

world," says Larsen, whose long-distance girlfriend lives in Washington, D.C.

"I've been drawn toward the things that other people didn't want to look at like genocide, ethnic cleansing and race issues. But I've always looked at them straight in the eye and wanted to move through it to find solutions."

After traveling to Ecuador and working with indigenous communities, she snagged a degree in comparative international studies from University of Wisconsin before she set sail again. This time, her rudder was aimed toward Southeast Asia.

As a free-lance journalist in Thailand and Burma, Larsen's vision for the magazine became clearer. "My work there impacted me profoundly," she says. Although there were a lot of elements that caused the bud to blossom, it was the Burmese women who left a permanent imprint.

"The women of Burma blew me away," Larsen remembers. "They had been through so much: Some had been raped [the Burmese regime is called a 'school for rape,' with soldiers instructed to rape ethnic minority women], some had their families killed in front of them, some had been living in the forest for years trying to flee from the troops, many had malaria. Their stories were so incredible and inspiring."

Beyond the crosses they bore, Larsen was moved by the way the women worked together. "They were not about to give up their homeland," she recalls. They not only collaborated to find ways to share their stories with the world but also strategized how to bring the dictatorship down. "They were always helping each other...and helping to educate the children."

The Burmese women put things into perspective for Larsen. "To start something like a magazine to tell their stories—although risky—was not a risk. The obstacles seem really small compared to what they're going through."

World Birth will tackle issues within a broad scope. The magazine and its international contributors will cover pivotal stories on urgent global topics. Part of the aim is to be unlike traditional media sources.

The *World Birth* Web site states that "coverage cuts to the heart of global problems and highlights committed local and cross-border forces already at work resolving these complex issues." Among others, that includes human rights, education, health care, international law, economics, the environment, drug trafficking, terrorism, domestic violence, grassroots movements and queer topics.

The forum

World Birth is more than just a magazine—it's an international coalition of journalists, teachers, social workers, mothers,

environmental advocates, psychologists, academics, midwives, artists and global change agents. In November 2002, Larsen founded the nonprofit World Birth Forum with the magazine as the primary vision. The forum is made up of a seven-woman board of directors, a handful of staff across the nation and innumerable professional volunteers, all of whom contribute in integral ways.


"There are so many different people helping us, so many different energies stepping forward that it's going to emerge in a different way than I'd ever envisioned it," Larsen shares. "It's bigger than me."

Riding these waves of support, Larsen has big plans for the future. She hopes to take the virtual roundtables they currently host to a higher level. "It would be amazing to get these women leaders together face to face to spend a few days together to tackle big issues like sex trafficking...getting to meet each other face to face is really powerful."

Other things on Larsen's "to do" list include creating individual news bureaus in every continent that would be run by women for their local and regional news. She also sees some sort of mentor leadership program that would be similar to life coaching for women around the world.

And, at the five-year mark, she'd like to look into publishing a magazine that branches off for children. "It would help teachers and educators broaden children's minds to become global citizens so they can be really knowledgeable about various cultures and traditions and social and economic trends around the world.... Right now, our public education is really lacking in geography and basic global education."

Larsen has no doubt in her mind that there's a rising global movement—one focused on solutions, one that goes beyond blame. "Women are at the forefront of it. I didn't even realize how powerful and networked it was until I started this magazine.... I could feel it, and I saw it in Ecuador, in Burma and in Thailand. But not until I started this did I realize...there were thousands and thousands of women's organizations that are seeking an equal place at the table in all kinds of decision-making around the world."

When asked how it feels to watch her brainchild come to fruition, Larsen says it's been nothing less than euphoric. "I'm excited because it's always been my dream to work with powerful, kick-ass women around the world." 

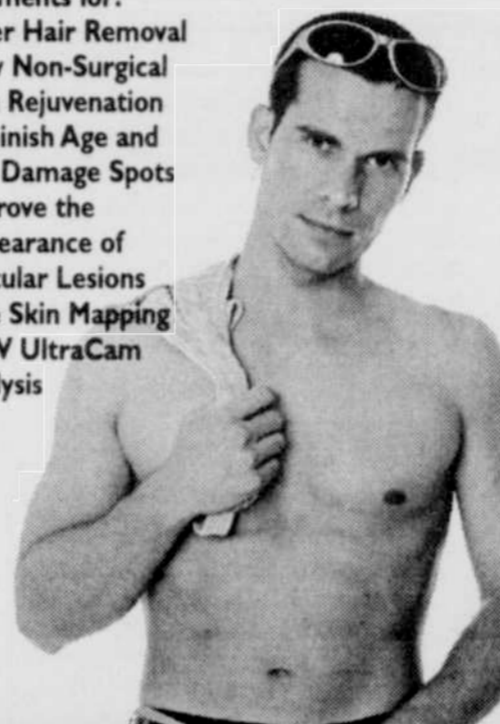
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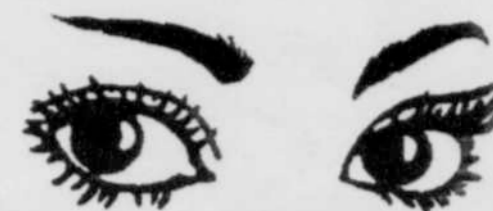
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