

Groundbreaking Betrayal Trauma Researcher Jennifer J. Freyd to Speak at Claremont Graduate University Commencement

Jennifer J. Freyd, a renowned scholar and founder of the Center for Institutional Courage, will be the keynote speaker and honorary doctorate recipient at Claremont Graduate University's commencement on Saturday, May 11, in Claremont, California.

Freyd, a longtime professor at the University of Oregon and now an affiliate professor at the University of Washington, is known for her groundbreaking theories of betrayal trauma, institutional betrayal, and institutional courage. Her Harvard Press award-winning book *Betrayal Trauma: The Logic of Forgetting Childhood Abuse* explored why psychogenic amnesia is often necessary for survival, especially if the abuse occurred at the hands of a parent or caregiver.

Her theory of DARVO (Deny, Attack, and Reverse Victim and Offender) explains the reaction that perpetrators may display in response to being held accountable for their behavior by attempting to turn victims into alleged offenders. DARVO gives attorneys, jurors, legislators, and the general public a clear way to understand how perpetrators have managed to control the narrative so frequently.

Colleagues have noted that since 1990, Freyd's theories on social betrayal and the relationships between attachment, trauma, betrayal, and memory have been nothing short of revolutionary.

"Professor Freyd has been a scientist, feminist, and activist throughout her career, which she has dedicated to making the world a more just and equitable place," says Michael Salter, a professor of criminology at the University of New South Wales, Sydney. "She is one of the most innovative, transformational, and impactful psychologists of her generation."

In 2020, Freyd founded the Center for Institutional Courage, a nonprofit dedicated to researching the relationship between people and the institutions they depend on. The center defines institutional courage as a commitment to seek truth and engage in moral action, despite the possible unpleasantness, risk, and short-term cost. It is a commitment that transforms institutions into becoming more accountable, equitable, and effective for everyone.

"It is so invigorating to create a courageous organization with an audacious mission," Freyd says. "We want nothing less than to change the world."

Freyd has mentored and launched the careers of an entire generation of scholars who think deeply about the socio-political context and implications of their work and now seek to evoke that same deep thinking in their own students.

"She has helped us see the importance of leadership," says Anne P. DePrince, a professor psychology and associate vice provost at the University of Denver. "Given her commitment to

mentoring and investment in developing the next generation of leaders in the field, it's no surprise that her students are department chairs well as leaders in national organizations.”

Earlier this year, Freyd received the American Psychological Foundation's Gold Medal Award for Impact in Psychology. Previous recognition includes being named a John Simon Guggenheim Fellow, an Erskine Fellow at the University of Canterbury, and a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

She served as a member of the Advisory Committee of the Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education, National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine from 2019 to 2023 and as editor of *The Journal of Trauma & Dissociation* from 2006 through 2023. Freyd earned her PhD in Psychology from Stanford University.

Claremont Graduate University's [97th Commencement Ceremony](#) begins at 9 am PDT.

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