COLORADO COLLEGE

CLASS OF 2013

Monday, May 20, 2013
8:30 a.m.
Colorado Springs, Colorado
MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

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.

Edelman, a graduate of Spelman College and Yale Law School, began her career in the mid-60s 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.

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 more than 100 honorary degrees, including one from Colorado College in 1999, 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 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.

SUSAN LANDAU AXELROD ’74

A liberal arts education comes to fruition in unpredictable ways. Susan Axelrod’s Colorado College education, begun in the year the Block Plan began, and her religion major, prepared her for a career as a physically active, spiritually informed, civically engaged professional. She found time in her senior year for a music theory course, and she took a course in the Classics Department. Her skills were honed in the pursuit of a graduate degree in business administration/health services administration at the University of Chicago, where she had grown up as a faculty child.

But circumstances focused her attention in a unique way. Her oldest child, Lauren, began having uncontrollable seizures at seven months old, joining the roughly one percent of Americans with epilepsy, half of whom even now do not have complete seizure control. In the 1980s this disease was more mysterious and frightening, and it started Lauren and her parents on 18 desperate years of medications, diets, an electronic implant, and surgical evaluations, until Lauren finally achieved seizure freedom in 2000.

Rather than simply living through these circumstances, Susan Axelrod chose to “turn . . . anguish into action,” joining with colleagues in 1998 to found Citizens United for Research in Epilepsy, which she still chairs. Under her leadership, CURE has redefined the goals of epilepsy research as ‘no seizures, no side effects.’ CURE funds cutting-edge research grants and sponsors landmark conferences, beginning with the 2000 National Institutes of Health (NIH) conference “Curing Epilepsy: Focus on the Future.” CURE’s commitment has earned the group the Child Neurology Foundation’s 2008 Advocacy Award of Merit. Axelrod serves on NIH’s National Advisory Neurological Disorders and Stroke Council, and as a consumer reviewer for the Peer Reviewed Medical Research Program in the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program within the Department of Defense. She has freely used her family experience in interviews and published reflections to bring media exposure to epilepsy and the devastating effects it can have on individuals and their families, appearing on the “Today” show, MSNBC’s “Morning Joe,” CNN with Campbell Brown, MSNBC with Andrea Mitchell and “60 Minutes” with Katie Couric, as well as in the pages of Parade magazine and Newsweek.

She lives in Chicago with her husband, David Axelrod, and, in addition to Lauren, has two sons, Ethan (Colorado College ’09) and Michael.

— Owen Cramer, Professor of Classics
RAYMOND DEAN JONES ’67

Ray Jones is a 1967 graduate of Colorado College. He was awarded his law degree from Harvard in 1971, thereafter becoming a licensed attorney in Colorado. He clerked for Chief Justice Pringle of the Colorado Supreme Court, and then joined the firm of Holme Roberts & Owen. From 1977 to 2004 he was appointed successively a judge in the Denver County Court, judge in the Denver District Court in 1979, Associate Judge in the Colorado Court of Appeals in 1988, then Chief Judge in the Colorado Municipal Court in Aurora. He has held teaching positions at Metropolitan State College and at Colorado College where, for several years, he taught a course on law and social justice in our Political Science Department. Since retiring from the bench, he has served in various capacities in business and is currently “of counsel” to The Holt Group. He is a member of the American Bar Association and four other bar associations. He has extensive training and experience in dispute resolution, and has published in his fields of expertise. He has been recognized for his work by a wide array of professional associations. Most recently, in 2012, he gained the Colorado Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Award for Seeking Justice and Community Service.

I remember Ray as a leading member of the class of 1967, one of the first students I taught at Colorado College. He was deeply involved in college life as a Selected Student — a program at that time devoted to recruiting students of high academic talent — as an athlete, as a head resident, as a class officer, and later as an elected alumni member of our Board of Trustees, and he has also served in the Alumni Leadership Forum. Ray’s daughter, Ruth, graduated from Colorado College in 2007.

It is clear that Ray Jones has combined liberal learning with professional success and unstinting service to every community and organization of which he has been a part. We have every reason to believe Ray will continue on this path of service for many years to come.

— Timothy Fuller, Professor of Political Science

ANTONIO SKÁRMETA

Antonio Skármeta was born in Antofagasta, Chile, in 1940, a city that has declared him “illustrious son.” He finished high school at the National Institute in Santiago and obtained the degree of professor of philosophy from the University of Chile, also getting a degree in literature from Columbia University in New York. He has taught in various institutions of higher learning in Chile, Europe, and the United States, including Washington University in St. Louis and Colorado College.


His novel, “Neruda’s Postman,” was brought to the screen by English filmmaker Michael Redford as “Il Postino,” had five Academy Award nominations, winning one of them.

Among the International Prizes he won are the Planeta Prize for his novel “The Dancer and the Thief (El baile de la Victoria)” also made into a movie by Oscar winner and director Fernando Trueba; the Prix Médicis Étranger in France; the Goethe Medal from Germany; the Llibretet Prize in Barcelona; and the following prizes awarded in Italy: Grinzane Cavour, Elsa Morante, and Ennio Flaiano.

Daniel Catán, noted Mexican composer and lyricist, turned the book “Neruda’s Postman” into an opera with Plácido Domingo singing the role of Neruda. The world premiere took place in Los Angeles and later traveled to Vienna, Paris, and Mexico. It was performed in Chile in 2012 and will be shown in Madrid in July 2013.

His play “The Referendum,” often performed by our students in Chile at the end of the course there, was initially performed by students and professors of the CC Romance Languages Department in 1989. It also served as the basis of the film “No,” whose main character is Gael García Bernal, and the movie became a finalist at this year’s Oscars (2013) for Best Foreign Film.

From 1973 to 1989, Skármeta lived in exile, first in Argentina in 1973, and a year later in Germany. He did not return to Chile until the dictator Pinochet had stepped down in 1989 and the country began its transition to democracy. Ironically, Chile, which had overthrown a democratically elected socialist president in 1970, 30 years later elected another socialist to the office, Ricardo Lagos. Lagos named Skármeta the Chilean ambassador to Germany in 2000, the country that had accepted the Chilean writer as an exile.

The intimate relationship between Professor Skármeta and Colorado College dates back to 1985, when he first visited our campus with his own version of the film “Il Postino,” then called “Burning Patience.” For almost three decades he has taught our students on and off campus and we are happy to see him return to CC today.

— Salvatore Bizzarro, Professor of Spanish