African clinics.
PROOF THAT M2M WORKS: We employ 1,800 HIV-positive moms in nine countries. We're reaching 20 percent of the global population of HIV-positive pregnant women." —CARRIE PAUL

DEB LEVINE, 48, FOUNDER/EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF INTERNET SEXUALITY INFORMATION SERVICE (ISIS)

THE PROBLEM: "I think I have an STD," or "Our condom broke. Now what?" BIG IDEA: A text-messaging service that allows teenagers to text questions about sex anonymously and get answers back almost instantly. HOW DID SHE GET STARTED?
ELLE STYLE THE FIXERS

Levine began as a Columbia University sex educator frustrated with traveling to dorms and teaching students how to put condoms on bananas. In 1993 the campus' newly spun dial-up lines inspired her to launch Go Ask Alice, one of the Web's first sex-health answer forums. ISIS grew out of that idea, and now its two-message service, Sexinfo, receives 35,000 texts a month. UNLIKELY INSPIRATION: The banking industry. Specifically, its mobile apps, to beef up Sexinfo's security mechanisms.

HER IDOL: “Margaret Sanger. She started her newsletter, ‘The Rebel Woman,’ in 1914. Almost a hundred years later, we're doing the same thing, except we can reach 20,000 people in 10 minutes.” —NOMA AMINOSHARE

LAURA STACHEL, 52
COFOUNDER OF WOMEN'S EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION AND RELIABLE ELECTRICITY (WE CARE SOLAR)

THE PROBLEM: In 2006, Stachel, an ob-gyn visiting a Nigerian state hospital for her doctorate research at Berkeley's School of Public Health, was observing a C-section when the electricity went out. "And that was it. There was no light." In Nigeria, there are an alarming 1,100 maternal deaths for every 100,000 live births. BIG IDEA: The solar suitcase. Stachel and her renewable-energy engineer husband, Hal Aronson, invented a solar electric system that could help power the maternity ward. To demonstrate the technology, Stachel brought a solar kit small enough to be carried like a suitcase—capable of powering the overhead lights and other small electronic devices—into a Nigerian operating room. “They said, ‘We love it...and can you leave the suitcase?’” WHAT HAPPENED NEXT? WE CARE Solar has distributed almost 70 solar suitcases to clinics and maternity wards in 14 countries. They power walkie-talkies (which pass for intercoms in these clinics) and small refrigerated blood-banks, and may soon be able to run portable ultrasound machines. —N.A.

LEILA CHIRAYATH JANAH, 28
FOUNDER OF SAMASOURCE

THE PROBLEM: “I wanted to learn why countries like Ghana and India, which have such incredible human talent, are so poor.” BIG IDEA: Samasource (Samba means “equal” in Sanskrit), an organization that outsources simple data-entry and media-tagging tasks for companies like Google to people in low-income countries. Since 2008, Samasource has hired more than 1,200 workers, but thousands of workers. And do it as a nonprofit.” BIGGEST CHALLENGE: “There’s still this idea among donors and from other people in our field that poor people lack the skill or will to work in the global economy. That’s us vs. them attitude is probably the single biggest inhibitor to real development.”

HER BUSINESS MODEL: “The people I admire most, who’ve achieved the most success, never stop being curious. In the case of great entrepreneurs, it’s asking their customers what would make their product better and being genuinely interested in the answer; and in the case of social entrepreneurs, it’s being curious about the people they’re trying to help. Curiosity is what prevents me from burning out and getting disillusioned or negative.” —JULIE VADAM

KATE ORFF, 39
FOUNDER AND PARTNER OF SCAPE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE; ASSISTANT PROFESSOR AT THE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

THE PROBLEM: New York City's dilapidated waterfront. BIG IDEA: Oyster-lecture: Building oyster reefs to clean and filter the dirtiest harbors and create appealing public spaces in which people can wander, with flourished OYSTERS EAT GARBAGE? They filter it, up to 50 gallons of water per oyster, per day. Orf imagines extensive reefs of them that could transform the polluted Gowanus Canal into a waterfront park with "mushrooms of baby oyster spots and a dynamic system of oyster gardening, cleaner water, and new forms of ecological urban life." THE RESPONSE: "People living on the Gowanus have asked, 'How can I help? From politicians, 'Why aren't we doing this already? We've met with the Port Authority to test some scenarios," WHO INSPIRED HER? "My old boss Ren Koolhaas understood the cultural power of architecture: not being shy or modest about what you want to accomplish, rather than just making beautiful buildings with beautiful finishes and fancy stoop pants." FIVE YEARS FROM NOW? "I'd like to dock my boat at the oyster reef in Gowanus Bay and have a beer there." —C.P.

JULIANA ROTICH, 33
COFOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF USHAHIDI.COM

THE PROBLEM: The 2007 election violence in Kenya caused a media blackout; no one knew where it was safe to travel, where food was available, or whether banks were open. BIG IDEA: Through it all, cell phones worked. With other Kenyans, Rotich created Ushahidi .com, an interactive, open-source map that pooled user-generated data about conflict zones, texted by phone, to a central online platform. You could text: "Violent mob at such and such corner," and the report popped up as a coded dot on the map. "The moment the map went up, we knew we were making a difference. It gave us a chance to do something positive for our country. Frankly, entering data into a site gave us a purpose," OTHER APPLICATIONS: After the 2010 earthquake, Haitians texted coordinates to Ushahidi that search-and-rescue workers used to find people alive in the rubble; Ushahidi also has supplied information in recent crises in Gaza, India, Chile, and Japan. SPEED BUMP: "Internet connectivity in Kenya wasn’t very good. I was lucky that I had access to a golf club that had Internet service. We were running out of food, but I still had the Internet." MANTRA IN A CRISIS: "This might sound trite, but: Work hard and celebrate ruthlessly." —J.V.