Background: This opinion piece was featured on the front page of the LA Times’ Sunday Op-Ed section.

SEX ED

The World Needs Skaters, Not Poser Girls

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Last month, Melissa Larsen took over as the editor of SG magazine [SGmag.com] Surf, Snow Skate Girl (http://www.sgmag.com/), an action-sports monthly for females in their late teens to early 20s. In a late-night e-mail to the publication's managing editor, she offered this informal mission statement:

I was at a skate park about a month ago, hanging out in the shade, nursing a wound and a bruised ego, locating my anger — as you do. And next to me on the grass was this group of boys — couldn't have been older than 15.

So they're sitting around talking about the usual stuff, how lame their moms are, etc., and the topic eventually comes around to this one girl who always hangs out at the skate park with her little friend, but never actually skates.

Meanwhile, across the park there's this other little girl, who I'd been watching for the better part of an hour.

She came with her brother, didn't really talk to anyone, and had been pushing around the outside of the park with her shoulders slumped in that kind of insecure way that young girls do.

So on every pass this girl keeps getting closer to this bowl, kind of looking longingly into it as she passes by.

Finally, she stops and walks to the edge with her board and sets the tail down on the coping. Seeing this, the boys on her side of the park all stop skating in order to cheer her on. It's her first time dropping into the bowl, you see.

At the same time, the conversation next to me turns to the topic of what a big "skank" the other "poser" girl is, and how many guys she had [hooked up with] in the bathroom by the baseball diamond.

So I'm sitting there, feeling sorry for the non-present girl, thinking about how she went the wrong route and, literally, screwed her entire small-town future in a misguided attempt to get a little attention, when across the way, the other little girl drops into the bowl, speed wobbles to the other side and runs off her board.

The entire park was cheering for her when she scrambled back out onto the deck. If you could have only seen the look on her face.
And my point is, I do not want to make a magazine for the girl who [hooks up with boys] in the bathroom by the baseball diamond.

I do not want to tell her how to dress and who to worship and what names to drop and why.

I want to make a magazine for the other little girl — the one who came to the park for reasons having nothing to do with little boys, the one who was scared, the one that made everybody stop and cheer.

Because I think that if the [hookup] girl could have seen the look on the other girl's face when she got out of that bowl, she would have realized that not only are there better ways to get little boys' attention, but that maybe there are things in life more rewarding than getting their attention in the first place.

We have to have a reason to exist. This is our reason. We are going to build an army of rad little girls who don't take [guff] from anyone, and they are going to take over the world.