

The baton that has been passed down from ancient times is now ours. It is our turn to be responsible for the environment. Throughout history, we humans have destroyed the environment without concern for centuries and did not notice how serious the situation had become until the late 1900s. This means that the baton we received still has several problems stacked up, and we have a choice: whether we will simply pass this baton down to our next generation or take action and ameliorate the situation.

Today, it is safe to say that more people are aware of our environmental problems and are working hard to be more sustainable. We have many more organizations that work for an eco-friendlier world, and our daily lives have changed too, such as through use of eco-bags rather than plastic bags. However, despite that fact, all we see on the news is that our environment is being harmed much more than before. I became very curious about the cause and realized that it is because each and every person has their social issues that they think are important, which simply means that we are not looking at the same goal. Because we care so much about everything, we are working hard to solve these problems all at once, which is nearly impossible.

What we can do is focus on one problem, but which one should it be? The answer has already been given by Wangari Maathai, an environmental and political activist who founded the Green Belt Movement back in 1977. In her speech, she claims that solving an environmental problem will link to democracy and peace. In her activity in the Green Belt Movement, she planted over 30 million trees in Africa to provide fuel, food, and shelter. However, this action led to many more positive effects: it provided income to support children's education and household needs, enabled women to gain social and economic position and power, and led citizens to defend democratic space. Just like this, Maathai contributed to solving various social issues, starting from environmental problems. This is in fact a strategy that we should learn and put into practice at present.

The more time passes, the worse the problems we are facing get. Although focusing nearly only on environmental problems and trying to solve them might sound risky and scary, we have to take action for the next generation to receive a better baton from us. As Maathai says, "In the course of history, there comes a time when we have to shed our fear and give hope to each other. That time is now."