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MEET 21 POWERFUL VISIONARIES
WHO TRANSFORMED THEIR
DREAMS INTO REALITY
BEFORE THEY TURNED 40

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BY WENDY CHIT / NY MAGAZINE

DESIGNING WOMEN

THEY MAKE SURE WE WALK
WITH CONFIDENCE AND STYLE

Q *Natasha Harvey, 28*
Owner and founder, First Footwear

"As Black women, we can lay the foundation for whatever we want to do as long as we are determined."

Before she sunk her life's savings of \$300,000 into her latest venture, Harvey got on her knees and prayed. "I don't regret my decision because it forced me to give it my all," says the married mother of three. "I had no other choice." Harvey used the profits from her three Georgia-based shoe boutiques to create Power, a price-friendly shoe line that ranges from five-inch sparkly stilettos to red round-toe wedges. Today the company is worth \$15 million, thanks in part to A-listers who rock her styles. **Her Power De-Strapor:** A hot bubble bath while reading *The Power of Praying Through the Bible* by Stormie Omartian. —*Amber J. Adams*



Monif Clarke, 31
Plus-size designer,
Monif/C, Fla. Store

"We are having a positive impact on young women who felt they could not be beautiful."

Using her 1997 Honda Civic as the get-away car, Clarke and her mother, the late Elaine Clarke, spent the months leading up to Monif's 2005 clothing line debut visiting New York media outlets. "She'd wait in the car while I sneaked past doormen to deliver my press packet," recalls Clarke. Within 14 days, TLC's *What Not to Wear* featured her designs. An especially proud moment was when she outfitted Jill Scott for ESSENCE's May 2010 cover. "We cater to the dynamic, sexy, full-figured woman," says Clarke. "It's a perspective that is new and fun." **Her Power Scent:** Chanel Coco Mademoiselle. "I don't leave home without it." —*A.J.A. B.*



Corporate Rock Stars

THEY HELP RUN SOME OF THE COUNTRY'S LARGEST COMPANIES

Rosalyn Durant, 34
VP, general manager, ESPN

"Do something that makes you uncomfortable. You'll learn more and have more fun." The son of a salesman, Durant's father expected the best from his children. "I never believed in a glass ceiling for myself," says the Connecticut-based executive. It came as no surprise when the former ESPN intern skyrocketed up the sales and marketing ranks, moving from coordinator to regional account executive to director of national accounts. Today she oversees all programming for the college sports network ESPN. "You still always wanted to make my family proud, so some things don't change." **Her Power Budget:** "The iPhone. I can access my stocks and find a cup at the beach of a college." —L.M.



Chekeha Kidd, 34
Chief of staff and VP, Business Development, Anso

"You have to make the right decisions, not the easiest ones." As an equity research analyst at CIBC, Kidd covered the \$2.9 billion acquisition of medical device maker Kyphon. But after nine years on Wall Street, she found herself more interested in project development. On joining Anso in 2008, she declined her interests and was tapped for her current role. **Her Power Values:** "Salmon, pink and apple green, because it's a serious matter." says the Alpha-Gamma Alpha Society member. —B.M.



Latoya L. Wall, 30
President and owner, The Hubard Group, a firm that improves business processes

"I have a dozen mentors. Not all are women, not all are Black." Wall helps firms like Chemco and Regence maximize efficiency. With a bachelor's in mechanical engineering, a master's in project management and a master Black Belt certification in the Lean Six Sigma, used by companies to improve performance, she boasts impressive qualifications. "Credentialed makes everyone feel comfortable enough to say, 'Okay, you can be involved in the party,'" she notes. **Her Power Top:** A Marigold Ivory French pearl. "It's my traveling office." —L.B.R.



Raquel Oden, 37
Head of Product Strategy and New Business Development, Global Investment Solutions, Bank of America Merrill Lynch

"A mentor once told me, 'Don't hoard your talent. Spend it liberally. Be a millionaire instead on going broke.'" Oden is a managing director at the largest bond-funding company in the United States. "It's my job to ask, 'What do our clients want?'" she says. "Based on that, I deliver the right investment products to our financial advisors to help them meet the client's needs." **Her Power Book:** "My voice. I can't sing a note, but I have been blessed with the ability to be heard." —B.M.



GUIDING LIGHT SHE'S TEACHING THE WORLD HOW TO FORGIVE

Immaculée Ilibagiza, 40
Interfaith activist on peace, faith and forgiveness

"People who hurt others have a blindness in their souls. Once you understand that, you can forgive."

During the Rwandan genocide in 1994, Ilibagiza survived the unthinkable. Amid

calls for Hutu to murder their Tutsi neighbors, Ilibagiza, then 24 and a Tutsi, hid for 91 days with seven women in a Hutu pastor's tiny bathroom. When she emerged, she discovered her parents and two of her brothers had been murdered alongside almost a million other people.

Instead of using these savage acts as fuel for hate, Ilibagiza opted for a powerful idea: radical forgiveness. "I was so angry that I wanted to blow up the whole country," recalls the mother of two, who now lives in New York City. "But I began going through the Bible to see how Jesus died. On the cross, he said, 'Father forgive them, for they don't know what they do.'" Ilibagiza now oversees the charity Left to Tell, which benefits children orphaned by the genocide. **Her Power Top:** "My Bible." —Michelle Burford □