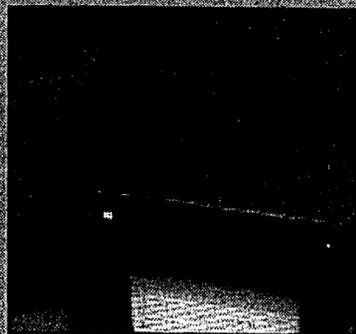


the MEREDITH **Her**ald

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WANGARI MAATHAI 'GOES GREEN' AT MEREDITH COLLEGE

Amy Hruby
Staff Writer

On Thursday, October 1, Wangari Maathai, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, visited Meredith College to lecture on her experiences in founding the Green Belt Movement. Maathai was educated at Mount St. Scholastica and at the University of Pittsburgh before becoming the first woman in East and Central Africa to earn a doctoral degree: her Ph.D. in anatomy from the University of Nairobi. Since then, she has become a political activist in Kenya, persistently struggling for democracy, and an environmental activist worldwide, creating a grassroots organization that aims to improve the environment and female quality of life in Africa by empowering groups of women to plant trees. Drawing heavily on her memoir, *Unbowed*, Maathai treated Meredith students and the Raleigh community to a lecture that included anecdotes from her childhood in Kenya, reflections on the sexual discrimination she faced in the Kenyan university system, methods for starting the Green Belt Movement, and advice for Americans hoping to further her environmental cause.

Dr. Maathai delivered the 2009 Lillian Parker Wallace lecture in the McIver Amphitheater, flanked by tropical plants and under the light of a waxing moon: a place she



Photo courtesy media2.newsobserver.com/smedia/2009/10/01/21

called "the best setting ever." Before beginning, President Maureen Hartford presented Maathai with an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters honoris causa degree. After thanking President Hartford and Meredith College, Maathai began the lecture with a story of playing with fish eggs in her youth. Her uninformed fascination with the translucent beads, then with the miniscule, swimming tadpoles, and finally with the tiny, jumping frogs fostered her early love for biology, a subject she later went on to study. As an adult, Maathai discovered that the stream where she had watched this life cycle in her youth had been destroyed because of development in the area, and she cited this moment of clarity as significant, showing her that she needed to do something to help save her country's natural resources.

Maathai went on to discuss the time when she served on the National Council of Women. She said that she "learned of environmental issues from rural women

[on this council] with their tales of lack of clean water and firewood." Her thoughts on how to help them led her to create the Green Belt Movement, a grassroots organization originally developed to educate women on environmental issues. Maathai first asked the women "What are your problems?" and then "Where did the problems come from?" Analyzing these answers led her to formulate what she called the "Wrong Bus Syndrome." Maathai asserted that the rural Kenyans' problems stemmed from riding the wrong bus. Kenya was being led by a corrupt, nondemocratic government, and Maathai argued that "people must eventually take charge and change the direction the bus was traveling." The Kenyan population needed to demand a democratic government to change their lives. Maathai stated that even though a revolution occurred in 1991, the Kenyan people still needed to push the bus in the right direction and demand that their country become "a democratic space where all rights would be respected."

Maathai also argued that the global population was on the "wrong bus" as regards environmental issues. People need to stop ignoring problems with environment and turn the bus around to save the planet. In attempts to turn the Meredith College bus around, to fulfill the campus theme "Catalyst for Change," and to honor Maathai's work with the Green

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Green Tip for the Week of October 14

Many schools are blazing and exciting eco-friendly trail so choose a green college to support your greening efforts.



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