

Who run the world?

To celebrate International Women's Day on March 8, we asked powerful women to reveal who *they* admire. Prepare to be inspired. By **Zoe Williams**

VICTORIA BECKHAM

nominates... **DR DEBORAH**



BIRX, Ambassador-at-Large and US Global AIDS Co-Ordinator.

Victoria says "I met Debbie last year when I was appointed

as UN AIDS International Goodwill Ambassador and invited to speak at the UN General Assembly in New York. The meeting had a profound effect on me. She's an intelligent, elegant powerhouse who has spent over 30 years focusing on HIV/AIDS immunology and vaccine research. She oversees the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which is the largest commitment by any nation to combat a single disease, so a *huge* responsibility. She also served in the US Army, rising to the rank of Colonel, and was awarded two service medals for her research and leadership when she increased the US military's efforts towards HIV and AIDS. She is also a mother and understands the pressures of juggling a professional life with a family.

On International Women's Day 2015, I believe we must support each other, celebrate the huge achievements and acknowledge the difficult struggles of women across the world."

Dr Deborah Birx says "HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of death among adolescent girls and young women in low- and middle-income countries. Our partnership with the Nike Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, called DREAMS, will focus on reducing new cases of HIV among girls and young women so they can live Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored and Safe. We have to approach HIV/AIDS as a community and family issue, as well as a public health issue."



SAMANTHA CAMERON nominates...

CLARISSA MITCHELL and **REVEREND CELIA CARTER**,

co-founders of Hop Skip and Jump, a charity offering childcare for disabled children.

Samantha says "Clarissa and Celia are two of the most dynamic women you could ever meet.

Their charity is transforming the lives of families with disabled children, and it's all down to their dedication and commitment that the charity has come so far. I have been privileged to invite them to Downing Street on a number of occasions to support their initiatives. I know from my own experience how difficult it can be to bring up a disabled child, but their kindness and commitment to helping so many families is amazing."

Celia says "Our main aim is to give parents a few hours off from the extraordinary job they are doing caring for their special needs children. Our new project, Care In The High Street, will create units in shopping centres with trained staff to look after disabled children, so their parents can do things others take for granted, like meeting a friend for coffee."



JUSTINE ROBERTS,

Mumsnet founder, nominates...

LAURA BATES, founder of The Everyday Sexism Project.

Justine says "Laura took a simple idea — sexism goes unchallenged with alarming frequency — and used Twitter brilliantly to address it."

Laura says "Since launching in 2012, we've collected 80,000 experiences of gender inequality. I now want to make it compulsory for young people to learn about consent and healthy relationships."



DIANE VON FURSTENBERG

nominates... **DR SUNITHA KRISHNAN**,

founder of Prajwala, an Indian NGO looking after victims of prostitution and sex trafficking.

Diane says "Sunitha's so strong. Her belief and optimism are uplifting and empowering."

Sunitha says "When I was 15, I was gang-raped by men who opposed my work teaching street kids. I feel the same now as I felt then: I haven't done anything wrong, so why am I supposed to feel pain and shame? The people who did it should. I run one of the world's biggest rehabilitation centres, rescuing girls in India from prostitution, giving them a home to recover. The best way to bring about change is through collective action." ▶



HELENA MORRISSEY,

CEO of Newton Investment

Management and founder of The 30% Club, nominates...



KAREN MATTISON, founder of Timewise and The Power Part Time List.

Helena says "Karen is so impressive for everything she's doing to change perceptions of flexible working."

Karen says "I set up Timewise, a website for part-time jobs, ten years ago. I had small kids, I still felt ambitious. I wanted to work flexibly and the door was closed. I was told, 'You can't do a role with any seniority. You can't do those things unless you're there all the time.' Really, this is about being comfortable judging people by their output, rather than where they're sitting."

BOBBI BROWN, cosmetics entrepreneur, nominates...



LIZ MURRAY, author of *Breaking Night*.

Bobbi says "I was so moved by Liz's story of growing up with drug-addicted parents, surviving homelessness and making it to Harvard. Despite the tough experiences, she has made an incredible life for herself empowering other women."
Liz says "I said to myself, 'What if I woke up, and every single day I did everything within my ability during that day to change my life? What could happen in just a month? A year?' I learned that no one truly knows what is possible until they go and do it."

RONA FAIRHEAD,

BBC Trust Chairman, nominates...



MELISSA LEACH, director of The Institute Of Development Studies.

Rona says "Melissa's research over the past 30 years, in countries like Guinea and Sierra Leone, has always been motivated by her desire to improve the world for *everyone* in it."

Melissa says "My aim has been to reveal the perspectives and priorities of people who are poor and marginalised around the world. There are many big challenges — Ebola is one, climate change is another, as well as growing inequalities, including in this country — and while there aren't any magic bullets, it's often about making small changes."



SARAH BROWN nominates...

GRAÇA MACHEL,

Mozambican politician and social and political activist.

Sarah says "Graça is the only woman who's been First Lady of two nations (Mozambique, then South Africa, as Nelson Mandela's wife), but her achievements stand up on their own. At 30, she was Mozambique's Minister of Education and Culture and under her tenure, primary school enrolment went from 40% to over 90% for boys and 75% for girls. I am proud to work with her supporting A World At School, aiming to get children into schools, and to call her my friend."

Graça says "When men and women truly come together around an agenda for women's empowerment in every sphere of life, underpinned by equal access to education, the scope for progress is unlimited."



JO MALONE, MBE, entrepreneur, nominates...

REBECCA BISHOP, Area Fundraising Manager for Macmillan Cancer Support.

Jo says "Totally committed and relentless in her fundraising efforts, Rebecca has inspired her team to double fundraised income in Manchester from £1m to over £2m. A wonderful wife, mother and friend, she's always smiling. A true inspiration!"

Rebecca says "Cancer isn't something that's going to go away — by 2020, half of the UK population will be diagnosed with it at some point in their lives, which is why I feel passionately about fundraising. What I love about my work is that we don't just offer amazing nurses, we shape everything we do around what people tell us they need."



CAMILA BATMANGHELIDJ,

Founder of Kids Company, nominates...

MAZ ALAVI, teacher at Kids Company.

Camila says "Maz has worked at Kids Company for 17 years with some of the most profoundly disturbed children and young people. She's a nurse as well as a teacher and has been an absolute lifeline to these kids. They adore her."

Maz says "My job is exciting, challenging and life-changing. One thing I'd like to see is more education facilities for children from difficult backgrounds — it's so important to teach girls, in particular, to be themselves and grow to be independent, responsible adults." ☺

