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TAKING ROOT: The Vision of Wangari Maathai

AWARD-WINNING NEW FILM CONNECTS ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION WITH HUMAN RIGHTS


_Taking Root_ illustrates the development of Maathai’s holistic worldview and model for sustainable development. Maathai discovered the core of her life's work when she turned her attention to the rural women with whom she had grown up in Kenya’s central highlands. Their daily lives had become intolerable: they were walking exhaustive distances for firewood, clean water was scarce, the soil was eroding, and their children were suffering from malnutrition. One hundred years of colonialism and neo-colonialism had devastated the forests they’d lived with for centuries.

“Why not plant trees?” Maathai thought. Trees provide shade, prevent soil erosion, supply firewood, building materials, and produce nutritious fruit. In 1977, Maathai founded the Green Belt Movement in Kenya and began teaching women about the connection between environmental problems and their daily problems.

Through chilling first person accounts and TV-news footage, _Taking Root_ documents the Green Belt Movement’s dramatic political confrontations of the 1980s and ’90s –a time when Maathai and other Kenyan women endured violent suppression, hunger strike, and risked personal injury. _Taking Root_ also chronicles the women’s successful political action in 2002 that helped to bring down Daniel Arap Moi, dictator of Kenya for 24 years. Contemporary _cinema verité_ footage of the tree nurseries, and the improved lives of the women and children who tend them, is testimony to the power of Maathai’s vision and the positive change it has brought about.

_Taking Root_ captures a world-view in which nothing is perceived as impossible. Brian Miles of _Nashvillescene.com_ describes the film as “…proof that one small voice of dissent can shake nations….an affectionate, rousing portrait.”

In the coming year, _Taking Root_ and related resources will be made available to schools and community groups through an ambitious grassroots campaign that will utilize Maathai’s model for sustainable development, integrated problem solving and citizen empowerment.

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