
THE COALITION OF UNITED PROGRESSIVES CHARMECK CHRONICLE



Greetings!

We truly appreciate everyone's involvement.
This War on Oppression will only be won as one
mass movement.

Sections

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Our Mission Statement

The continual unification of as many organizations as possible, starting at the local level and branching out to both the state of North Carolina and then the entire nation.

Spotlight

Wangari Muta Maathai

“The First African Woman Nobel Peace Prize



Winner”

(April 1, 1940 – September 25, 2011)

By DonnaMarie Woodson

“Incredible Black Women You Should Know About”

In recognition of Earth Day 2022, I’m spotlighting Wangari Muta Maathai, a Kenyan social, environmental, and political activist who in 2004 became the first African woman and environmentalist to win the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize for her “contribution to sustainable development, democracy, and peace.”



Her life and dedication to our planet fit well with this year’s Earth Day theme of “Invest in Our Planet.” Ms. Maathai’s philosophy was that “We need to act (boldly), innovate (broadly), and implement (equitably). It’s going to take all of us. All in. Businesses, governments, and citizens — everyone accounted for and everyone accountable. A partnership for the planet.” Earth Day 2022

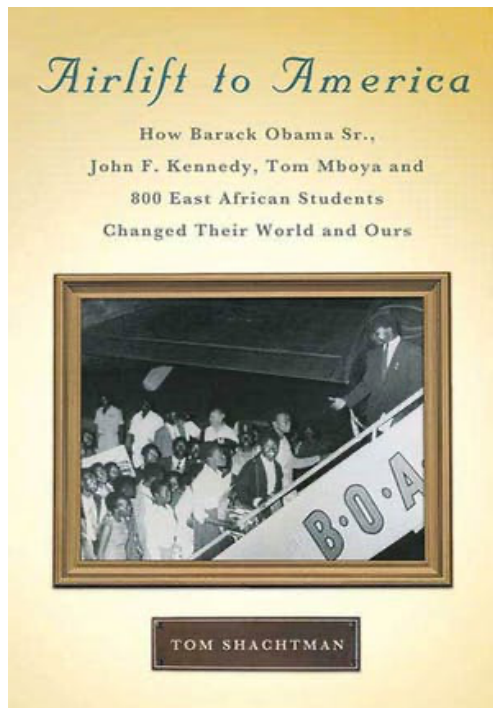
According to [Alfred Nobel’s](#) will, the Peace Prize shall be awarded to the person who in the preceding year “shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses.”

Ms. Maathai stood up courageously against the former oppressive regime in Kenya. Her unique forms of action have contributed to drawing attention to political oppression—nationally and internationally. She has inspired many to fight for democratic rights and encouraged women to better their situation.

— *The [Norwegian Nobel Committee](#), in a statement announcing her as the 2004 [Nobel Peace Prize](#) winner.*

Wangari Maathai was born on April 1, 1940, into a farming family in the beautiful central highlands of Kenya. While poor, her family was nevertheless able to live off the land, which, at that time, was still fertile. As a child, Wangari was fascinated by nature. She played in pristine verdant forests and clear rivers of the highlands and learned about the importance of the land and the trees from her mother.

However, she was growing up against a backdrop of growing environmental degradation, a legacy of British Colonial rule in Kenya which was causing devastating over-cultivation and deforestation. Native Kenyan trees were being removed and replaced with non-native varieties, such as pine and eucalyptus. The image of forests burning in the distance stayed with her and influenced the course of her life profoundly.



As a participant in the [Kennedy Airlift](#) program, she studied in the United States, obtaining degrees in Biological Sciences from Mount St. Scholastica College in Atchison, Kansas (1964), and a Master of Science degree from the University of Pittsburgh (1966). She also pursued doctoral studies in Germany and the University of Nairobi before obtaining a Ph.D. (1971) from Nairobi, where she taught veterinary anatomy.

The Kennedy Airlift was started in 1959 by a 28-year-old Kenyan, [Tom Mboya](#), who sought support for promising Kenyan students to get college and university educations in the United States and Canada.

The program brought hundreds of students from East Africa from 1959 to 1963 with the support of many North American educational institutions and foundations, including the African American Students Foundation (AASF).

Many well-known entertainers and activists, including Harry Belafonte, Jackie Robinson, Sidney Poitier, and Martin Luther King, Jr. were also very supportive of the Kennedy Airlift program.

The program got its nickname in September 1960 when Senator John F. Kennedy, in a close presidential campaign, arranged for a \$100,000 donation from the [Joseph P. Kennedy Jr Foundation](#) just as the program was running out of funds. The donation covered the airfare for the autumn 1960 group of East African students.



In 1977, ["The Green Belt Movement"](#) answered the call of rural Kenyan women. Typically responsible for collecting firewood and growing food, these women were hit hardest by the effects of mass deforestation in Kenya. They saw their source for wood disappearing and their soil drying up and eroding. Maathai's solution was to teach them to plant and raise new trees. The trees gave needed shade and kept the ground from washing away. As they grew, they would provide firewood, building materials, and fruit to combat malnutrition.

Women organized, started tree nurseries, and exchanged knowledge honed from years of experience working with the land, becoming what Maathai calls “foresters without diplomas.” the trees also provided a rare income-generating opportunity for rural women. Maathai’s new grassroots organization, called “The “Green Belt Movement,” paid the women a small amount for each tree they planted.

The more Maathai investigated solutions to Kenya’s environmental problems, the more she realized that these were only symptoms of a much larger cause. She says it was impossible to disconnect the country’s natural resources from social, economic, and political problems.

“The issues and the problems that people were bringing to the table were symptoms of problems that needed to be addressed from the root. And so I kept going more and more towards the root. I began addressing politics, addressing democracy, conflict issues, rights of the vulnerable, of women and children.”



Maathai’s activism began to make political waves in the country, often putting her and her supporters in danger. Targeted by Kenya’s dictator Daniel Arap Moi, Maathai was regularly arrested and jailed, even forced into temporary exile. During one demonstration, she was beaten unconscious by police.

But the movement had become strong, and the momentum of Greenbelt women’s organizing, led by Maathai, started to turn the political tide. Maathai made it her mission to protect a strip of forest that was being carved up and auctioned off to the government’s supporters. Women, men, students, and the

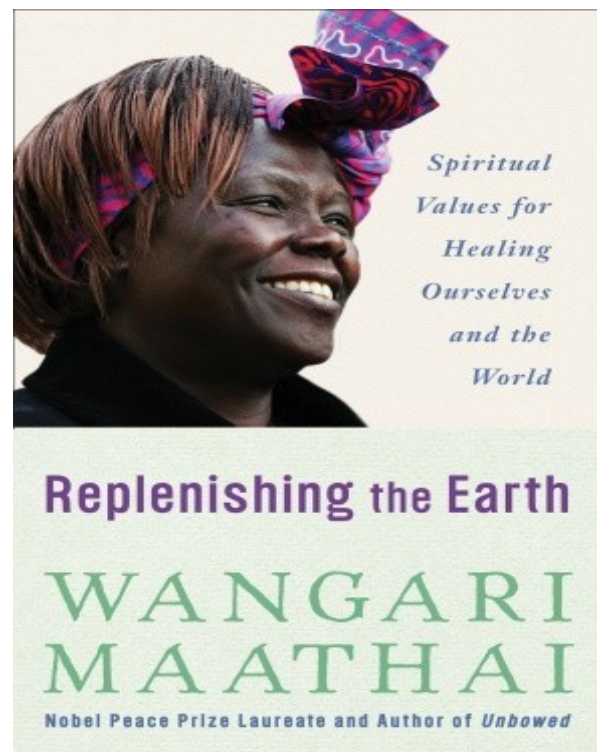
international community rallied behind her in such a force that they helped oust Moi in 2002.

That same year, Maathai ran for Kenya's parliament, winning her seat with 98 percent of the vote. The following year she was appointed Assistant Minister for the Environment, Natural Resources, and Wildlife. As a parliamentarian, she encouraged military personnel to plant trees around their barracks, telling them to "hold a gun in one hand and a tree in the other." The soldiers have taken up the environmental cause seeing the connection between defending territory and defending Kenya's natural resources.

Maathai's environmental and human rights activism has grown beyond Kenya's borders. "The Green Belt Movement" combats environmental devastation and promotes women's empowerment across Africa and around the globe.

In her 2010 book, *Replenishing the Earth: Spiritual Values for Healing Ourselves and the World*, she discussed the impact of the "Green Belt Movement."

The group's civic and environmental seminars stressed "the importance of communities taking responsibility for their actions and mobilizing to address their local needs. We all need to work hard to make a difference in our neighborhoods, regions, countries, and the world. That means making sure we work hard, collaborate with each other, and make ourselves better agents to change."



In this book, she explicitly engages with religious traditions, including the indigenous Kikuyu religion and Christianity, mobilizing them as environmental thinking and activism resources.

Maathai authored four books: [The Green Belt Movement](#); [Unbowed: A Memoir](#); [The Challenge for Africa](#); and [Replenishing the Earth](#). As well as having been featured in several books, she and the Green Belt Movement were the subject of a documentary film, [Taking root: the Vision of Wangari Maathai](#) (Marlboro Productions, 2008).



Maathai died of complications from [ovarian cancer](#) on September 25, 2011, leaving an incredible legacy. She was a charismatic and outspoken African woman who wasn't afraid to challenge authority at the highest level. Having pursued a career in academia, she then used her education to give Kenyan women a voice and find empowering and straightforward solutions to problems

at a grassroots level.

She highlighted the crucial link between sustainable development, democracy, and peace. The tree became a symbol of Kenya's democratic struggle through her, and her "Green Belt Movement" brought a holistic approach to development.

She's been described as a beacon of inspiration to African women and people around the world. [Africa Environment Day](#) is co-named Wangari Mathaai day in her honor. The causes she fought for – good governance, zero tolerance of corruption, sound resource management, and peace are as crucial today as in Wangari's lifetime.

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Editorial

Star Trek and Why Stacey Abrams Continues to Inspire Me

**By
Tarik Kiley
3/26/2022**

Stacey Abrams recently had a cameo role on “Star Trek: Discovery” as the president of a United Earth. In the season four finale called “Coming Home.” If you don’t know who Ms. Abrams is in real life, here is some background info.



She is a politician, voting rights activist, and a New York Times bestselling author. She served for eleven years in the Georgia House of Representatives, seven years as Democratic Leader. She ran as the Democratic nominee for

Governor of Georgia in 2018 and won more votes than any other Democrat in the state’s history in that gubernatorial race. Her books include “While Justice Sleeps,” “Lead from the Outside,” “Stacey’s Extraordinary Words,” and “Our Time is Now.”

While she has done other things such as serving on the subcommittee on diversity with the Council on Foreign Relations as a lifetime member,

founding the organization Fair Count in 2019 and the Southern Economic Advancement Project, and writing eight romantic suspense novels using the pseudonym Selena Montgomery, etc., her work in electoral politics is most relevant here.



Understand this, while Stacey Abrams plays a fictional president of Earth, she is a real-life politician. Ms. Abrams has said in her own words, “It’s about giving people hope and giving them a better life and creating this vision of what is

possible.”—according to The Hollywood Reporter. This means that it is possible in our dreams to imagine a United Earth as a possibility, as someone who pursues politics. We can even dream of a United Earth, using an influential African American woman as its representative, showing that we can envision an Earth without ills such as racism, classism, and extreme nationalism.

Ms. Abram’s cameo appearance on Star Trek also reminds us of the journey that everyone on Earth shares together. And she reminds us of the struggle that we have on a disunited Earth to further unity. Ms. Abrams continues to comment on Star Trek as a show, saying, “It has this idealized notion of what can be but a very grounded understanding of how hard the work will be to get there,” according to The Hollywood Reporter.

Why is Ms. Abrams’ cameo appearance on Star Trek: Discovery, as the president of a United Earth, so vital to me?

I have watched every episode of every iteration of Star Trek—not so much Discovery—but the other ones, such as Captain Kirk’s Star Trek, The Next Generation, Voyager, Deep Space Nine, and Captain Archer’s Star Trek. I have also watched all the movies. For me, Star Trek was great because it imagined a technological future where race hatred among humans and gross socioeconomic inequality didn’t exist for the most part.

Also, the United Federation of Planets included other types of humanoids, such as the Vulcans. And Star Trek was inspiring in partisan lines that even when there were enemies to fight, such as the Klingons, they did not stay enemies forever. In fact, by the time of The Next Generation, the Klingons were allies of the United Federation of Planets and a Klingon Star Fleet Officer—albeit raised by humans—Lt. Worf was an officer serving on the bridge of the starship Enterprise.



Watching the Klingons become allies of humanity as the overall Star Trek story progressed made me hopeful for the future. Also, it is not that far-fetched for Stacey Abrams to become the president of a United Earth in real life. While we are far from having a United Earth, we have the United Nations. It wouldn’t be impossible to imagine Stacey Abrams as an ambassador to the United Nations. Also, think about how intelligent and charismatic she is. Think of the fact that



she attended Spelman College and Yale Law School. I believe that if she did serve as ambassador to the United Nations, she would be a very

effective one.

Also, considering that she is such a prolific writer if she wanted to write on international law, I could imagine her introducing new concepts and ideas into international law that would further unity across national borders. While I don't think she has tackled international law in detail, it doesn't mean that she wouldn't be able to.



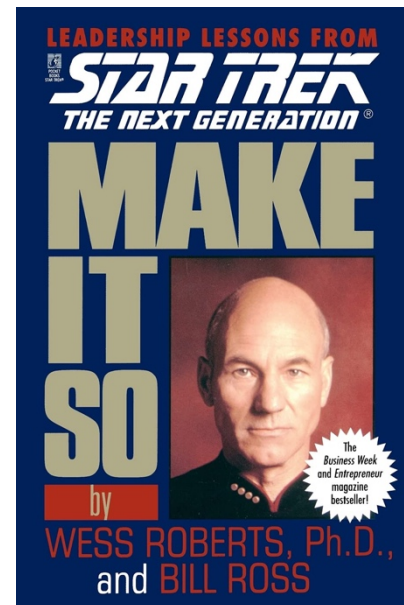
Lastly, I would add that representation matters. It is good to see African American people portrayed in positive ways that defy stereotypes. I fell in love with Star Trek when I first saw Nichelle Nichols play communication officer Lieutenant Uhura aboard the USS Enterprise in

the original Star Trek series with Captain Kirk. This was inspiring, as Lt. Uhura was intelligent, capable, and beautiful. She played a leader, a Star Fleet Officer when African Americans' depictions in cinema had been incredibly racist.

So, I applaud Star Trek. I applaud the vision of a brighter future without the “isms”—without racism, classism, and extreme nationalism. It is part of why I continued with my college education, even when faced with obstacles. It has influenced how I perceive my leadership style.

I would even go as far as to say that I read a book when I was around 20 years old called “Make It So: Leadership Lessons from Star Trek: The Next Generation” by Wess Roberts, Ph.D., and Bill Ross.

This book went into depth about Captain Picard’s leadership style. And because of reading this book, I learned important lessons in diplomacy and delegation. I still apply lessons regarding diplomacy and delegation learned from Captain Picard to this day when put in a leading group position. So, let’s keep alive our dreams of unity, even when faced with the hard work necessary to get us there.



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Announcements



Democrats of North Mecklenburg:
Monthly Meeting
Thursday, April 7 at 7:00 PM
Pre-register here for the Zoom link.

N. Meck Progressives
Monthly Meeting
Tuesday, April 12 at 6:00 PM
Primary Candidates
Zoom Link - Michelle Blumenthal
n.meck.progressives@gmail.com

Democratic Women of North Mecklenburg County
In partnership with the -
Progressive Democrats of Mecklenburg County
Charlotte City Council Candidate Forum
Wednesday, April 13th
6:30 PM Candidate/Officials Reception
7:00 PM Program
Don't miss out on this great event! You can register in
advance at: <https://bit.ly/34xiD9i>.

Announcements



Mecklenburg County Senior Democrats

Monthly Meeting

Friday, April 8 at 11:30 AM

Guest: Democratic Candidates for Mecklenburg
County Commissioner

Register in advance for this meeting:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/.../tZYtf...](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/91382800000)

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email
containing information about joining the meeting.



Please submit your group events to donnamarie93@gmail.com
by the 15th of the month for inclusion in the Announcements.

Happenings Gallery!



The Executive Corner:

Executive Director - Jade X. Jackson

Rev Rodney Sadler, Joel Segal, DonnaMarie Woodson

Rev Glencie Rhedrick

Coalition of United Progressives-CharMeck Chronicle

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