



AUTUMN CAVINESS



JANEEN COMENOTE



MICHELLE COTE



ERICA COURTNEY



CHRISTINA MELTON CRAIN



MILDRED C. CRUMP



CAMILLE CYPRIAN



LISA DUNSTER



PENNY BROWN HUBER



CHERYL MATHIEU



TAMARA OYOLA-SANTIAGO



O'S WHITE HOUSE LEADERSHIP PROJECT

WOMEN RULE!

A CRASH COURSE IN CHANGING THE WORLD

Last spring, more than 3,000 women with great ideas applied for the first-ever **O-White House Leadership Project contest**. The 80 winners got to attend an inspiration-packed three-day program, with coaching by some of the top women trailblazers in the country. **AIMEE LEE BALL** watched as our winners learned to “make it happen.” ▶

Photographs By Ben Goldstein



JENNIE DURANT



JENNY HWA



BINDU MAYI



RESHMA PATTNI



EVAN RYAN



CHRISTINA SAINT LAURENT



ELIZABETH ASAHI SATO



ANJULI SHERIN



JORDAN SILVER



FREYA SPIELBERG



ARCHANA SRIDHAR



LEA WEBB



MOLLY WICKWIRE-SANTE



DIANE WILLIAMS



ERICA WILLIAMS



RAHAMA WRIGHT



CHUE YANG



ELIZABETH ZAPIEN-PLATA



RAOLAT ABDULAI



NADINE BEAN



DEBORAH BEREICHEZ



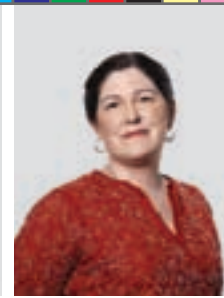
DAWN BILLINGS



ROSLIND BLASINGAME-BUFORD



CHRISTINE BRECK



AMY CALLIS



REBECCA DALLEY



JEANNE DASARO



CERELYN DAVIS



ANDREA DEAN



TAMMY DOBREZ



ANNE DODGE



SARAH DOUGHER



EVELYN FERNANDEZ-KETCHAM



STEPHANIE FIALLO



CATHERINE HEGEMAN



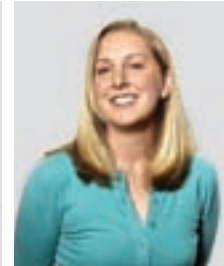
SONYA HENDERSON



SUE HILDICK



SHEILA HODGKIN



TORI HOGAN



NANCY ROLDAN JOHNSON



JULIA KEFFER



MICKI KRIMMEL



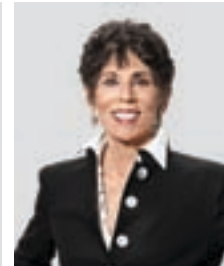
ELIZABETH LINDSEY



YARA LORENZO



SHANNON LYNBERG



NANCY MANSFIELD



JAMEELAH MEDINA



TANYA MOORE



ANNETTE MORALES



IRMA R. MUÑOZ



NNEKA NORVILLE



EBELE OKOBI-HARRIS



MORGAN OWEN-CRUISE



BOBBI PIASECKI



MICHAELLE POPE



RHONDA PRIEST



LORI-ANNE RAMSAY



BETHANY ROBERTSON



THENA ROBINSON



LINDSAY ROSS



JENNIFER STIMPSON



JOANNE TAWFILIS



JUDI TOWNSEND



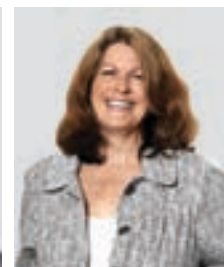
YESICA TRUJILLO



CAROL WAGNER



CAROL WATSON



CARY WEATHERBY



ON A WARM JUNE EVENING, CERELYN DAVIS IS SCANNING a hotel ballroom in New York City, acclimating herself to the surroundings like Dorothy just landing in Oz. A major in the Atlanta police department, she's seen plenty during her career of more than two decades—but nothing like this astonishing scene. Across the room, there's a similar gaze of anticipation on the face of Janeen Comenote, who works for a Native American foundation in Seattle. And in another corner, a self-described “ordinary mom” from suburban Minnesota, Cary Weatherby, is wondering how she got here. Dinner has been served with a rousing welcome by *O*'s Gayle King and a stirring performance by Grammy-winning singer Angelique Kidjo. But the palpable exhilaration isn't coming from the stage; it's pulsing among the crowd: Davis, Comenote, Weatherby, and the other remarkable guests, all winners of an unprecedented leadership training contest called Women Rule!

It's no secret that now is a time when women's strengths are urgently needed in their communities, in business, and in the world. It was with this in mind that *O* magazine partnered with the White House Project—a nonprofit organization committed to advancing women from all backgrounds into positions of power—to create Women Rule! Over the past ten years, the White House Project has perfected the art of teaching leadership skills. And with a sponsorship by American Express, its staff customized a star-studded training program specifically for *O*'s winners.

The contest got off to a start in our April issue with a call to women who had already initiated a project—a nonprofit, business, public policy initiative, or run for political office—and wanted to take it to the next level. More than 3,000 entered, despite the extensive application, and it took weeks to select the 80 standouts, who were then invited to New York City for three days of leadership training.

Now the lobby of the Affinia Manhattan hotel is buzzing with women from all over the country, ranging in age from 18 to 69, burning with ideas and wild dreams. Déborah Berebichez wants to launch a TV science series for girls, encouraging interest in “the physics of high heels” and “chemistry in the kitchen.” Nadine Bean has a plan for social work students to help rebuild the spirit of New Orleans's beleaguered Lower Ninth Ward. Rahama Wright

hopes to expand the fair-trade shea butter cooperative she's started in Mali. Lea Webb intends to get her underserved upstate New York neighborhood a grocery store. And Joanne Tawfilis is creating a pyramid in Egypt from 12 miles of murals by worldwide artists to celebrate International Day of Peace 2010. “I need a business plan because I'd like to turn Art Miles into an income-generating, self-sustaining project,” says Tawfilis, a mother of nine children, seven of whom are adopted



CERELYN DAVIS

Hometown:

Douglasville, Georgia

Project: Sisters-in-Law

Challenge: Getting buy-in from her male colleagues on the police force

► Breakthrough:

Changing the way she presents her idea is key

Takeaway:

A six-month plan

“If the energy and vision in this room were applied to world problems, the morning paper would look completely different.”

shops, and individual coaching by top leaders in business, philanthropy, and politics. But the truth is, they will probably glean as much from one another as they will from the experts, according to Marie C. Wilson, founder and president of the White House Project. “If the energy and vision in this room were applied to world problems,” she says at the opening dinner, “the morning paper would look completely different.”

That energy and vision were clearly evident in the three women we chose to follow through the weekend:

CERELYN DAVIS

AS A GIRL, CERELYN DAVIS WATCHED *Police Woman* so often that her whole family knew she would become an officer herself. But while she has succeeded in earning the rank of major in the Atlanta Police Department, the climb has been a struggle in a male-dominated world (according to the National Center for Women & Policing, women today constitute only 13 percent of the country’s officers). “I’ve had to work above and beyond,” says the 48-year-old Davis, “to deal with men not accepting me as a credible leader. A policewoman doesn’t get respect until she runs a robber down. But women in these roles contribute so much. I’ve had experiences where my presence prevented the situation from turning into a shoot-out. And there are some things I can tell a battered woman, things that aren’t so protocol.” Davis’s conviction that women’s peacekeeping is essential to police work lies at the heart of her initiative, Sisters-in-Law—a support network for women in law enforcement that also encourages girls to consider the profession by offering real-life role models.

On Saturday morning, Davis and the other Women Rule! winners are divided into breakout groups of five. Led by experts the White House Project has selected, the groups will meet several times during the weekend to focus individually on each woman’s project and determine the next steps to move it forward. Davis’s facilitator is Aliza Mazor, a consultant for nonprofit start-ups, who begins by going around the table asking, “What is your biggest obstacle right now?” Davis explains she’s put out feelers to a few police departments about adopting Sisters-in-Law as an in-house program. “But the men think that I’ll bring in an army of women screaming about equality,” she says. The group suggests that she change her presentation: Rather than emphasizing the need to serve and uplift women, she should highlight

from other countries. “My family is tired of seeing me with paint on my clothes.”

The staff of the White House Project have forsaken business attire for Women Rule! T-shirts—“and anyone wearing a T-shirt, consider her your new best friend,” says national program director Erin Vilardi at the orientation. The women are in for an intensive weekend of lectures, work-

▶ LEADING LADIES

To meet all 80 winners, go to oprah.com/omagextras. For a sneak preview, take a look at these seven....



EVAN RYAN In February this year, the Associated Press reported the results of a new study showing that unemployment among recently discharged military veterans is 18 percent, three times the current national average. The news shocked Ryan, a 37-year-old consultant to Education Partnership for Children of Conflict, an NGO cofounded by Angelina Jolie. “There seems to be little gratitude extended on their return,” says Ryan, who lives in Washington, D.C. “The war in Iraq may be controversial, but our veterans shouldn’t be.” She has begun the groundwork for a conference called Home of the Brave that will bring together veteran groups with government officials and the Veterans Administration to troubleshoot why so many men and women are still falling through the cracks. “I want to play a part in welcoming vets home,” she says, “but I want to do it in a way that gives them a hand up, not a handout.”



ROSLIND BLASINGAME-BUFORD Raised by a single mother, Blasingame-Buford started drinking, smoking dope, and hanging out with gangs as a young teenager in Minneapolis. “I should be a statistic,” she says. Her saving grace was a YMCA Black Achievers Program that helped her imagine other possibilities. Today the 32-year-old is paying it forward with Building Futures, a Chicago-based college prep and career readiness program for high-risk inner-city youth that is now five years old. In 2007 an astonishing 97 percent of her 1,000 protégés graduated from high school or were promoted to the next grade, and 86 percent went on to college. “In the Chicago public schools we target, the counselor-student ratio is about 1 to 400,” she says. “But I believe—no, I know—that given the proper tools and support, at-risk youth can succeed.”



AMY CALLIS A vacation in India turned into a destiny for 41-year-old Callis, of Atlanta, who ended up volunteering for two years at a Calcutta hospital where Mother Teresa cared for tuberculosis patients. “Even in her frail state,” Callis says, “when she came into the room, the energy changed.” Determined to continue meaningful work, in 2007 Callis cocreated the Darfur Stoves Project, which produces efficient portable cookers for refugee women of this war-torn region so they don’t have to leave their camps in search of wood, risking rape. Ultimately Callis, a freelance communications consultant, would like to find other simple technological solutions to problems in the developing world. “I’ve never been an out-front leader,” she says. “But the stove is a good intervention right now, until the best one: peace in Darfur.”



EVELYN FERNANDEZ-KETCHAM Growing up in New York City’s heavily Hispanic Washington Heights, Fernandez-Ketcham, now 41, was struck by the ironic proximity of a world-class educational institution, Columbia University, and the area’s many illiterate and unemployed residents. She started the New Heights Neighborhood Center to help young adults in the community develop their skills and get meaningful jobs at the university and other local facilities, like Columbia University Medical Center (all while earning a master’s degree, putting her husband through law school, and raising four children). After hearing Minnesota state senator Mee Moua speak at Women Rule! she is considering a run for political office in New York. “It’s the policies that effect long-term change,” she says. “After the senator spoke, I thought, *Wow, this is really possible.*”

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 278]



Rock and rule!

1. Singer Angelique Kidjo got Women Rule! off to a spirited start in New York City this June. 2. Kidjo with a few of the other trailblazers who led the conference (from left): American Express's Susan Sabbott, O's Gayle King, White House Project president Marie Wilson, and Cause & Affect's Meredith Blake. 3. Two of the 80 winners, Jennifer Stimpson (left) and Tanya Moore, pair up at a workshop. 4. More trailblazing by Mee Moua (right), who was born in a bamboo hut in Laos and became a Minnesota senator. 5. Rahama Wright signs a mural with the other winners before heading off to change the world.

Sisters-in-Law's value to the force, articulating how it will make a department better. Davis pauses to take in the idea. "You're absolutely right," she says. "Just sitting here, I'm already tweaking what I'm going to say."

At dinner that night, Davis listens raptly to a presentation by Julie Gilbert, a senior vice president at Best Buy. "It was a boy's toy store, designed by boys for boys," she says. Gilbert decided that if she wanted to make the store a good place for women to shop, it had to be a good place for women to work. So she started the Women's Leadership Forum—WOLF—to develop a female contingent of innovators within the company. At one point she consulted a male friend in management. "Do you need money?" he asked, trying to be helpful. Realizing that she was about to encounter resistance from on high, she answered, "No, I need a heat shield." Later Davis says she almost wept hearing this story—a heat shield is exactly what she could use in the police department. She also heeds Gilbert's counsel: "Think about all the possible reasons for hearing no, and write them down. It helps you get clear in your own mind."

After the breakout groups reconvene for their next session on Sunday, Mazor asks, "When you push for what you want, what do you feel others are thinking?" There's a simpatico laugh at the response of Evelyn Fernandez-Ketcham, who started a neighborhood center for disconnected young adults in

“Think about all the possible reasons for hearing no, and write them down. It helps you get clear in your own mind.”

Manhattan's mostly Hispanic Washington Heights (see "Leading Ladies," page 259, for more about her project). "I probably make people angry," she says, "but I need to let them react and not worry that they're thinking, *Oh, she's PMS-ing.*" Davis tells the others that her female colleagues are hesitant to "make waves"; Mazor counters by suggesting she look at the younger women—this new generation assumes job satisfaction as a birthright, and they are probably ready to join her. "Form a group and brainstorm around the idea, What is women's policing?" says Mazor. This way Davis can start speaking publicly about the program as a new concept. They discuss how Sisters-in-Law could be organized along the lines of the Police Athletic League, with officers going out in the community to work with girls. Do some research, Mazor suggests: Measure the program's potential impact and demonstrate that it will not distract officers from their other work. As the session wraps up and each woman states her intentions for next steps, Davis says her six-month goals are to establish a stakeholder group (including, everyone jokes, one token "alpha male" to keep things lively) and develop a mission statement that she can hand to the chief.

JANEEN COMENOTE

A MEMBER OF THE QUINAULT AND THREE other Indian nations, Janeen Comenote was born in Seattle and spent her first few years in and out of foster care. At age 5, she was taken in by her grandmother, who as a young girl had been forcibly removed from her own family and placed in boarding school, where any child caught speaking a Native language had her mouth washed out with soap. "My grandmother hated the American government—she'd send me out to the mailbox for our welfare checks saying, 'Go get the Eagle s—,'" recalls Comenote, 39, a development officer for the United Indians of All Tribes Foundation in Seattle. "So much of our culture has been co-opted. Probably no one who drives a Jeep Cherokee could tell you where the Cherokee tribe is from."

And many Americans may not know that about 65 percent of our country's Native people actually live off reservations, often facing the same, if not worse, socioeconomic hardship as those who live on them. To give what she calls "the silent population" of Native Americans who reside in cities a voice, Comenote created the National Urban Indian Family Coalition, which represents 24 organizations in 19 cities and has already hosted national summits. Her dream is to raise awareness among policymakers and convince Congress to dedicate funding for much-needed services. "Part of my motivation is wanting to help my own family," she says. ▶



JANEEN COMENOTE

Hometown: Seattle

Project: National Urban Indian Family Coalition

Challenge: To increase support and funding for her advocacy group

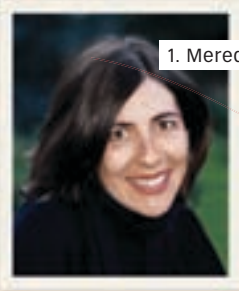
▶ **Breakthrough:** Organizing her busy life will help her devote energy to this project

Takeaway: Time-management skills

▶ AND THE INSPIRATION FLOWED...

The women who mentored and advised our 80 winners know what it's like to wrestle a dream into reality. Meet a few key players who shared their knowledge.

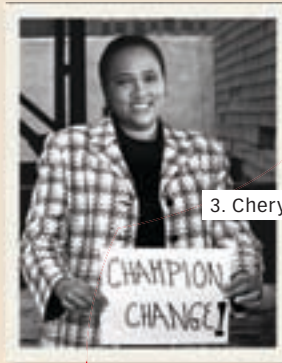
1 The idea for **Women Rule!** started with **MEREDITH BLAKE**: Straight out of UCLA School of Law, Blake founded Break the Cycle, a non-profit agency that helps teens prevent and end dating abuse and domestic violence. Ten years later, in 2005, she joined Participant Productions (now called Participant Media), which makes films such as Al Gore's Oscar-winning documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth*. Inspired by the power of the media to spread important messages, last year Blake founded Cause & Affect, a company that designs high-impact social action campaigns around issues ranging from the environment to human rights to women's leadership. When she took on the White House Project, she contacted O's health and news director, Liz Brody (the two had been tossing around ideas for years). "Making your dream a reality almost requires an obsession," Blake says, "a feeling that your idea really, really matters and that you are the one to make it happen come hell or high water." To that, she adds: "You also need a ton of chutzpah and a Teflon skin. You must have, or quickly develop, the ability to forge ahead in spite of naysayers and, ideally, leave them in the dust."



1. Meredith Blake



2. Marie C. Wilson



3. Cheryl Dorsey



4. Mee Moua



5. Libby Cook

2 **MARIE C. WILSON** took Blake and Brody's enthusiasm and ran with it—agreeing to expand the White House Project's political training to a leadership program in various fields. Wilson had launched the White House Project ten years earlier, when she was president of the Ms. Foundation for Women. "I have never known anything about any field I entered," she says with amusement. "I was a philosophy major in college!" A mother of five children, one of them with special needs, she says there's still a deep ambivalence in the world—and inside women—about ambition. "It's not that women can't dance; it's that women are waiting to be asked," she says. Wilson insists that we must encourage one another to take the lead. "Within the next 24 hours," she says, "you should call up a friend and say, 'Have you thought about becoming a leader in your community or running for...?'"

3 **CHERYL DORSEY, MD**, immediately agreed to take part in Women Rule! when she was contacted by the White House Project. In the early 1990s, while studying to be a pediatrician at Harvard Medical School, Dorsey saw a photo in a local paper of a poverty-stricken mother leaning over the grave of a child. It was her

"moment of obligation"—the realization that a particular issue is so important you have to do something about it, "that you are *accountable* for it, that you *own* it." Dorsey launched Family Van, a mobile health unit for Boston's inner-city residents. That endeavor was financed by Echoing Green, a global nonprofit

that provides seed money to social entrepreneurs with bold ideas. Today Dorsey is its president. "Ideas without execution are simply daydreams," she says. "My mother was convinced she invented Cookies 'n Cream ice cream. Maybe she thought of it. It doesn't matter—she didn't do it."

4 Minnesota state senator **MEE MOUA** joined the Women Rule! lineup as inspiration for anyone considering political office. She was born at the height of the Vietnam War in a bamboo hut with no electricity or running water in a jungle village of northern Laos. Her family immigrated to the United States in 1978 and settled in Wisconsin, where they faced the common post-war hostility toward Asians. "I've always been guided by my mother's words: 'No matter how American you become, some people will never like you because of the way you look. That is why you must study hard, go to college, come back, and be their boss.'" Moua did just that, becoming a lawyer and then winning a seat in the Minnesota senate by contacting every single household in her district, reaching out to the most disadvantaged and disenfranchised. "We should infuse our hearts and our souls into this political world that we live in," she says. "Just look around and see what the world has come to without our presence at the decision-making table. We must be audacious, we must be strategic, and we must be ambitious about taking up the mantle of affirmative leadership because we know we can do better."

5 Philanthropist **LIBBY COOK** agreed to help support Women Rule! financially, then came to check out the participants, counseling a number of them during and after the conference. Cook, with her husband, turned a local health food store called Wild Oats into a billion-dollar company before selling it to Whole Foods in 2007. "I had no business experience and made every mistake in the book—at least twice," she says. "At one point we were trying to be everything to everybody—we had seen hard-core hippie health food stores fail and we were trying to be a crossover store, introducing customers to natural foods without scaring them. But people were wondering: *What's your real message?* Sometimes it's important to start small and be really focused." Wild Oats provided the means for Cook to create Philanthropiece, a foundation that supports international programs focusing on education, health, and the environment, with an emphasis on local communities [CONTINUED ON PAGE 281]

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF MEREDITH BLAKE. COURTESY OF THE WHITE HOUSE PROJECT. COURTESY OF WDWYD. COURTESY OF YEE CHANG. COURTESY OF JOAN KNUDSON.



"My sisters ran away when they were 11 and 12 and started having kids soon after. My sisters are in prison, so I have all these nieces and nephews in foster care that I've never met."

At Women Rule! Comenote can't believe it when she learns that the facilitator of her breakout group, Elisabeth Garrett, is also Native American. Another high point of the session for Comenote is sharing what she's learned about designing her Web site (using an experienced tech consultant) with fellow winner Roslind Blasingame-Buford, who has started a college prep program for at-risk inner-city kids (see "Leading Ladies").

Go to oprah.com/omagextras to meet each of the 80 winners and learn about their projects. You'll also find resources to help you turn your own dreams into action.

In a workshop about public speaking with Ora Shtull, president of MAXIMA Coaching, Comenote learns that body language, delivery, and wardrobe choices have more impact than the actual words. "In fact, when you communicate, you transmit as much as 93 percent of your information nonverbally—gestures, tone of voice, volume—and as little as 7 percent verbally," Shtull says, "and you have seconds to establish credibility." When addressing a group, she coaches: Keep your feet in line with your shoulders and hands above your waist, make eye contact with multiple members of the audience, and occasionally connect to the back of the room. Shtull strongly advises every woman to have an "elevator pitch" handy for meeting

a potential donor or anyone who might support her cause. "Summarize your venture, mention one or two accomplishments, and tell me why I should care," Shtull says. "Too often people stop at features and don't move on to benefits."

In a lecture about time management, Comenote has a moment of clarity about her compulsive e-mail checking. "It puts you in a reactive mode rather than addressing your own agenda," says presenter Julie Morgenstern, author of *When Organizing Isn't Enough: SHED Your Stuff, Change Your Life*. "Wait an hour in the morning before opening your in-box." But Comenote realizes her problem is larger than e-mail: With a full-time job, hectic travel schedule, and an inability to say no when others ask for her time, she's allowing an overstuffed life to keep her from focusing on her project.

Morgenstern offers a number of concrete strategies: "Every time you feel out of control, fill in the blanks: I spend way too much time on _____. I procrastinate whenever I have to _____. If there were a 25th hour in the day, I'd use it for _____." Energized, Comenote starts practicing: *No. I'd love to do it, but I'm simply too busy at this time*—words that are "a huge evolution" for her. "And I know I've got to learn the fine art of delegation—the idea that yes, someone else really might be able to do this as well, if not better," she says. Vowing never to get a BlackBerry—"it would be fatal"—she declares herself ready to "do nothing less than change the face of Indian country."

▶ THE SCIENCE ROCK STARS

Three winners are putting a new face on math, physics, and chemistry—and they want girls to notice



When **DÉBORAH BEREBICHEZ** told her family and friends she wanted to study mathematics, they said, "But you'll never get married. No man wants a wife who's smarter than he is." Their reaction was typical in the Mexico City community where Berebichez grew up, but she paid no heed, earning a PhD in physics at Stanford in 2004. Now 34 and living in New York City, where she's a consultant for MSCl Barra, a financial risk analysis firm, she is determined to make science more appealing to the next generation of girls. Her videos, with titles like *The Physics of High Heels*, demonstrate ways in which science applies to daily life and how fun it can be to learn. If her dream comes true (likely, considering her record), the series will become a TV show.

TANYA MOORE remembers being told by a high school teacher that she didn't belong in the advanced math class. Moore, 35, now has a PhD in bio-



Chemistry is hot! Jennifer Stimpson (*second from left*), back home in Dallas, gets her students fired up about science. Here she shows (*from left*) Phantasia Preston, Richia Campbell, and Chelsea Grant how to determine the number of calories in a peanut.

statistics from UC Berkeley and wants to challenge the idea that "only some people can do math—usually white males." Her project, an Infinite Possibilities Conference, will support and encourage minority women and girls in mathematics by offering role models and mentors. "Math provides a framework to organize information and interpret data," says Moore, who is program manager for the City of Berkeley's Division of Public Health. "Even if you're not going to use geometry in your life's work, it gives you tools that are good for decision making and critical thinking."

JENNIFER STIMPSON, a 36-year-old chemistry teacher from Dallas, calls herself a "new-millennium science nerd." Stimpson is developing a K-12 program

called Get a KIC Out of Science (KIC stands for Knowledge in Chemistry). "It shows that everyday people use chemistry," she says. "Your pharmacist is a chemist, your neighborhood baker is a chemist, and your air conditioner guy has to have some knowledge of chemistry. KIC makes science relatable and tangible."

The trio bonded during the conference, and after a discussion on how celebrities always generate buzz for their causes, they joked about forming a mock girl group: Déborah as Shakira, Tanya as Alicia Keys, and Jennifer as Beyoncé. They're more than half serious (anyone in Hollywood reading? are we talking TV pilot?). "We're women, we're minorities, we're scientists, and we don't have that geeky look," says Stimpson, "so here's our message: You can be black, Hispanic, or Asian, you can wear Manolos, you can be fly, hip, and dynamic and be a scientist. When a 12-year-old thinks you're cool, that's like getting a million-dollar check."

FROM LEFT: MARK VIKER/GETTY IMAGES; JESSICA STIMPSON.

CARY WEATHERBY

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, CARY WEATHERBY, OF Bloomington, Minnesota, salvaged a huge box of alphabet stickers that were headed for the Dumpster, castoffs from a local business that had changed filing systems. She delivered them to a grateful kindergarten teacher at her children's school who had exhausted her minuscule budget for supplies. Then Weatherby thought, *There's probably more of this stuff out there*, and Companies to Classrooms was born. Now the 52-year-old "stay-at-home" mother, who spends most of her time running the nonprofit, wants to create "free stores" stocked with surplus business products for teachers across her state.

At the conference on Saturday morning, she finds signs posted around the ballroom describing different emotional reactions to negotiating: "It's a piece of cake." "It makes me feel powerful." "I try to avoid it." "I worry about how others are going to react." Linda C. Babcock, PhD, a professor of economics at Carnegie Mellon University and coauthor of *Ask for It*, has instructed the women to stand near the sign that best expresses the way they feel. Weatherby plants herself next to: NEGOTIATING IS LIKE GOING TO THE DENTIST. But listening to Babcock, she realizes that she should ignore the voice in her head saying, *Watch out; don't be pushy or Are you sure you're good enough?* "It's not the voice of experience or common sense," says Babcock. "It's not even your own voice. It's the voice of society. It's holding you back, it's cutting you off from the opportunity to broaden your life, and it's costing you money."

The part of negotiating that's most like a root canal for Weatherby is "the ask": actually requesting money from individuals or institutions. She hates getting turned down, takes it personally, feels debilitated. But in a Sunday seminar, Julia Pimsleur, a veteran fund-raiser who has worked for more than ten years in nonprofits, suggests a different mind-set. "You're offering something that stirs your passion, and anyone would be lucky to be involved," Pimsleur says. "When you get a no, it

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 278]

CARY WEATHERBY

Hometown:

Bloomington, Minnesota

Project: Companies to Classrooms

Challenge: Fear of fund-raising

► **Breakthrough:** She can't take rejection personally

Takeaway: Skills for making the "ask"



► SKILLS TO GO

Are you itching to make your own dream happen? The Women Rule! experts have some choice bits of wisdom for you:

5 TIPS ON FUND-RAISING

For anyone who hasn't asked for money since Girl Scout cookie drives, it can be intimidating. But if you can talk, you can fund-raise.

1. **Ask frequently, ask big** (more than you think you can get), and ask specifically (focus on individuals and organizations that are more likely to care about your project because they have similar values or philanthropic priorities).
2. **Avoid cold-pitching** whenever possible. You can be more brilliant with your preparation and documentation when a potential donor is expecting you, even if he or she is having a bad day.
3. **Protect donor privacy** by asking their permission before sharing their information with anyone.
4. **Spend 90 percent of your time** on the 10 percent of your donors who have the potential to give 90 percent of the money.
5. **Keep in mind** that, although there's a lot of competition, around \$300 billion of philanthropic money is now given away every year.

SECRETS OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

If you love to talk in front of an audience, you fall into a minuscule percentage of the population—people like Lisa Witter, who, as a child, deliberately got lost in the local grocery store so the manager would let her say her name over the loudspeaker. Witter turned that extrovert disposition into a career as chief operating officer of Fenton Communications, which provides communication strategies for clients such as MoveOn.org and Women for Women International. Here's her advice on how to make an impact:

1. **What people want most from a speech is authenticity**; you can't project that if you're reading from notes or a teleprompter (which is something politicians don't always seem to get). Have a stump speech perfected, memorized, and ready at a moment's notice.
2. **Practice out loud and get feedback** from family or friends.
3. **Don't thank people at the beginning of a speech.** It's boring.

CREATE A MILLION-DOLLAR BUSINESS

Women own 10 million businesses and employ more than 13 million people in this country, says Susan Sobott, president of OPEN from American Express. OPEN helps women entrepreneurs through a program called Make Mine a Million \$ Business. (It provides money via loans and lines of credit, as well as mentoring, marketing, and technology tools.) "Having a million-dollar mind-set includes setting a goal and being serious about it," says Sobott. "A woman who has it can describe what she's doing succinctly and compellingly, having honed her focus so she can sell it to anyone, whether customer, creditor, or investor. Clarity of thinking is what allows you to cultivate believers who buy into your success." Sobott's best advice:

1. **Figure out what only you can do, then get other people to do the rest.** "Women tend to be good at multitasking but have trouble delegating, probably because of their sense of accountability and desire to be involved."
2. **Balance passion and profit.** "You must advance your cause but have an appreciation for the bottom line. When couples say they're going to live on love, they can get very skinny."
3. **Success is driven in part by the ability to manage stress.** "Perspective and detachment are critical, which means stepping back from a challenge, looking at it objectively, and figuring out how to make it work for you. If you're stressed, you won't be at the top of your game. Get a massage, read a book, take a walk, but remove yourself mentally from the situation. Instead of being mired in the problem, your energy needs to go to solving it."

WOMEN RULE!

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could mean, 'We don't know you well enough' or 'It's not a priority right now.'"


During Pimsleur's session, Tori Hogan asks what standards donations should meet—she's raising money for a project that will assess international aid programs to determine which ones really work. "Choose two or three issues you won't compromise on," says Pimsleur. "Personally, I don't feel comfortable taking money from pharmaceuticals, tobacco, or alcohol. But too broad a list is unnecessarily limiting." Weatherby has faced the same funding dilemma—to seek investors and go into debt or to work with a limited budget—that is raised by another winner, Cheryl Mathieu, who has created an online resource for caretakers of the elderly (see "Leading Ladies" for more on Hogan and Mathieu). Pimsleur throws a question back at them: "Do you want to own a big piece of something small or a small piece of something big? It's hard to take your company far and fast on your own, but with help you can become the biggest player." Ignoring the negative voice in her head, Weatherby realizes that player could be her.

PERHAPS THE MOST STRIKING ASPECT OF the conference, true to Marie Wilson's prediction, is the cross-pollination of ideas. Evan Ryan, who works for an organization that helps provide books, supplies, and teachers to children in areas of conflict around the world, is thrilled to meet Cary Weatherby. And because Ryan's project is a plan to help returning Iraq vets, she's also excited to meet Amy Callis, who has turned her attention to another war zone, providing stoves to Darfuri refugees. And when Jenny Hwa meets Callis, she has a brainstorm: Hwa's line of eco-clothing could incorporate a Darfuri flower print, with a portion of the proceeds going to the refugees (for more on all these women, see "Leading Ladies").

On Sunday evening, the participants return to the hotel ballroom. Responding to a random name call, each woman stands and delivers a one-sentence mission statement—a "lite" version of the elevator pitch. ("Through Sisters-in-Law, policewomen will gain invaluable training and professional support in achieving leading roles in their agencies," says Davis. "Companies to Classrooms gets surplus office supplies and equipment into the hands of teachers," Weatherby follows. "The National Urban Indian Family

Coalition will improve the lives of Native people in our cities," asserts Comenote.) As they speak, they fulfill the Hopi proverb that says: The one who tells the stories rules the world. Many of them had mothers who directed the show from the backseat, raised to believe that leading would take them away from their duty. Now these daughters can comfortably take charge, front and center.

For a closing ceremony, the women form a circle and, one by one, offer a word to sum up the conference: "Strength." "Strategy." "Invincible." "Network." "Possibility." Hugs are exchanged along with business cards, as they rush off for trains and planes. "I loved the theme of getting knocked down but finding a way to pick yourself up and navigate your way through obstacles in a positive fashion," says Evan Ryan, heading for the Metroliner to Washington, D.C. "Focus, focus, focus—it's the results that matter," says Cheryl Mathieu on her way back to California. "It's okay to be of service to people and make money. The world needs me and my story—yes, me!"

The application for Women Rule! asked: What would you do if you knew you could not fail? As these new leaders head out to change the world, they now have some answers to guide them. We'll be following their progress. 

WHEN MILDRED MET MICKI...

Two winners form an unlikely—and righteous—duo



MICKI KRIMMEL (right), 30, plays on a Roller Derby team in Los Angeles and sports a vivid Picasso-esque tattoo that occupies most of her upper right arm. A Web 2.0 consultant, she has a video blog, *The Mickipedia Show*, with a huge following, and she easily references the jargon of the techno-age, such as "wiki" (a collection of Web pages that allows anyone to contribute or modify the content; the word means "fast" in Hawaiian). An early devotee of recycling (and president of her grade-school ecology club), she now plans to fuse her love of technology and her passion for the

environment with an online community for sharing goods, modeled after the idea of neighborly borrowing. "It's partly the consumer cycle that's gotten us into the environmental mess," Krimmel says. "If you need, say, a power drill, you'll be able to find one here, rather than purchasing a new one."

Although **MILDRED C. CRUMP** (left), 69, has never heard of a wiki and is wary of technology, one conversation with Krimmel convinces her of its value. Crump is not one to evade a challenge. This is a woman who as a teenager got the highest score in Detroit history on a district-wide high school placement test but was told that the prestigious school of her choice already had its "Negro quota." Nevertheless, she went on to become the

president of the Newark, New Jersey, city council and created a program to mentor high school girls living in housing projects: They spend time in motivational workshops and connect with what Crump calls women of purpose, developing tools to make good decisions in their lives.

Crump is always looking for better ways to stay in touch with her community, so Krimmel introduces her to Twitter (online messaging between people for whom e-mails and blog posts just aren't enough). "It's as easy as writing a letter," Krimmel assures, offering to add Crump to Twitter right then and there from her phone. Crump just smiles in a way that means, *Let me get used to this idea....* "Baby steps, I guess," says Krimmel.

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TORI HOGAN As a premed student in 2002, Hogan went on a class trip to Lebanon. While working in a refugee camp there, she called home to say, "Mom, guess what? I'm not going to be a doctor." She realized that aid money was often being wasted and people's lives were not improving. With her project, Beyond Good Intentions, 26-year-old Hogan, now a graduate student at Harvard, is determined to mobilize the next generation [CONTINUED ON PAGE 281]

LEADING LADIES

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of aid workers in a debate about what really works, by creating educational programs and a documentary of successful organizations around the world. "Coming from the West, we don't always know what's best for people in other cultures," she says. "We have this idea that if it worked in Cambodia, it must work in Uganda."



CHERYL MATHIEU Although she hadn't been particularly close to her grandparents, Mathieu, 44, became the point person in her family, responsible for their care as they aged. "The gift they gave me at the end of their lives was the realization that I relate really well to older people," she says. And from that gift came her vision for AgingPro, a one-stop online resource for elder care, including everything from support groups for caregivers to directories of medical specialists and assisted-living facilities. "There's a maze of senior services that's so difficult to navigate," says Mathieu, who lives in Long Beach, California, and went back to school in her 30s to earn a PhD in social work. "I want to be the Google of elder care."



JENNY HWA As a dancer with the San Francisco Ballet at age 16, Hwa realized her career wouldn't last forever. With a love of fashion and a concern for the environment, she studied design, working with Catherine Malandrino and Armani Exchange, and parlayed her experience into her own organic clothing company: Loyale, a line of sustainable, eco-chic apparel. Even the hang tags are made from recycled paper. Now 30 and living in New York City, Hwa plans to expand the line. "I want to amend the philosophy that says the environment must be compromised in order to make a profit," she says.

AND THE INSPIRATION FLOWED...

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(Cook took a particular interest in several participants, including Lea Webb, Micki Krimmel, and Rahama Wright and has been working with them to develop their projects). "You have to surround yourself with the right people," she says. "I didn't care about having marquee names on my board. I knew not to ask, say, the dean of a business school because he's too darn busy. I looked for people with the same passion I had."

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