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**For Immediate Release**

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**Celebrated Professor, Novelist, and Trustee to Speak at Commencement 2024**

*Frieda Ekotto ’86 First African to Graduate from Colorado College*

**COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — March 28, 2024 —** Colorado College is pleased to announce that alum, trustee, and university professor Frieda Ekotto ’86 will deliver the Commencement ceremony address for the Class of 2024 on May 19 at 8:30 a.m. at Ed Robson Arena.

Ekotto is a professor of Afro-American and African Studies, Comparative Literature, and Francophone Studies at the University of Michigan. In addition to her academic work—her research on how law serves to repress and mask the pain of disenfranchised subjects has been published in many books and journals—Ekotto is also a creative writer. She received the Nicolàs Guillèn Prize for Philosophical Literature in 2014 and has produced two documentaries. She has recently completed her term as President of the Modern Languages Association.

The Academic Events Committee at Colorado College, a group comprised of faculty, staff, and students, selected Ekotto for the honor. They cite her area of expertise as providing valuable insight for graduates entering a world so heavily shaped by English and French colonization.

Born in Cameroon and raised in Switzerland, Ekotto is the first person from Africa to graduate from CC. She came to the U.S. in 1983 to learn English and by chance met two CC professors—Harvey and Marcelle Rabbin—who encouraged her to apply to the college and earn a fellowship. She says Harvey Rabbin was the person who gave her the confidence to be who she is today. She now speaks and is published in four languages.

“We are honored to welcome Frieda Ekotto ’86 back to campus to deliver the 2024 Commencement address,” said Colorado College President L. Song Richardson. “Frieda’s path to Colorado College — the challenges she overcame, the professors who believed in her, and the passion she discovered for academia — are a testament to her own determination and the power of a CC education. Her story will inspire our graduates to find their voices and manifest their dreams.”

Ekotto is the recipient of numerous grants and awards, including a Ford Foundation seed grant for research and collaborative work with institutions of higher learning in Africa. She is the author of several books, including *L’Ecriture carcerale et le discours juridique: Jean Genet* (2001), *Rethinking Third Cinema* (2009), and *Race and Sex Across the French Atlantic* (2011).

“Every time I get a promotion or an award, I think of those two professors and the day I landed on this campus. CC changed my life,” said Frieda Ekotto. “I wouldn’t be here without those two professors who thought I could become somebody.”

Ekotto holds a BA from CC, and both an MA and PhD from the University of Minnesota. She has lectured throughout the U.S. and in Australia, Algeria, Cameroon, Cuba, Canada, England, France, Ivory Coast, Malaysia, Malta, Nigeria, Tunisia, South Africa, and Singapore (among other countries); and she has held faculty and leadership positions at the Concordia Language Villages in Minnesota, the University of Technology in Sydney, Sichuan University, and the Consortium of Universities of Wisconsin, Indiana, and Michigan in Aix-en-Provence, France.

Ekotto’s focus on contemporary issues, including LGBTQIA2S+ issues, aims to recenter those most heavily experiencing oppression. Furthermore, through her engagement as a trustee since 2020, she has demonstrated her passion for Colorado College, her alignment with the college’s values, and her longstanding commitment to the community.

**About Colorado College**

Colorado College is a nationally prominent, four-year liberal arts college that was founded in Colorado Springs in 1874. In 1970 the college created the Block Plan, in which its approximately 2,200 undergraduate students take one class at a time in intensive 31⁄2-week segments. A Master of Arts in teaching degree also is offered. The college’s vision is to ignite students’ passion and potential to create a more just world. For more information, visit www.coloradocollege.edu.

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