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Brilliant, brave and under 25!

Wondering who the next Hillary, Condoleeza and Oprah will be? You're looking at 'em! The winners of our 49th annual Top 10 College Women Competition are fighting for AIDS relief in Africa, brokering peace between Jews and Muslims and rescuing sex-trafficking victims in Vietnam—and they're just getting started. Photographs by Danielle Levitt



THE SCIENTIST

Maya Shankar, 20, Yale University

HER DEFINING MOMENT: While packing for China to further her study of violin with Itzhak Perlman, Shankar got a call from her doctor: The pain in her hand was the result of inflamed tendons, a career-ending condition. “I heard the diagnosis and knew my life would be forever changed,” she says. **HER NEXT STEPS:** Shankar searched for something to love as much as music and found it in an unlikely place: cognitive science. After refocusing her studies at Yale and acing graduate-level classes, she received five fellowships, enabling her to present her research on vision science using rhesus monkeys and humans. “I thought I’d lost my passion, but I just hadn’t realized how much the world has to offer.” **DREAM JOB:** Science adviser to the President. **FAVORITE PIECE OF CLOTHING:** “The sari my mom got married in—I wore it to prom.”



THE HEALER

Chikoti Mibenge, 24, Wellesley College

HER DEFINING MOMENT: The day after turning 19, Mibenge sat by her mother’s bedside, holding her hand as the last breath left her AIDS-ravaged body. “She held on so she didn’t die on my birthday,” says Mibenge, a native of Zambia, who also lost her father to the disease. Like most Africans, the family couldn’t afford treatment. **HER NEXT STEPS:** Mibenge made it her mission to help find a cure for AIDS, in part to save her youngest brother, who contracted it at birth. She left Zambia two months after her mother’s death to get a better education abroad. Now studying biochemistry at Wellesley College, she also works at the Partners AIDS Research Center near Boston. Until a vaccine

exists, she plans to fight to make sure Africans have access to lifesaving AIDS drugs the way Americans do. **DREAM JOB:** AIDS doctor—and “loving wife and mother.” **GUILTY PLEASURE:** Cheeseburgers. “Nasty, but I can’t help it!”



THE PEACEMAKER

Danielle Josephs, 21, Douglass College, Rutgers University

HER DEFINING MOMENT: “At a campus rally protesting Israeli aggression, I heard someone utter, ‘Death to Jews,’” Josephs, then a freshman, remembers. “I knew I had to understand why people hate—and help build tolerance.” **HER NEXT STEPS:** Josephs, a political science and Middle Eastern studies major, launched the Rutgers University Middle East Coexistence Project, whose goals include encouraging women’s involvement in international conflict negotiation. “Women have a unique skill set to find resolution,” says Josephs, a Jewish New Jersey native who’s fluent in Hebrew and Spanish and conversant in Arabic. **HER BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT:** founding the Middle East Coexistence House, the first of its kind on any campus in the U.S., where 13 Jewish, Muslim and Christian students will live and learn together. “We’re going to get in each other’s faces,” she says, “but we’ll show that it’s possible for people of different religions to prosper together.” **DREAM JOB:** Secretary of State. **HOW SHE UNWINDS:** Gossip magazines!



THE ADVOCATE

Rebecca Mitchell, 22, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

HER DEFINING MOMENT: Mitchell volunteered at an orphanage in Kenya in 2005, where she saw a caretaker whipping young children. “They were on the ground trembling,” she remembers. **HER NEXT STEPS:** She lobbied to have the caretaker removed and drafted new discipline guidelines for all employees. The biology major then founded the

Student Project Africa Network (SPAN), a nonprofit organization (it started as a blog) that's sent 43 people to Africa to continue her work. **DREAM JOB:** Director of the World Health Organization. **MOTTO:** "Do something that scares you every day."



THE EDUCATOR

Elizabeth A. Scoville, 20, University of Kentucky, Lexington

HER DEFINING MOMENT: After watching several classmates drop out of school—and learning that only 53 percent of adults in her Kentucky county had a high school diploma—a 13-year-old Scoville had an idea to reverse the trend: Collect and distribute computers being discarded during pre-Y2K upgrades. "These weren't bad kids, they just lacked computers, a tool everyone needs to succeed." **HER NEXT STEPS:** Scoville's program became so successful—to date she's given away 640 computers—that she partnered with Kentucky's Department of Education to develop an after-school club whose members restore the incoming computers. Scoville, now a 4.0 biotechnology student, is still very involved. "I won't stop until every kid has a computer." **DREAM JOB:** Doctor and literacy crusader. **CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT:** *Grey's Anatomy*.

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