

# UTNE READER

## 25 Visionaries Who Are Changing Your World

by Utne Reader staff and contributors - November-December 2010






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**Nelson Mandela didn't always look like a visionary.** In fact, for 27 years, he simply looked like a prisoner, locked up in South African jail cells for his anti-apartheid activism. But what seemed like a long exercise in futility is now the stuff of legend: After his release in 1990 he became his country's president, and today he's celebrated not as an outlaw but as an icon of commitment and compassion.

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Fortunately, visionary thinkers aren't always imprisoned, but they are often ridiculed, marginalized, or just plain dismissed for proposing big ideas that may sound outlandish to others. Get people to invest in local food systems? *Good luck with that.* Identify and dismantle the roots of violence? *Sure you will.* Create a global grassroots movement to halt climate change? *Very funny.*

Yet these are just a few of the lofty, laudable, and reachable goals of the 25 forward thinkers featured on the following pages. Instead of pushing these women and men to the edges, as our politics and media often do, we aim to celebrate their courage and encourage both admiration and emulation.

## Elizabeth Scharpf: Essential Entrepreneur

Utne Reader Visionary

by Joe Hart, Utne Reader - November-December 2010

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A simple lack of menstrual pads keeps many women and girls in developing nations home from work and school. Scharpf's Sustainable Health Enterprises supports entrepreneurs in Rwanda and other countries in devising sustainable pads.

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“Eighteen percent of girls in Rwanda miss, on average, 35 days of school every year due to their periods and ineffective pads and the embarrassment and ridicule that ensues,” according to **Fast Company's** [profile of Elizabeth Scharpf](#). The “blood cost” of young African women was Scharpf's reason for founding the [she28](#) campaign, which aims to supply 1 million women with pads made from banana leaves. Keep up to date with Scharpf's humanitarian enterprises on the [SHE blog](#), [Twitter](#), or [Facebook](#).

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