

**Wangari Maathai: The Barriers She Broke for a Greener and
More Just World**

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Wangari Maathai was a “mad woman,” according to former Kenyan president Daniel arap Moi.¹ She was a rebel, a dissident, and a pioneer. “She was . . . driven by four values, which she had learned growing up: a love of the Earth, the spirit of volunteerism, self- and community empowerment, and honesty and accountability.”² Through tree planting, Maathai has reshaped the lives of millions of disempowered Africans. She not only broke gender barriers in education and employment, but also overcame seemingly insurmountable political oppression in her home country. Furthermore, she improved the lives of rural Kenyans by helping them transcend their economic predicament, a position caused by decades of environmental degradation, corrupt governing, and disempowerment.

Background

Throughout the early-to-mid 1900's, Africa was colonized by foreign powers, Kenya included.³ African traditions were gradually replaced by European ones, and many European agricultural techniques took hold, an example being the planting of cash crops over native trees.⁴ By planting foreign crops, such as coffee and tea, over domestic ones, soil quality worsened, which made it difficult to grow food. Also, commercial logging became widespread, and vast forests were slowly being replaced

¹ "Wangari Maathai." *Contemporary Black Biography*, vol. 43, Gale, 2004. *Gale In Context: World History*, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/K1606002713/WHIC?u=leota&sid=WHIC&xid=201a634f>. Accessed 7 Oct. 2019.

² Rowe, Martin. E-mail interview. 22 Oct. 2019.

³ Sirch, Willow Ann. *Eco-Women: Protectors of the Earth*. Fulcrum Publishing, 1996, p. 66.

⁴ Maathai, Wangari. "Bottlenecks to Development in Africa." 30 Aug. 1995. *The Green Belt Movement*, 2019, www.greenbeltmovement.org/wangari-maathai/key-speeches-and-articles/bottleneck-to-development-in-africa. Accessed 30 Oct. 2019. Speech.

by farmland and deserts.⁵ In 1989, for every 100 trees that were cut down, only 9 were being replaced.⁶ With a lack of trees, soil erosion became more severe, hurting African agriculture.⁷ In addition, Kenyan women, who were primarily responsible for gathering firewood and harvesting crops, found it harder and harder to obtain livestock food and fuel, as a result of deforestation.⁸ This resulted in Kenyans having to eat cheaper, refined foods over their traditional, healthy ones.⁹

With the decolonization of Africa in the mid-twentieth century, Kenya finally became an independent republic.¹⁰ However, politics quickly took a dark turn after Kenya became a one-party state in 1969.¹¹ The Kenyan African National Union (KANU), the ruling party, gradually extinguished political dissent and abolished individual freedoms, and the Kenyan people were oppressed for the next few decades. They began to rely on the government to provide the solutions to their problems instead of fixing it themselves. "To the disempowered, it seem[ed] much easier and acceptable to leave their lives completely in the hands of third parties, especially governments."¹² When the government allowed the clearing of public forests for development, few voiced

⁵ Komisar, Lucy. "Kenya: Where Environmentalism Clashes with Authoritarianism." *The Baltimore Sun*, 31 May 1992. *The Baltimore Sun*, www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-1992-05-31-1992152129-story.html. Accessed 21 Mar. 2020.

⁶ "Wangari Maathai." *Newsmakers*, Gale, 2005. *Gale In Context: World History*, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/K1618004135/WHIC?u=leota&sid=WHIC&xid=d0f9d496>. Accessed 22 Sept. 2019.

⁷ "Wangari Maathai." *Contemporary Black Biography* <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/K1606002713/WHIC?u=leota&sid=WHIC&xid=201a634f>.

⁸ Sirch. *Eco-Women: Protectors of the Earth*, 1996, p. 68-69.

⁹ "Wangari Maathai." *African Biography*, Gale, 1999. *Gale In Context: World History*, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/K2421000036/WHIC?u=leota&sid=WHIC&xid=e3855d9b>. Accessed 27 Sept. 2019.

¹⁰ Sirch. *Eco-Women: Protectors of the Earth*, 1996, p. 66.

¹¹ Maathai, Wangari. *Unbowed: A Memoir*. New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2006, p. 112.

¹² Maathai, Wangari Muta. "Rise Up and Walk!" 19 July 2005. *The Green Belt Movement*, 2019, www.greenbeltmovement.org/wangari-maathai/key-speeches-and-articles/rise-up-and-walk. Accessed 24 Oct. 2019. Speech.

their concerns for the environment.¹³ Worse, Kenyan women, who were experiencing the effects of deforestation the most, were expected to be submissive in African culture.¹⁴ Instead of working to solve their problems, they mostly kept quiet and resigned to walking longer distances for firewood. With most of Africa in poverty, many foreign organizations sent aid to the continent.¹⁵ However, due to the poor governing in African countries, including Kenya, much of the aid was being intercepted by corrupt government officials.¹⁶ To add to all this, in the 1980's and 90's, there was a lot of violence in Africa as a result of its lack of resources, as the underlying tension between different ethnic groups often erupted into violence.¹⁷ With the Kenyan people in an ongoing cycle of poverty, and with the oppressive government being plagued by corruption, Maathai was compelled to take action.

Environmentalism

Even before she began advocating, Maathai had already broken many barriers. Born in the rural highlands of Kenya in 1940, Maathai attended school at a young age, which was rare for girls at the time.¹⁸ She studied hard and developed a love for biology, winning a scholarship to Mount St. Scholastica College in the United States.¹⁹ She then

¹³ Hiltzik, Michael. "Skyscraper Prompts an Environmental Uproar," *Los Angeles Times*, 17 Dec. 1989. *Los Angeles Times*, www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1989-12-17-mn-1678-story.html. Accessed 23 Nov. 2019.

¹⁴ Sirch. *Eco-Women: Protectors of the Earth*, 1996, p. 67-69.

¹⁵ Maathai. "Bottlenecks to Development in Africa." 30 Aug. 1995. www.greenbeltmovement.org/wangari-maathai/key-speeches-and-articles/bottleneck-to-development-in-africa.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Maathai, Wangari. "Trees for Democracy." *The New York Times*. *The New York Times*, www.nytimes.com/2004/12/10/opinion/trees-for-democracy.html. Accessed 4 Nov. 2019.

¹⁸ Maathai. *Unbowed: A Memoir*, 2006, p. 39-40.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 69, 73-74.

attended the University of Pittsburgh, graduating with a master's degree in 1965.²⁰ In 1971, Maathai became the first woman in East and Central Africa to earn a Ph.D.²¹ In addition to breaking barriers in education, in 1966, Maathai became a research associate at the University of Nairobi, a position few Kenyan women held at the time.²² Maathai kept adding to her achievements, becoming the Department Chair in Veterinary Anatomy in 1976 and an associate professor in 1977.²³ She was the first woman in the region to hold such high positions.²⁴

In 1976, Maathai joined the National Council of Women in Kenya and would become its chair.²⁵ While working with rural women and listening to their problems, Maathai came up with the idea of tree planting as a solution.²⁶ Trees provide firewood and food, directly benefiting poor, rural farmers.²⁷ They also improve agriculture by cleaning water reservoirs, preventing soil erosion, and slowing climate change.²⁸ Maathai began to spread her idea to rural women. "I have always believed that solutions to most of our problems must come from us," she would proclaim.²⁹

In 1977, Maathai formed the Green Belt Movement, its purpose being to

²⁰ Breton, Mary Joy. *Women Pioneers for the Environment*. Boston, Northeastern UP, 1998, p. 13.

²¹ "Wangari Maathai - Biography." *The Green Belt Movement*, 2019, www.greenbeltmovement.org/. Accessed 14 Oct. 2019.

²² "Wangari Maathai." *African Biography*. <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/K2421000036/WHIC?u=leota&sid=WHIC&xid=e3855d9b>.

²³ "Wangari Maathai Biographical." *The Nobel Prize*, Norwegian Nobel Institute, 2005, www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2004/maathai/biographical/. Accessed 21 Oct. 2019.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ "Wangari Maathai - Biography." *The Green Belt Movement*. www.greenbeltmovement.org/.

²⁶ Malnor, Bruce, and Carol Malnor. *Champions of the Wilderness*. Illustrated by Anisa Claire Hovemann, Nevada City, Dawn Publications, 2009. Earth Heroes, p. 129-130.

²⁷ Oyugi, Willis. E-mail interview. 27 Oct. 2019.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ "Wangari Maathai-Nobel Lecture." *Environmental Issues: Essential Primary Sources*, edited by Brenda Wilmoth Lerner and K. Lee Lerner, Gale, 2006, pp. 467-470. *Gale In Context: World History*, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX3456400174/WHIC?u=leota&sid=WHIC&xid=88a1907d>. Accessed 3 Oct. 2019.

“empower people and to give them a sense of taking their destiny into their own hands,”³⁰ and to “plant trees and prioritize the felt needs of communities.”³¹ Funded by foreign grants, the movement primarily focused on marginalized groups, such as women, the disabled, and the elderly, as disempowerment was embedded deepest in these communities.³² It paid these individuals for planting and caring for trees, giving them a sense of power and independence.³³ The movement at first planned to plant millions of trees, which seemed ridiculous to some professional foresters.³⁴ However, through education and employment, the movement soon proved the critics wrong. Its simple approach made it popular among ordinary people. “All they needed to know was how to put the seedling in the soil and help it grow, and that didn’t seem too hard. Anybody can dig a hole, put a tree in it, water it, and nurture it.”³⁵ Under Maathai’s leadership, the movement spread across Kenya, encouraging women to plant trees and establish tree nurseries throughout the land. The movement also held seminars, educating women about the environment, human rights, and empowerment.³⁶ Furthermore, the Green Belt Movement constantly evolved to meet the needs of ordinary women, with Maathai personally traveling the countryside to listen to their problems.³⁷ As the movement

³⁰ Maathai, Wangari. "Speak Truth to Power." *Speak Truth to Power. The Green Belt Movement*, www.greenbeltmovement.org/wangari-maathai/key-speeches-and-articles/speak-truth-to-power. Accessed 28 Oct. 2019. Excerpt originally published in *Speak Truth to Power*, edited by Kerry Kennedy.

³¹ Maathai. "Bottlenecks to Development in Africa." 30 Aug. 1995. www.greenbeltmovement.org/wangari-maathai/key-speeches-and-articles/bottleneck-to-development-in-africa.

³² Maathai, Wangari. "Acceptance Speech – Wangari Maathai." 31 Dec. 1984. *The Right Livelihood Foundation*, 2016, www.rightlivelihoodaward.org/speech/acceptance-speech-wangari-maathai/. Accessed 7 Nov. 2019. Speech.

³³ Oyugi, Willis. E-mail interview. 27 Oct. 2019.

³⁴ Maathai. *Unbowed: A Memoir*, 2006, p.134.

³⁵ *Ibid*, p.135.

³⁶ "Wangari Maathai - Biography." *The Green Belt Movement*. www.greenbeltmovement.org/.

³⁷ Maathai. *Unbowed: A Memoir*, 2006, p.171-174.

became more and more popular, it began to work with schools and youth groups, educating future generations about the importance of the environment.^{38 39} In 1986, the Pan Africa Green Belt Network was established, spreading the Green Belt Movement's ideals to the rest of the continent.⁴⁰

Challenging the Government

With popularity came attention, as the Kenyan government began to take more and more interest in the Green Belt Movement's work. For most of the 1980's, the Kenyan government was fairly supportive of the movement's work.⁴¹ It all changed in 1989. That year, the Kenyan government announced a plan to build a 60-story skyscraper in Uhuru Park, one of the biggest public recreational spots in the capital of Nairobi.^{42 43} The plan would have greatly decreased the size of the park and also required a huge loan by foreign investors, putting Kenya into more debt.⁴⁴ Maathai and her supporters were determined to stop the project in its tracks. They staged demonstrations and wrote letters to government officials.⁴⁵ This soon attracted attention, and many other members of the community began to voice their concerns as well.

³⁸ Breton. *Women Pioneers for the Environment*, 1998, p. 14.

³⁹ See Appendix A

⁴⁰ "Wangari Maathai Biographical." *The Nobel Prize*, 2005.
www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2004/maathai/biographical/.

⁴¹ Maathai. *Unbowed: A Memoir*, 2006, p.197.

⁴² Perlez, Jane. "Nairobi Journal; Skyscraper's Enemy Draws a Daily Dose of Scorn." *The New York Times*, 6 Dec. 1989. *The New York Times*,
[www.nytimes.com/1989/12/06/world/nairobi-journal-skyscraper-s-enemy-draws-a-daily-dose-of-scorn.htm](http://www.nytimes.com/1989/12/06/world/nairobi-journal-skyscraper-s-enemy-draws-a-daily-dose-of-scorn.html)
l. Accessed 21 Mar. 2020.

⁴³ See Appendix B

⁴⁴ Hiltzik. "Skyscraper Prompts an Environmental Uproar," 17 Dec. 1989.
www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1989-12-17-mn-1678-story.html.

⁴⁵ Perlez. "Nairobi Journal; Skyscraper's Enemy Draws a Daily Dose of Scorn," 6 Dec. 1989.
[www.nytimes.com/1989/12/06/world/nairobi-journal-skyscraper-s-enemy-draws-a-daily-dose-of-scorn.htm](http://www.nytimes.com/1989/12/06/world/nairobi-journal-skyscraper-s-enemy-draws-a-daily-dose-of-scorn.html)
l.

Foreign investors were discouraged, and eventually, the project was scrapped.⁴⁶

However, ever since Kenya became a one-party state, dissent from the ruling party was almost unheard of.⁴⁷ The Kenyan regime was incensed by Maathai's fierce opposition, and as punishment, the government vilified her. "One [Kenyan parliamentary] member after another took the rostrum to crack crude jokes at her expense [and] question her patriotism and marital status."⁴⁸ In only a matter of weeks, Maathai had gone from a relatively unknown activist to a public menace in the eyes of the executive. The Green Belt Movement was also defamed, and it was evicted from its government offices, operating from Maathai's own house instead.⁴⁹ However, the activists were not deterred, participating in a hunger strike in 1992 calling for the release of political prisoners. Maathai and her supporters were badly beaten by police during the demonstration.⁵⁰ Despite this, they were ultimately successful, as almost all of the prisoners were eventually released.⁵¹

Throughout the 1990's, Maathai continued to battle unjust government land-grabbing projects. Many of the demonstrations Maathai and her supporters staged ended in violence as police and hired thugs attacked the protesters.^{52 53} "She [Wangari

⁴⁶ "Wangari Maathai." *African Biography*.

<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/K2421000036/WHIC?u=leota&sid=WHIC&xid=e3855d9b>.

⁴⁷ Hiltzik. "Skyscraper Prompts an Environmental Uproar," 17 Dec. 1989.

www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1989-12-17-mn-1678-story.html.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Breton. *Women Pioneers for the Environment*, 1998, p. 15.

⁵⁰ "Wangari Maathai." *African Biography*.

<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/K2421000036/WHIC?u=leota&sid=WHIC&xid=e3855d9b>.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ngunjiri, Philip. "ENVIRONMENT-KENYA: UN Chief Condemns the Beating of Ecologist." *Inter Press Service News Agency* [Nairobi], 11 Jan. 1999. *Inter Press Service*, www.ipsnews.net/1999/01/environment-kenya-un-chief-condemns-the-beating-of-ecologist/. Accessed 21 Mar. 2020.

⁵³ See Appendix C

Maathai] was a controversial figure in Kenya in the 1980s and 1990s, and . . . she had many enemies in [the] government, who insulted her and even threatened her life.”⁵⁴ However, Maathai and her supporters remained fiercely determined, jeopardizing their own safety for what they believed in. Their tenacity often paid off, and many precious ecosystems were saved. In response to all the violence, world leaders condemned the Kenyan government’s brutal crackdowns and Maathai began to receive more international support.⁵⁵ Maathai didn’t only advocate for the environment during this time, but she also promoted women’s rights, democracy, and civil liberties.⁵⁶ Wangari Maathai and the Green Belt Movement soon became a symbol of freedom and peace as it challenged the oppressive Kenyan regime, unyielding amidst all the blood and violence.

Later Life

In the early 2000’s, the decades of oppression that Kenya faced slowly came to an end as the corrupt regime was replaced by a more democratic administration.⁵⁷ As Maathai became more widely-recognized, she began raising awareness about climate change,⁵⁸ culture loss, and international debt along with deforestation and women’s

⁵⁴ Rowe, Martin. E-mail interview. 22 Oct. 2019.

⁵⁵ Komisar. "Kenya: Where Environmentalism Clashes with Authoritarianism," 31 May 1992. www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-1992-05-31-1992152129-story.html.

⁵⁶ Breton. *Women Pioneers for the Environment*, 1998, p. 15, 18.

⁵⁷ Maathai. "Speak Truth to Power."

www.greenbeltmovement.org/wangari-maathai/key-speeches-and-articles/speak-truth-to-power.

⁵⁸ Maathai, Wangari. "Prof Wangari Maathai's Keynote Address during the 2nd World Congress of Agroforestry." 24 Aug. 2009. *The Green Belt Movement*, 2019, www.greenbeltmovement.org/wangari-maathai/key-speeches-and-articles/2nd-world-congress-of-agroforestry-keynote-address. Accessed 31 Oct. 2019. Address.

rights.⁵⁹ Maathai also stressed the importance of land management, native culture, and human rights to the United Nations.⁶⁰ She would write, "I saw how important culture was to the larger goals of the Green Belt Movement and to managing our natural resources efficiently, sustainably, and equitably. Many aspects of the cultures our ancestors practiced had protected Kenya's environment."⁶¹ Over the years, Maathai had rallied thousands to the cause of freedom and justice. However, there was only so much one activist could do. As a result, in 2002, Maathai decided to create even more change by becoming a politician. It was a risky decision, as running for office could be a lethal blow to an activist's otherwise virtuous reputation.⁶² However, Maathai was successful, cruising to a seat in the Kenyan Parliament with 98% of the popular vote.⁶³ A few months later, she was appointed Assistant Minister of the Environment, Natural Resources, and Wildlife.⁶⁴ As a legislator, Maathai would propose many bills aimed at helping the environment and improving the lives of those in poverty.⁶⁵

In the last few years of her life, Maathai continued to remain active in the community, spreading the idea of tree planting throughout the African continent. She urged African governments to not "succumb to pressure from pulp and building industries and re-introduce a system that was largely responsible for the destruction of

⁵⁹ Maathai. "Bottlenecks to Development in Africa." 30 Aug. 1995.
www.greenbeltmovement.org/wangari-maathai/key-speeches-and-articles/bottleneck-to-development-in-africa.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Maathai. *Unbowed: A Memoir*, 2006, p. 174-175.

⁶² "Wangari Maathai." *Contemporary Black Biography*
<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/K1606002713/WHIC?u=leota&sid=WHIC&xid=201a634f>.

⁶³ "Wangari Maathai Biographical." *The Nobel Prize*, 2005.
www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2004/maathai/biographical/.

⁶⁴ "Wangari Maathai." *Contemporary Black Biography*
<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/K1606002713/WHIC?u=leota&sid=WHIC&xid=201a634f>.

⁶⁵ Malnor and Malnor. *Champions of the Wilderness*, 2009, p. 132.

forests in the past.”⁶⁶ With all this, Maathai was internationally recognized many times, winning the Right Livelihood Award in 1984, the Goldman Environmental Prize in 1991, the Edinburgh Medal in 1993, the Outstanding Vision and Commitment Award in 2002, and the Sophie Prize in 2004.⁶⁷ To top it all off, in 2004, Wangari Maathai won the Nobel Peace Prize "for her contribution to sustainable development, democracy and peace," becoming the first African woman to ever do so.⁶⁸

Effects

Over the years, the Green Belt Movement has vastly changed the Kenyan environment. It planted over 50 million trees and established over 5,000 tree nurseries.⁶⁹ All these newly planted trees cleaned the air, prevented soil erosion, and maintained watersheds, ameliorating the African quality of life.⁷⁰ In addition to healing the environment, Wangari Maathai and the Green Belt Movement also changed the lives of rural women. As a result of tree planting, women no longer needed to work as hard to find resources to sustain their families, and increased food production resulted in a healthier populace.⁷¹ Furthermore, the Green Belt Movement has provided employment to tens of thousands of impoverished individuals. “Women earn money from planting trees in their free time, money that they are able to use to provide for their families while

⁶⁶ Maathai. "Prof Wangari Maathai's Keynote Address," 24 Aug. 2009. www.greenbeltmovement.org/wangari-maathai/key-speeches-and-articles/2nd-world-congress-of-agroforestry-keynote-address.

⁶⁷ "Wangari Maathai Biographical." *The Nobel Prize*, 2005. www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2004/maathai/biographical/.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ The Green Belt Movement. "The Green Belt Movement: 40 Years of Impact." *The Goldman Environmental Prize*, 21 Mar. 2018, www.goldmanprize.org/blog/green-belt-movement-wangari-maathai/. Accessed 8 Jan. 2020.

⁷⁰ Oyugi, Willis. E-mail interview. 27 Oct. 2019.

⁷¹ Sirch. *Eco-Women: Protectors of the Earth*, 1996, p. 68-69.

also caring for their environments.”⁷² This income also helped women become more independent from their households, giving them power and opportunity. Not only did the movement support women, but it also provided employment to the disabled, the elderly, and the underqualified.⁷³ As a result of Maathai and the Green Belt Movement, women and other disempowered groups have been able to rise up and pave their own path. The job experience received by being employed helped the individuals hired by the Green Belt Movement seek better careers.⁷⁴ To top it all off, the movement has provided education to ordinary citizens. By educating women and children about democracy, human rights, leadership, and the environment, the Green Belt Movement has provided disempowered individuals the knowledge to create change.

In addition to having environmental and socioeconomic impacts on Africa, Wangari Maathai also transformed the political landscape. Her efforts against land clearing checked the former Kenyan regime’s power, which made it clear to government leaders that the people are a force to be reckoned with. Thanks to her, Uhuru Park exists to this day untouched, providing busy city workers a place to relax. Maathai also called for the release of political dissidents and provided humanitarian aid to victims of ethnic violence, risking her own life to do so.⁷⁵ Maathai’s bravery has inspired many others to take on the cause of democracy and human rights. She also educated

⁷² Oyugi, Willis. E-mail interview. 27 Oct. 2019.

⁷³ Maathai. "Acceptance Speech – Wangari Maathai," 31 Dec. 1984.
www.rightlivelivelihoodaward.org/speech/acceptance-speech-wangari-maathai/.

⁷⁴ "Wangari Maathai." *Contemporary Black Biography*
<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/K1606002713/WHIC?u=leota&sid=WHIC&xid=201a634f>.

⁷⁵ "Wangari Maathai." *African Biography*.
<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/K2421000036/WHIC?u=leota&sid=WHIC&xid=e3855d9b>.

ordinary Kenyans about the importance of democracy and justice.⁷⁶ With all this, the people elected a more democratic government in 2002, finally ousting the oppressive ruling party from power.⁷⁷ Maathai's fierce opposition against oppressive government operations has protected the Kenyan environment and redefined African politics, demonstrating the change ordinary people can create.

Conclusion

Wangari Maathai has changed the lives of thousands of Africans, and her activism has had worldwide effects. "Wangari Maathai successfully combined environmentalism with the fight for human rights/women's rights [and] the expansion of democracy in Kenya during the 1990s, and also challenge[d] patriarchal structures that generally marginalize women in the household."⁷⁸ In a society where women were expected to be docile, Maathai improved the African environment, created political reform, and empowered the ordinary people, in addition to breaking barriers in education and employment. She risked her life by being outspoken, facing threats and insults from many members of the Kenyan elite. She worked towards a more just government, and succeeded in 2002 with the end of KANU dominance.⁷⁹ Winning the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize for her peaceful efforts towards a better world, Maathai continued advocating for what she believed in. To future generations she said, "We are a unique heritage to the ecosystem on this planet . . . and we have a special

⁷⁶ Maathai. "Bottlenecks to Development in Africa." 30 Aug. 1995.
www.greenbeltmovement.org/wangari-maathai/key-speeches-and-articles/bottleneck-to-development-in-africa.

⁷⁷ "Wangari Maathai." *Contemporary Black Biography*
<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/K1606002713/WHIC?u=leota&sid=WHIC&xid=201a634f>.

⁷⁸ Oyugi, Willis. E-mail interview. 27 Oct. 2019.

⁷⁹ Maathai. *Unbowed: A Memoir*, 2006, p. 286-289.

responsibility. If to those to whom more has been given more will be expected, then we must embrace our special responsibility, which is more than is expected of the elephants and the butterflies. In making sure that they and their future generations survive, we shall be ensuring the survival of our own species.”⁸⁰ Wangari Maathai has broken many barriers to help the ordinary people of her country, becoming an inspiration to thousands about how one person can change the world.

⁸⁰ Maathai. "Acceptance Speech – Wangari Maathai," 31 Dec. 1984.
www.rightlivelihoodaward.org/speech/acceptance-speech-wangari-maathai/.

Appendix A



This picture shows Maathai helping a child water a tree during a reforestation project in the Aberdare Forest. The Green Belt Movement often worked with school children in order to encourage them to develop a respect for nature. By educating the youth, the movement's message could be carried into the future.

Citation

Merton, Lisa. Wangari Maathai planting trees in the degraded Aberdare Forest, Kenya. *The Goldman Environmental Prize*, 21 Mar. 2018, www.goldmanprize.org/blog/green-belt-movement-wangari-maathai/. Accessed 23 Mar. 2020.

Appendix B



This is a photo taken in 1989, showing the planned construction site of the Uhuru Park skyscraper. Wangari Maathai and her supporters staged protests in the vicinity, in opposition of the project. Uhuru Park would be the site of many more of Maathai's demonstrations throughout the 1990's, such as the 1992 hunger strike.

Citation

Vehicles drive past the fence marking the construction site for the Uhuru Park skyscraper in 1989. *The Daily Nation*, 2 Oct. 2006, www.nation.co.ke/lifestyle/1190-147394-gifwm6z/index.html. Accessed 23 Mar. 2020.

Appendix C



This picture was taken in 1998 at the entrance to Karura Forest, the site of one of many government land-grabbing projects. Wangari Maathai (far-left) and her supporters, primarily reporters and activists, argue with multiple guards, armed with bows, machetes, and clubs. Soon, Maathai and her followers would be attacked, resulting in Maathai being badly injured.

Citation

Mathenge, Joseph. Wangari Maathai arguing with guards at Karura Forest in 1998. *The Daily Nation*, 3 Oct. 2006, www.nation.co.ke/lifestyle/1190-147486-gifvujz/index.html. Accessed 23 Mar. 2020.

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Hiltzik, Michael. "Skyscraper Prompts an Environmental Uproar : Kenya: The Furor over the Proposed High-rise in Nairobi Is Unusual for Two Reasons: Progress Is Rarely Opposed, and Political Debate Is Almost Non-existent." *Los Angeles Times*, 17 Dec. 1989. *Los Angeles Times*, www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1989-12-17-mn-1678-story.html. Accessed 23 Nov. 2019. This source is a primary newspaper article from the Los Angeles Times that was published around the time Maathai was becoming a prominent figure. I used this source to add more variety to my sources and to get more details on what the public opinion was regarding Maathai and the Green Belt Movement. This source helped my understanding of the topic by better explaining what the world thought of Maathai back in the 1980's and 90's. I used this source in my paper to explain the details surrounding the 1989 incident at Uhuru Park.

Maathai, Wangari. "Speak Truth to Power." *Speak Truth to Power. The Green Belt Movement*, www.greenbeltmovement.org/wangari-maathai/key-speeches-and-articles/speak-

truth-to-power. Accessed 28 Oct. 2019. Excerpt originally published in *Speak Truth to Power*, edited by Kerry Kennedy, . This source is a well-written primary article by the topic, Wangari Maathai. I used it to add more variety to my sources and to better understand Maathai's views on African politics and the environment. This source helped my understanding of my topic by giving a more detailed explanation of what Maathai believed in and what motivated her to take action. I used this source in my paper to better show Maathai's struggle against the Kenyan government.

Maathai, Wangari. *Unbowed: A Memoir*. New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2006. This source is a well-written and detailed autobiography from the topic, Wangari Maathai. I used this source to add more variety to my sources and to get more specific details about Maathai's life. This source greatly helped my understanding of the topic by giving more facts about Maathai childhood, education, activism, and career. I used this source in my paper in many areas, as it contained a plethora of information on multiple aspects.

Maathai, Wangari. "Trees for Democracy." *The New York Times*. *The New York Times*, www.nytimes.com/2004/12/10/opinion/trees-for-democracy.html. Accessed 4 Nov. 2019. This is a primary newspaper article written by Wangari Maathai. I used it to get more information on Maathai's activism and to add more variety to my sources. This source helped my understanding of the topic by making it more

clear what Maathai's plans for Africa were, and what she had done to help Africa thrive. I used this source in my paper to show Maathai's opinions on the Kenyan government.

Maathai, Wangari. "Bottlenecks to Development in Africa." 30 Aug. 1995. *The Green Belt Movement*, 2019,

www.greenbeltmovement.org/wangari-maathai/key-speeches-and-articles/bottlenecks-to-development-in-africa. Accessed 30 Oct. 2019. Speech. This is a primary speech given by Wangari Maathai. I used it to get more information about Maathai's opinions and what she considered as obstacles in African development. This source helped my understanding of the topic by better explaining what Maathai's thoughts on African politics and economies were. I used this source in my paper to describe the problems that faced Kenya and to show Maathai's later activism.

Maathai, Wangari. "Prof Wangari Maathai's Keynote Address during the 2nd World Congress of Agroforestry." 24 Aug. 2009. *The Green Belt Movement*, 2019,

www.greenbeltmovement.org/wangari-maathai/key-speeches-and-articles/2nd-world-congress-of-agroforestry-keynote-address. Accessed 31 Oct. 2019.

Address. This is a primary address given by the topic, Wangari Maathai. I used this to get more information on Maathai's views and what she believed were solutions to Africa's problems. This source helped my understanding of the topic

by better showing me what Maathai's views on the environment were and what solutions she advocated for. I used this source in my paper to show Maathai's later activism.

Maathai, Wangari. "Acceptance Speech – Wangari Maathai." 31 Dec. 1984. *The Right Livelihood Foundation*, 2016,

www.rightlivelihoodaward.org/speech/acceptance-speech-wangari-maathai/.

Accessed 7 Nov. 2019. Speech. This is a primary speech given by Wangari Maathai. I used it to get more information on the Green Belt Movement and what motivated Maathai to found it. This source helped my understanding of my topic by better explaining the organization and mission of the Green Belt Movement. I used this source in my paper mainly to describe the Green Belt Movement's actions and its effects on ordinary people.

Maathai, Wangari Muta. "Rise Up and Walk!" 19 July 2005. *The Green Belt Movement*, 2019,

www.greenbeltmovement.org/wangari-maathai/key-speeches-and-articles/rise-up-and-walk. Accessed 24 Oct. 2019. Speech. This is a speech given by Wangari Maathai, the topic herself. I used it to add more variety to my sources, and to get more information about Maathai's beliefs. This source helped my understanding of the topic by making more clear what Maathai's thoughts on the environment

and African politics were. I used this source in my paper to show Maathai's views on disempowerment.

Rowe, Martin. E-mail interview. 22 Oct. 2019. This source is an interview that I conducted over e-mail with Martin Rowe, someone who personally knew Wangari Maathai. I used it to add more variety to my sources and to get information on Maathai not commonly mentioned in other sources, like her personality. This source helped my understanding of the topic by better explaining what Maathai was like as an individual. I used this source in my paper to emphasize the danger Maathai faced in Kenya while also showing the more personal side of her.

"Wangari Maathai-Nobel Lecture." *Environmental Issues: Essential Primary Sources*, edited by Brenda Wilmoth Lerner and K. Lee Lerner, Gale, 2006, pp. 467-470. *Gale In Context: World History*, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX3456400174/WHIC?u=leota&sid=WHIC&xid=88a1907d>. Accessed 3 Oct. 2019. This source is a primary speech delivered by Wangari Maathai, the topic. I used it to get some quotes from Maathai, provide more variety to my sources, and to understand what compelled Maathai to do what she did. The source helped my understanding of the topic by giving a brief overview of Maathai's life and her motivations. I used this source in my paper to better show Maathai's views on activism and empowerment.

Komisar, Lucy. "Kenya: Where Environmentalism Clashes with Authoritarianism." *The Baltimore Sun*, 31 May 1992. *The Baltimore Sun*, www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-1992-05-31-1992152129-story.html. Accessed 21 Mar. 2020. This source is a primary newspaper article from 1992, detailing Maathai's opposition against the government, and the many times she was arrested. I used this source to gain a third-party's perspective of Maathai's actions. This source helped my understanding by showing what the rest of the world thought of Maathai and the Kenyan government. I used this source in my paper to reinforce what I already know about Maathai's clashes with the government.

Ngunjiri, Philip. "ENVIRONMENT-KENYA: UN Chief Condemns the Beating of Ecologist." *Inter Press Service News Agency* [Nairobi], 11 Jan. 1999. *Inter Press Service*, www.ipsnews.net/1999/01/environment-kenya-un-chief-condemns-the-beating-of-ecologist/. Accessed 21 Mar. 2020. This source is a newspaper edition from 1999, reporting on the beating of Wangari Maathai and her supporters at the Karura Forest. I used this source to better balance my sources, and to gain better insight at how world leaders reacted to the violence. This source helped my understanding of my topic by giving a less partial perspective of Maathai's

actions. I used this source in my paper to better show the struggles Maathai had with the Kenyan government.

Perlez, Jane. "Nairobi Journal; Skyscraper's Enemy Draws a Daily Dose of Scorn." *The New York Times*, 6 Dec. 1989. *The New York Times*, www.nytimes.com/1989/12/06/world/nairobi-journal-skyscraper-s-enemy-draws-a-daily-dose-of-scorn.html. Accessed 21 Mar. 2020. This source is a primary newspaper article from 1989, reporting on Maathai's opposition against the Uhuru Park skyscraper. I used this source to add more variety to my sources, and to get more details on Maathai's first clashes with the government. This source helped my understanding of my topic by giving an outsider's insight on Wangari Maathai's actions in 1989. I used this source in my paper to give more details on the Uhuru Park incident.

Secondary Sources

Breton, Mary Joy. *Women Pioneers for the Environment*. Boston, Northeastern UP, 1998. This source is a thorough, well-written secondary book. I used it to reinforce what I already know and to get details on important aspects of Maathai's life that I haven't recorded yet. This helped my understanding of my source by going into more detail about the cultural obstacles Maathai faced and

the successes of the Green Belt Movement. I used this source in my project in a variety of areas, from Maathai's education to her effects on ordinary people.

The Green Belt Movement. "The Green Belt Movement: 40 Years of Impact." *The Goldman Environmental Prize*, 21 Mar. 2018, www.goldmanprize.org/blog/green-belt-movement-wangari-maathai/. Accessed 8 Jan. 2020. This is a secondary website that provides extensive information about Maathai's work. I used this to learn more about Maathai's effects on the environment. This has helped my understanding of the topic by showing how Maathai has impacted the world to this day, and to get more up-to-date information. I used this source in my project to provide more recent numbers and statistics in the section of my project showing the effects of Maathai on the environment.

Malnor, Bruce, and Carol Malnor. *Champions of the Wilderness*. Illustrated by Anisa Claire Hovemann, Nevada City, Dawn Publications, 2009. Earth Heroes. This source is a well-written secondary book. I used it to add more variety to my sources and to get a more in-depth look into Maathai's life. This helped my understanding of the topic by giving more details about Maathai's childhood and education. I used this source in my paper to show Maathai's actions toward helping ordinary people.

Oyugi, Willis. E-mail interview. 27 Oct. 2019. This source is an interview I personally conducted over e-mail with Willis Oyugi, a professor at Sam Houston State University who is an expert in African environmental history. I used it to add more variety to my sources and to get more lesser-known facts about Wangari Maathai and the Green Belt Movement, such as the reason for the movement's success. This source helped my understanding of the topic by better explaining the Green Belt Movement's effects on Africa and why the movement was so influential. I used this source in my paper to better show Maathai's impacts on rural women and to extract important quotes to reinforce my claims.

Sirch, Willow Ann. *Eco-Women: Protectors of the Earth*. Fulcrum Publishing, 1996. This source is a well-written book (secondary). I used it to get more information on why Wangari Maathai was so invested in the environment and the actions she took to help Kenya's trees. This source helped my understanding of the topic by better explaining Maathai's childhood, the challenges she faced being a woman, and the importance of trees in Kenya. I used this source in my paper to show the problems facing rural women before Maathai took action.

"Wangari Maathai." *African Biography*, Gale, 1999. *Gale In Context: World History*, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/K2421000036/WHIC?u=leota&sid=WHIC&xid=e3855d9b>. Accessed 27 Sept. 2019. This is a well-written and informational secondary database. I used it to get an overview of Wangari Maathai's life, from

childhood to activism. This source helped my understanding of the topic by giving me a more detailed overview of Wangari Maathai's accomplishments and the barriers she broke. I used this source in my paper in a variety of areas, but I mainly used it to show Maathai's activism against the Kenyan government.

"Wangari Maathai." *Contemporary Black Biography*, vol. 43, Gale, 2004. *Gale In Context: World History*,

<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/K1606002713/WHIC?u=leota&sid=WHIC&xid=201a634f>. Accessed 7 Oct. 2019. This source is a well-written, detailed secondary database. I used it to get more detailed information on Maathai's education and political activism. This source gave me a better understanding of my topic by better explaining the challenges Maathai faced from the government and how she overcame these challenges. I used this source in my paper to better show Maathai's struggles against the Kenya government.

"Wangari Maathai." *Newsmakers*, Gale, 2005. *Gale In Context: World History*,

<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/K1618004135/WHIC?u=leota&sid=WHIC&xid=d0f9d496>. Accessed 22 Sept. 2019 This is a well-written secondary database. I used it to get a general overview of Wangari Maathai's life. This source gave me a better understanding of Wangari Maathai's education, career, political activism, and accomplishments. I used this source in a variety of sections, especially in the paragraphs relating to the environment.

"Wangari Maathai Biographical." *The Nobel Prize*, Norwegian Nobel Institute, 2005, www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2004/maathai/biographical/. Accessed 21 Oct. 2019. This source is a credible, well-written secondary website. I used it to get more information about Maathai's activism and achievements. This source helped my understanding of Wangari Maathai by better explaining the awards Maathai won and what she did to earn them. I used this source in my paper mainly to highlight Maathai's achievements and awards.

"Wangari Maathai - Biography." *The Green Belt Movement*, 2019, www.greenbeltmovement.org/. Accessed 14 Oct. 2019. This is a trustworthy and reliable secondary website. I used it to get more information on the Green Belt Movement and also on Wangari Maathai's activism. This source helped my understanding of my topic by going into more detail about the purpose and history of the Green Belt Movement. Due to this source's varied information on Maathai, I used it in multiple sections, although it was primarily used in the paragraphs showing Maathai's impacts on people and the environment.