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Unbowed: A Memoir



Synopsis

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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Customer Reviews

Professor Wangari Maathai is truly one of the most important voices of our time. This dynamic and indefatigable Kikuyu woman of Kenya has illuminated rays of light through the dark clouds of Kenya, and so Africa. Standing in the face of oppression and unbearable adversity she faced when Kenya was not a land of freedom, but a state of oppression and discord, it was Wangari's resilient voice, her never-ending effort to stand strong in the winds of injustice, and her ceaseless love of mankind that has in many ways begun the great changes toward democracy and freedom for all individuals not just in Kenya, but in Africa. As the Cold War has, as Professor Maathai clearly and carefully points out, changed the dynamics of government in Africa, the reader becomes aware, in a different way than what is typically presented in the press, of the many issues involved with the challenges

that the world faces through the daily experiences of those who seek 'Freedom'. Clearly, as the world becomes closer and more connected, the issues that continue in Africa are critical issues that we, as a progressive society, must not simply acknowledge, but do something about. Acting on what is right . . . standing up for your beliefs . . . standing down oppression and hatred . . . and nurturing Mother Earth as she continues to nurture and provide for all, are themes this visionary African woman - who is the first African woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize - shares with the world in her brilliantly written life story. Readers across the world - men and women of all colors and creeds and beliefs will tap into the determination of this extraordinary activist who has taught so many about how love of each other can grow through respecting and nurturing the land we live on.

When Wangari Maathai was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004, questions were raised regarding her choice by the Nobel Committee. Why should an environmentalist receive a prize that was identified with peace and human rights, voiced the critics. Reading Maathai's memoir sets the record straight, and justifying her selection for the award. In this fascinating and very personal account, she paints a vivid picture of her life, embedded in the realities of Kenya before and since independence. Her experiences during the Moi regime, in particular, demonstrate the challenges a young educated woman confronted in the face of traditional prejudice as well as political oppression. Raised in rural Kenya, Wangari Maathai never lost the deep connection with the land and its natural beauty. Over the years, she noticed the changes and the increasing fragility of the environment. Trees for her became a symbol and a tool for protecting the vulnerable ecosystem and assisting rural population to stem the growing poverty. Thanks to the intervention of her older brother and the support of her mother, she was able to attend school beyond the primary level, which was all girls at the time could reach for. As luck had it and, being a bright student, her convent school was one of those selected to send graduates to the US under what became known as the Kennedy Airlift: a program to send young Africans to American colleges for further education. These young people were being primed to become future leaders of their societies in the soon to be independent African states. Maathai returned to Kenya with a Master's degree in biology, a subject that for her combined her scientific interests with her deep love for her natural environment.

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