

I CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

A Lecture by
**MARIAN WRIGHT
EDELMAN**

Thursday, March 29, 2018, at 4 p.m.
Mayer Auditorium, Health Sciences Campus
University of Southern California

“A nation that does not stand for its children does not stand for anything.”—Marian Wright Edelman

ABOUT MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

- Marian Wright Edelman, founder and president of the Children’s Defense Fund, has been an advocate for those marginalized in U.S. society her entire professional life.
- She was the first Black woman admitted to the Mississippi Bar (in the mid-1960s), and directed the Jackson, Mississippi, office of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund.
- In 1968, she moved to Washington, D.C., as counsel for the Poor People’s Campaign founded by Martin Luther King Jr.
- She founded the Washington Research Project, a public-interest law firm.
- She has received more than 100 honorary degrees and awards, including the Albert Schweitzer Humanitarian Prize, the Heinz Award, a MacArthur fellowship, the Robert F. Kennedy Lifetime Achievement Award, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

“Children do not come in pieces and need a comprehensive quality continuum of care from birth to adulthood.”

—Children’s Defense Fund

THE CHILDREN’S DEFENSE FUND

The mission of the Children’s Defense Fund 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. CDF provides a voice for the children of the United States who cannot vote or lobby for themselves, with particular attention to children who are poor, children of color, and children with disabilities. CDF educates the nation about the needs of children and encourages preventive investments before they get sick, drop out of school, get into trouble, or suffer family breakdown.

CDF grew out of the civil rights movement under the leadership of Marian Wright Edelman. After working for the NAACP and the Poor People’s campaign, she founded a public-interest law

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firm that monitored federal programs for low-income families. That work inspired her to establish CDF in 1973. The organization does research on children’s survival, development, and protection, and then uses this research to advocate for policies and programs that serve children nationwide. Their work, in coalition with other organizations and community leaders, has led to policy changes and programs in areas including health care, nutrition, poverty, early education, family support, protections for children in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, and more.

THE STATE OF AMERICA’S CHILDREN

The Children’s Defense Fund reports that “this is a very challenging and scary time for America’s children.” Millions of children are suffering from hunger, homelessness, and hopelessness, while governmental decisions are dismantling the social safety net that they and their families rely on.

- Nearly 1 in 5 American children—or 13.2 million children—were poor in 2016
- About 3 million American children live in families trying to survive on \$2 per person per day, which rivals child poverty in some of the world’s poorest nations
- In 2015, the median family income of white households with children (\$80,800) was about two times that of Black (\$35,900) and Hispanic (\$41,000) families with children. In 2016, white families had seven times more wealth than Black families and five times more than Hispanic families. Wealth inequality has reached levels not seen since the late 1800s.
- More than 1.2 million homeless children were enrolled in U.S. public schools in 2014–15.
- In 2015, nearly 1 in 5 children lived in food-insecure households.
- The high cost of child care and lack of early childhood investments means many children do not receive quality care during critical years of brain development.
- The number of abused and neglected children is rising as the opioid epidemic worsens.
- Black children are nine times more likely than white children to receive an adult prison sentence. Once incarcerated, children are at risk of serious harm, including abuse, assault, suicide, inadequate educational instruction, and solitary confinement.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

The Children’s Defense Fund has been working proactively on multiple fronts for decades to create a United States in which all children can survive and thrive. Recent and current campaigns include

- Supporting legislation to ensure affordable, high-quality child care for all families
- Advocating for gun control
- Gathering and sharing the stories of people who have been affected by child poverty, budget cuts to federal programs that support poor and low-income families, or harsh and racially biased school discipline programs
- Training community leaders in how to influence local systems that impact children

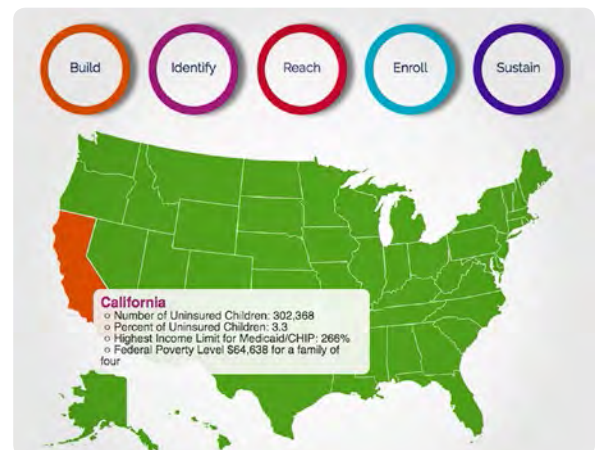
CDF has played a leading role in monumental wins for children over the past five decades, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Head Start, the Children’s Health Insurance Program, and raising awareness about the school-to-prison pipeline.

Children of color will be a majority in the United States by 2020.

—Children’s Defense Fund



childrensdefense.org



“Does your child have health insurance?”—childrensdefense.org

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- How was your childhood affected by the socioeconomic conditions in which you grew up?
- What do you think is needed to ensure a fair start for everyone?
- Have you witnessed or experienced any actions that transformed a child's life for the better?

TO LEARN MORE OR TAKE ACTION, CHECK OUT THESE RESOURCES:

- Children's Defense Fund
childrensdefense.org
- Children's Defense Fund—California
cdfca.org
- Youth Justice Coalition
youth4justice.org

DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

ALYSSA BRISSETT of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about Marian Wright Edelman and her work with the Children's Defense Fund. Those with a call number (e.g., books) are physical items which you can find in our campus libraries. Those without a call number (e.g., databases) are electronic resources, which you can access through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at libraries.usc.edu.

BOOKS

- Edelman, Marian Wright. *The Measure of Our Success: A Letter to My Children and Yours / Marian Wright Edelman*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992.
DOHENY MEMORIAL LIBRARY HQ769 .E355 1992
- Edelman, Marian Wright. *The Sea Is so Wide and My Boat Is so Small: Charting a Course for the next Generation / Marian Wright Edelman*. 1st ed. New York: Hyperion Books, 2008.
GRAND DEPOSITORY HQ769 .E3554 2008
- Edelman, Marian Wright., and Paul V. Smith. *Portrait of Inequality: Black and White Children in America / Marian Wright Edelman with Research by Paul V. Smith*. Washington, D. C.: Children's Defense Fund, 1980.
DOHENY MEMORIAL LIBRARY E185.86 .E34

- Shames, Stephen., and Children's Defense Fund. *Outside the Dream: Child Poverty in America: Photographs / by Stephen Shame ; Introduction by Jonathan Kozol; Afterword by Marian Wright Edelman*. New York, N.Y.] : [Washington, D.C.]: Aperture; Children's Defense Fund, 1991.

GRAND DEPOSITORY HV741 .S53 1991

JOURNAL ARTICLES

- Edelman, Marian Wright. "Children in Poverty: Why Don't We Have the Will to End Child Poverty?" *Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law & Policy* 10, no. 2 (2003): 273-277.
- Edelman, Marian Wright, and Jones, James M. "Separate and Unequal: America's Children, Race, and Poverty." *Future of Children* 14, no. 2 (2004): 134-37.
- Edelman, Marian Wright. "The Cradle to Prison Pipeline: America's New Apartheid. (Essay)." *Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy* 15 (2009): 67.
- Edelman, Marian Wright. "Ending Childhood Poverty in America." *Academic Pediatrics* 16, no. 3 (2016): S6-S7.

AUDIO-VISUAL MATERIALS

- Julieanna Richardson, Paul Bieschke, and Marian Wright Edelman. *Marian Wright Edelman Interview*. Black Studies Center: The HistoryMakers, 2001.
- Weisberg, Roger. *Our Children At Risk*. Academic Video Online: Premium. New York, NY: Filmmakers Library, 1992.

PODCASTS

Education Week

No Child Left Behind: Marian Wright Edelman on Childhood Poverty
February 15, 2001
<http://bit.ly/edelmanpodcast2>

MAKERS Podcast

Making Yourself Deaf: Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Sandra Cisneros & Marian Wright Edelman
April 19, 2017
<http://bit.ly/edelmanpodcast1>

