

## Women with character who inspire – Profile: Angelique Kidjo

### Background

Angelique Kidjo is a West African singer, songwriter and UNICEF International Goodwill Ambassador.

Four-time Grammy nominee Angélique Kidjo is not only one of the spunkiest, most electrifying performers in the pop world today, but she's also one of its most forward and creative thinkers, an artist whose mission has been to explore the relationships of diverse musical cultures. While she has steeped her music in the tribal and pop rhythms of her West African heritage, the Benin-born, Brooklyn-based Kidjo has crossed musical boundaries by blending a variety of styles, including funk, salsa, jazz, rumba, souk and makossa.



The music of African-born songstress Angélique Kidjo offers another perspective: that the world is also much smaller than we think, and that no matter how far flung its peoples may be, subtle lines of interconnection span the globe, uniting its people.

### Humanitarian Work

Angélique continues to travel the world as a UNICEF goodwill Ambassador and symbol of Africa. While on the fields in Tanzania, Benin, Ethiopia, Brazil and many other places, she has also been helping to raise awareness of a new UNICEF Program, Girls Education, which has been designed to help eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education. Kidjo has also started her own foundation, the Batonga Foundation, to help fund and support education for young girls in Africa.

### Which woman inspires you?

Wangari Maathai

Everyone who ever met Wangari Maathai instantly felt her charisma: she was so elegant in her traditional dress, and had a beautiful smile that never fades, but also a strong determination in her eyes!

When we started the Batonga Foundation with Mary Louise Cohen and John Philips, we knew we wanted to focus our efforts on girls' education but we were not sure exactly how. Then we heard about Wangari's amazing life. As a young woman in Kenya, she received a scholarship from the "Africa Airlift" program and her life was changed forever. Many years later she would win the Nobel Peace Prize



for her amazing environmental work. We then thought: if we support young girls in Africa through scholarship, maybe some of them will be able to achieve as much success as Wangari.

When she passed away, I organized a tribute concert for the "Celebrate Brooklyn" festival. We planted a young tree in her name in Prospect Park. Hurricane Sandy has passed over the Park but our little tree is still growing up, as strong as ever!

To learn more about the Batonga Foundation please visit <http://batongafoundation.org/>



To learn more about the Green Belt Movement please visit <http://www.greenbeltmovement.org/>



### **Women's History Month: Students write about the women who inspire them**

Who inspires you? In honor of Women's History Month in March, we want to know about the woman in history you look up to most and why. Send a photo of yourself, a close-up photo of your hands holding a picture (or drawing) and a short blurb about why you chose that woman to [newshourextra \[at\] gmail.com](mailto:newshourextra@gmail.com) and we may post it here.

[http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/student\\_voices/women\\_who\\_inspire/](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/student_voices/women_who_inspire/)