

# WANGARI MAATHAI

*(Peace, 2004)*

Dr. Wangari Maathai was a Kenyan biologist and founder of the Green Belt Movement (GBM), an organization dedicated to environmental conservation, poverty reduction, women's equality, and human rights.

Maathai founded GBM in 1977 as a community empowerment and tree-planting program involving women's groups in Kenya to address deforestation, disenfranchisement, and economic insecurity in the country. Under her leadership, it emerged as one of the most prominent grassroots women's environmental organizations in the world. Since its founding, GBM has planted over 51 million trees and spearheaded environmental advocacy and community empowerment projects in Kenya, inspiring similar initiatives throughout Africa.

Recognizing that sustainable development requires peace and social justice, Maathai also led numerous campaigns to end ethnic violence, release political prisoners, and promote democracy in her country. She was repeatedly arrested, jailed, and subjected to severe ill-treatment as a consequence of her courageous activism.

Following her receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize, Maathai co-founded the Nobel Women's Initiative, which works to empower women working for peace, justice, and human rights around the world. Maathai, "the Mother of Trees", died on September 25, 2011.

*"In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground. A time when we have to shed our fear and give hope to each other. That time is now."*

