



## HER LIGHTBULB MOMENT

It hit Laurie David as she pushed a stroller through a cloud of SUV exhaust: It was up to women to stop global warming. She raised awareness, got her husband, Larry, to drive a Prius on *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, and became one of the most powerful environmentalists in America

**N**ot too long ago I was still doing the cliché girl thing: dreaming that some knight in shining armor would come to rescue the planet from environmental catastrophe. It has since become apparent to me that no such person is likely to appear. In 2004, the annual growth rate of U.S. greenhouse-gas emissions, in particular, carbon dioxide, was nearly double what it had been in 1990. We are barreling in the wrong direction. More carbon dioxide means more heat. Higher temperatures mean warmer oceans. Warmer oceans lead to fiercer storms. Higher temperatures also cause droughts and melting ice caps,

which will raise sea levels. All of this points to species extinction: A 2005 study linked the disappearance during the '80s and '90s of about 70 amphibian species to warmer temperatures; another study warned that in the next 50 years, if emissions remain the same, a quarter of land animals and plants will become extinct. The name for this mess is global warming and it is not debatable, nor is it a decade or two away. It is unfolding right now.

Global warming is going to affect many things that we hold dear and also take for granted. Winter scenes of kids happily exhausted and wet from snowball fights may become only a memory—or, at best, reduced to bizarrely seesawing bouts of

50-degree temperatures and freak snowstorms. Cool summer nights will be replaced by evenings that are as hot as the days. Pollen counts are likely to triple, and insects will no longer be an annoyance; they will proliferate and spread diseases such as malaria, dengue fever, and West Nile to places never before afflicted with these illnesses. The polar bear and the penguin will live only in movies and cartoons. Our ability to grow food will be compromised as the heat sucks moisture from the soil like lemonade through a straw. April showers will bring not May flowers but devastating floods and hurricane-force winds. As much as it all sounds like a first draft of a science fiction film script, it is entirely true. You can witness the mounting evidence yourself in two new documentaries: On April 22, HBO debuts *Too Hot Not to Handle*, about the effects of global warming in the United States. And coming to theaters soon is the Sundance hit *An Inconvenient Truth*, starring former vice president Al Gore. Both films make it abundantly clear that if we continue to do nothing to reduce our emissions, we will, in about 10 years, hit a point of no return.

My global warming conversion began in 1994, soon after the birth of my first daughter. I was feeling overwhelmed with the realization that I was now irreversibly responsible for this tiny creature. I remember crying every day at 5 P.M., the witching hour, my stress level at a breaking point. My husband, Larry, and I would look at each other as if to say, "What have we done?"

I hated those first few months of motherhood. The baby colicky... Larry on the *Seinfeld* soundstage seven days a week... my career as a television producer on hold... all of my friends working... no one to talk to. I spent a lot of time pushing the stroller around the neighborhood, and as I did I began to notice all the SUVs on the street. Everyone was driving one! Not long afterward, I picked up a copy of *High and Mighty*, by Keith Bradsher of *The New York Times*. It was about the rise of SUVs and how they were harming America. Bradsher explained that our fuel economy standards were plunging backward because of a loophole in the law that classified SUVs as light trucks, thereby allowing them lower mileage standards than regular cars—and resulting, in some cases, in double the carbon dioxide emissions. Every time you drove to the store, to school, on the freeway, you were exponentially adding to CO<sub>2</sub> pollution, and when CO<sub>2</sub> goes into the atmosphere, it hangs around for about 100 years. This literally panicked me. I'd had other lightbulb moments in my life, like the first time I tasted good wine and then couldn't drink the cheap stuff anymore, or the moment I learned that bald men make better lovers and never again dated a man with hair. But this was different. This awareness landed with a thud on my shoulders. It was just as Wangari Maathai, the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize winner who inspired a movement of Kenyan women to plant more than 30 million trees as a hedge against deforestation, has said: "The burden is on those who know. Those who don't know are at peace. It's those of us who do know who get disturbed and are forced to take action."

My moment of no return as I read *High and Mighty* was disturbing indeed. Soon, global warming felt to me like *the*

issue. So when ELLE asked me to guest-edit its environmental package, I jumped at the opportunity to talk directly to its millions of women readers. I was already thinking about women and the environment. What, you may be wondering, is it that makes women so uniquely qualified to tackle an issue like this? Well, we are natural nurturers—we are moms. We are instinctive caretakers. We can multitask. We can see the forest *and* the trees. And now we have a problem that is going to greatly impact everything that matters to us—our health, our economy, our security, our kids. America's energy policies are outdated and inadequate, and they won't change until the people demand it. That is why a giant shift in attitude and in consciousness is imperative. Yet, as my friend the country-and-western star Tim McGraw said to me recently, "It's not about sacrifice. It's about change."

So I'm not asking you to commit to big sacrifices. I'm asking you to make just one change in your life to stop global warming. Maybe you can afford to buy a hybrid the next time you're shopping for a car. Maybe when you're replacing your dishwasher you can choose an energy-efficient model—one with the Energy Star symbol—and get state-of-the-art technology while reducing CO<sub>2</sub> and saving yourself money. Maybe you'll go out and buy a package of compact fluorescent lightbulbs. If every American household

replaced five regular lightbulbs with energy-saving compact fluorescent bulbs, it would be equal to taking 5 million carbon-dioxide-spewing cars off the road for one year. No sacrifice in brightness, but a huge change in the amount of energy consumed.

According to NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, last year was the world's warmest in a century, and certainly the most devastating year of weather havoc in recent memory. We are discovering now what astronauts learn when they look down on us from outer space. *Discovery* commander Eileen Collins, the first female captain of a space shuttle, sent a strong message to Earth when she reported that she could see with her own eyes widespread environmental destruction. She described the atmosphere as an eggshell—that thin and that frail. The atmosphere is increasingly compromised because of rising CO<sub>2</sub> levels, and there is a growing consensus that global warming is the mother of all environmental problems—that unless we reverse this trend, we will be facing calamities that dwarf Hurricane Katrina. That's why I hope you'll embrace an effort close to my heart: the virtual march to stop global warming, at [www.stopglobalwarming.org](http://www.stopglobalwarming.org). It's an Internet-based, nonpartisan petition that is dedicated to counting the Americans who want our country engaged in finding meaningful climate-change solutions, now. Already, more than 290,000 have joined. Among them are senators John McCain and Hillary Clinton, Al Gore, the Philadelphia Eagles, Walter Cronkite, Leonardo DiCaprio, Carole King, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, and New Mexico governor Bill Richardson. Our goal is to get one million marchers. One voice can turn into a million. A million voices will be hard for anyone to ignore.

So it's not about doing everything; it's about doing something. Decide what that is, and then inspire others to do the same. Don't wait too long. Time is running out. □

AS MY FRIEND  
TIM MCGRAW SAID,  
BEING GREEN  
"IS NOT ABOUT  
SACRIFICE. IT'S  
ABOUT CHANGE."



# ELLE

FINALLY  
HOW TO GET  
CLEAR  
SKIN  
FOREVER  
& EVER

IT'S  
HOT!  
100+

SEXY  
SWIMSUITS  
(COLORS, SHAPES, &  
SIZES FOR YOUR BODY)

+ SANDALS  
& BAGS

THE GREEN  
ISSUE

CLEAN UP YOUR ACT  
WITH THE CO-CHIC  
FASHION, TRAVEL, FOOD,  
AND ROBERT F. KENNEDY, JR.

WOULD YOU CHANGE  
YOUR STYLE FOR LOVE?  
ONE WOMAN'S  
EXTREME MAKEOVER

LOST'S  
EVANGELINE  
LILLY

GETS  
SAVED

ACUT  
ABOVE  
HOW TO  
CHOOSE  
A GREAT  
PLASTIC  
SURGEON

NATURAL  
BEAUTIES  
HAIR STYLISTS,  
MAKEUP ARTISTS,  
AND DOCS  
NAME THE  
3.5 BEST  
ORGANIC  
BEAUTY  
PRODUCTS

ELLE.COM



WATSON  
LONDON  
CHICAGO