

BEAUTY

This Sustainable Moisturizer Laughs In the Face of 12-Hour Days

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AS TOLD TO MAUREEN CHOI

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PHOTO: CLAUDIA GOETZELMANN

Words I live by: You can't be perfect at everything from day one. That philosophy and my consciousness of the world was instilled early on by my grandmother, who hitchhiked across the globe and met my grandfather in India in the late forties—a crazy thing for a young white woman to do at the time. I was lucky that I grew up feeling like I didn't need to follow certain life rules or a specific timeline. It's what made me decide to take a gap semester in Africa when I was 17. My family didn't have much money, but I convinced them and my college scholarship committee to let me use some of the funds to do volunteer work in Ghana. That trip changed my life.

It's where I saw firsthand how important the sustainable development of wild plants is in ensuring that our planet is still here a thousand years from now. Right now we're cutting them down and destroying their biodiversity at a rate faster than we can study them. Uganda is the place I discovered Nilotica, a rich, soothing skin butter native to rural areas there and in South Sudan that's hand-harvested from trees that take 20 years to mature. Nilotica butter is so pure you can literally eat it. And if you look at the skin of the local women who collect the nuts, all smooth and spot-free despite working 12-hour days in the sun, you know it's legit. I was like, Why can't I buy this instead of the stuff that costs \$200 and does nothing for the planet or my face? So I got to work.

After finishing college and building a tech nonprofit that provides work for low-income communities around the world, I launched a sustainable beauty brand called LXMI two years ago. My goals: that it feature natural, plant-based ingredients; multipurpose formulations that tackle a variety of skin issues so we can consume less stuff altogether; and eco-packaging (currently, we at LMXI use glass and recyclable materials but are working toward fully biodegradable packaging for upcoming collections).

Along the way, I've learned that the future of beauty isn't about a one-size-fits-all routine or a "go big or go home" green ethos. It's about growing and tweaking and trying to make smarter choices moving forward. And not feeling bad about any of it. Because shame doesn't motivate change; progress does.