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First Monday

What to read or watch in June



The New Recruits: Spokesmodel Shweta Rai with an LED light by D.light Design, which sells the lights to the poor.

Ironbound Films

The New Recruits

PBS, June 15, 10 p.m. ET (check local listings or pbs.org)

Each year, the non-profit Acumen Fund places a small class of overachieving business-school grads in yearlong fellowships with companies in which the fund has invested. The twist is that the venture fund supports foreign businesses that sell to the poor — a sort of social change through capitalism.

This hour-long documentary follows three ambitiously altruistic recruits charged with helping to sell drip-irrigation systems to farmers in Pakistan, an LED alternative to kerosene lamps in India and an eco-toilet in Kenya. Though the situation is ripe for glorification, the filmmakers unflinchingly show the challenging fish-out-of-water situations the recruits earnestly face. Savvy editing and an interesting choice of narrator — *The Office*'s Rainn Wilson — ensure a lack of solemnity, and leaves the question of capitalism's ability to help combat poverty up to the viewer to ponder.