

Keynote Speaker - Honorary Doctorate

Marian Wright Edelman - Lawyer, Writer, Activist, Children's Advocate

Marian Wright Edelman, founder and president of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), has been an advocate for disadvantaged Americans for her entire professional life. Under her leadership, CDF has become the nation's strongest voice for children and families. The Children's Defense Fund's Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start, and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

Mrs. Edelman, a graduate of Spelman College and Yale Law School, began her career in the mid-1960s when, as the first black woman admitted to the Mississippi Bar, she directed the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund office in Jackson, Mississippi. In 1968, she moved to Washington, D.C. as counsel for the Poor People's Campaign that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. began organizing before his death. She founded the Washington Research Project, a public interest law firm and the parent body of the Children's Defense Fund.

For two years she served as the director of the Center for Law and Education at Harvard University and in 1973 began CDF. As founder, leader and principal spokesperson for the CDF, Mrs. Edelman worked to persuade Congress to overhaul foster care, support adoption, improve child care and protect children who are handicapped, homeless, abused or neglected. She continues to advocate youth pregnancy prevention, child-care funding, prenatal care, greater parental responsibility in teaching values, and curtailing children's exposure to the barrage of violent images transmitted by mass media.



Marian Wright Edelman

Mrs. Edelman served on the Board of Trustees of Spelman College, which she chaired from 1976 to 1987, and was the first woman elected by alumni as a member of the Yale University Corporation on which she served from 1971 to 1977. She has received over 100 honorary degrees and many awards including the Albert Schweitzer Humanitarian Prize, the Heinz Award, and a MacArthur Foundation Prize Fellowship. In 2000, she received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian award, and the Robert F. Kennedy Lifetime Achievement Award for her writings which include: *Families in Peril: An Agenda for Social Change*; *The Measure of Our Success: A Letter to My Children and Yours*; *Guide My Feet: Meditations and Prayers on Loving and Working for Children*; *Stand for Children*; *Lanterns: A Memoir of Mentors*; *Hold My Hand: Prayers for Building a Movement to Leave No Child Behind*; *I'm Your Child, God: Prayers for Our Children*; *I Can Make a Difference: A Treasury to Inspire Our Children*; and *The Sea Is So Wide and My Boat Is So Small: Charting a Course for the Next Generation*.

She is a board member of the Robin Hood Foundation and the Association to Benefit Children, and is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the American Philosophical Society, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences.

Marian Wright Edelman is married to Peter Edelman, a professor at Georgetown University Law Center. They have three sons and four grandchildren.

Fifty-First Annual

Commencement



ST. CROIX

Wednesday, the Thirteenth of May
Two Thousand and Fifteen
Half after One O'clock in the Afternoon
Campus Grounds
St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands

ST. THOMAS

Thursday, the Fourteenth of May
Two Thousand and Fifteen
Half after One O'clock in the Afternoon
Sports and Fitness Center
St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands