



# Unbowed: A Memoir

By Wangari Maathai

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In *Unbowed*, Nobel Prize winner Wangari Maathai recounts her extraordinary journey from her childhood in rural Kenya to the world stage. When Maathai founded the Green Belt Movement in 1977, she began a vital poor people's environmental movement, focused on the empowerment of women, that soon spread across Africa. Persevering through run-ins with the Kenyan government and personal losses, and jailed and beaten on numerous occasions, Maathai continued to fight tirelessly to save Kenya's forests and to restore democracy to her beloved country. Infused with her unique luminosity of spirit, Wangari Maathai's remarkable story of courage, faith, and the power of persistence is destined to inspire generations to come.

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## Unbowed: A Memoir By Wangari Maathai Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Maathai, a 2004 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, presents a matter-of-fact account of her rather exceptional life in Kenya. Born in 1940, Maathai attended primary school at a time when Kenyan girls were not educated; went on to earn a Ph.D. and became head of the Department of Veterinary Anatomy at the University of Nairobi before founding Kenya's Green Belt Movement in 1977, which mobilized thousands of women to plant trees in an effort to restore the country's indigenous forests. Because Kenya's environmental degradation was largely due to the policies of a corrupt government, she then made the Green Belt Movement part of a broader campaign for democracy. Maathai endured personal attacks by the ruling powers-President Moi denounced her as a "wayward" woman-and engaged in political activities that landed her in jail several times. When a new government came into power in 2002, she was elected to Parliament and appointed assistant minister in the Ministry for Environment and Natural Resources. Despite workmanlike prose, this memoir (after *The Green Belt Movement*) documents the remarkable achievements of an influential environmentalist and activist. Photos not seen by PW.

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From [Booklist](#)

*\*Starred Review\** The mother of three, the first woman in East and Central Africa to earn a doctorate, and the first African woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, Wangari Maathai of Kenya understands how the good earth sustains life both as a biologist and as a Kikuyu woman who, like generations before her, grew nourishing food in the rich soil of Kenya's central highlands. In her engrossing and eye-opening memoir, a work of tremendous dignity and rigor, Maathai describes the paradise she knew as a child in the 1940s, when Kenya was a "lush, green, fertile" land of plenty, and the deforested nightmare it became. Discriminated against as a female university professor, Maathai has fought hard for women's rights. And it was women she turned to when she undertook her mission to restore Kenya's decimated forests, launching the Green Belt Movement and providing women with work planting trees. Maathai's ingenious, courageous, and tenacious activism led to arrests, beatings, and death threats, and yet she and her tree-planting followers remained unbowed. Currently Kenya's deputy minister for the environment and natural resources, Nobel laureate, visionary, and hero, Maathai has restored humankind's innate if nearly lost knowledge of the intrinsic connection between thriving, wisely managed ecosystems and health, justice, and peace. *Donna Seaman*  
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## Review

"Wangari Maathai's memoir is direct, honest, and beautifully written—a gripping account of modern Africa's trials and triumphs, a universal story of courage, persistence, and success against great odds in a noble cause." —President Bill Clinton "Wangari Maathai is the rare leader who knows how to create independence, not dependence. On the page as in person, her example makes each of us a little stronger, wiser and braver than we ever thought we could be." —Gloria Steinem "Compelling. . . . A striking reminder that the peace award, more than any other Nobel honor, recognizes success achieved through tremendous adversity." —*The Seattle Times* "Inspirational. . . . Ms. Maathai will not be beaten down." —*The Economist* "[Maathai's] story provides uplifting proof of the power of perseverance—and of the power of principled, passionate people to change their countries and inspire the world." —*The Washington Post*

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**Rita Campanelli:**

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