

Five-time world-champion boxer Mary Kom.



INDIA
RING LEADER

MARY KOM KNOCKS OUT TRADITION IN A NEW BIOPIC

WORLD-CHAMPION BOXER Mary Kom, 31, is proof good things come in small packages. Standing just 5'2" and boxing in the pinweight category (reserved for those under 102 pounds), Kom has spent a lifetime busting stereotypes and overcoming hurdles. Now, her story is the subject of a Bollywood biopic, *Mary Kom*, which premiered at the Toronto Film Festival and hits theaters worldwide this fall.

Born into poverty to a family of farmers in the northeastern state of Manipur near the Myanmar border, Kom became interested in boxing at age 15 after seeing Dingko Singh, a local hero, win

gold at the 1998 Asian Games. Inspired, Kom eventually moved to her state's capital to try her hand at the sport—an uncommon choice for girls in India, where femininity is prized. "Whenever the going got tough, I'd convince myself to work harder," she says. "It helps that I'm passionate about what I do."

In 2002, Kom became a world champion, winning the women's world amateur boxing title (a title she would go on to earn another four times). One of her biggest tests came in 2012 at the London Olympic Games, the first to include women's boxing. She was forced to move up two weight classes in order to compete (only three weight classes were allowed in the sport; the lightest was 112 pounds). She took home the bronze, and with it, international fame.

Since her Olympic success, she's used her celebrity to open India's first female-only fight club to train women to defend themselves against India's growing incidence of sexual violence (at

"WHENEVER THE GOING GOT TOUGH, I'D CONVINCED MYSELF TO WORK HARDER."

age 18, Kom punched a man who tried to molest her), and she's also planning to launch an app that will offer self-defense advice. "I've always felt women are very strong mentally and emotionally," she says, "but I want to make them strong physically, too." —*Bhakti Bapat Mathew*



LISA GROSS

Serving up a taste of home cooking

HER INSPIRATION

As a child, Lisa Gross ate traditional meals cooked by her Korean-born grandmother. But by the time Gross, now 32, developed a passion for cooking, her grandma had passed away. "My food was never as good as hers," she says. "I was missing the subtle techniques that make the difference between good food and truly authentic and exceptional cuisine."

HER BIG IDEA

In February, Gross launched the New York City-based League of Kitchens to give anyone access to a "grandmother" in the kitchen. She hires immigrant women to share family recipes and techniques in cooking classes in their apartments.

THE RESULTS

So far, Gross' eight instructors, from places like Greece and India, have taught some 200 people. One instructor named Nawida came to the U.S. as a refugee in 2010 and now teaches Afghan specialties like *quabili pilau* (basmati rice with lamb, carrots, pistachios, and raisins). —*Sarah Z. Wexler*

CHINA

BREAKING UP IS HARD TO DO

Chinese women outsource the dirty work of ending relationships

HEARTBREAKERS ARE FOR HIRE in China, where a number of so-called breakup agencies have opened for business. Cropping up in the months since a Chinese rom-com called *The Breakup Guru* hit theaters in June, featuring a smarmy man who makes a living ending relationships, breakup agents act as go-betweens for clients who want to ditch unwanted lovers but don't have the time or guts to do it themselves. Shanghai-based breakup agent Qi Linlin says she's broken off

relationships over text, phone, e-mail, and even coffee. She rehearses several possible scenarios before the actual breakup and earns about \$5 to \$15 for each successful split. "I

A scene from *The Breakup Guru*.



get a little nervous the first time I call," she says. "What if they blame me or yell at me?"

Mostly she ends relationships as a neutral third party, but a recent breakup required a different approach. One of her clients wanted to call it quits with a guy but worried he would put up a fight. Qi studied her client's writing style and began exchanging messages with the online flame. After a fiery back-and-forth, he eventually agreed never to contact his "girlfriend" again. —*Lisa Gay*

12% THE CAMPUS ACCOUNTABILITY & SAFETY ACT TO COMBAT SEXUAL ASSAULT AT COLLEGES.

11% THE PAYCHECK FAIRNESS ACT TO PROHIBIT GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN PAY.

9% THE INTERNATIONAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S ISSUES IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY.