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# Prince says students hold keys to peace

**Dan Hirschhorn**

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In a deep, booming voice that could only be described as regal, Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan asked a room packed to the brim with graduating students, family and friends what he called "a simple question."

"How can we live together?" he asked at the University's 55th commencement ceremony Sunday in Gosman Sports and Convocation Center. The answer, he said, lies within the students he addressed and their experience at Brandeis.

Later, before a deluge of blue and white balloons fell from the ceiling to wild cheers, 776 undergraduates received their college degrees.

In his commencement address, bin Talal told graduating seniors that Brandeis had prepared them for the challenge of bringing peace and coexistence to the world.

"... I have no doubt that your studies here have prepared you to be part of a new generation of visionary leaders," bin Talal said. "This university itself is a testament to the idea of unity in diversity. It is truly a world in microcosm, where all races, ages and religions meet to affirm the combined genius of humanity."

"Whatever the color of our skin, there is no difference in the color of our blood," he said. "The important thing to remember is that as human beings, our commonalities are much greater than our differences."

The commencement proceedings had been the subject of much attention in the national press in the weeks leading up to Sunday's ceremony, largely because of the University's decision to present an honorary degree to Tony Kushner, a playwright who has been accused of being overly critical of Israel.

The University was also in the spotlight because of its widely reported decision to remove artwork by Palestinian youth from the Goldfarb Library after some students complained about the exhibit.

In addressing the audience before Kushner, bin Talal and four others were presented honorary degrees, University President Jehuda Reinharz alluded often, if vaguely, to this recent public scrutiny.

Seeming to refer to the incident regarding the Palestinian artwork, Reinharz said: "At Brandeis we believe that art can educate, inspire and stir healthy and constructive debate, and can best serve those purposes in a university context if it is accompanied by thoughtful contextualization and recognition of multiple perspectives."

Referring to Kushner as "arguably the most highly accomplished of his generation," Reinharz told the

audience that "the founders of Brandeis understood the importance of arts and culture to higher learning."

Reinharz called bin Talal "a remarkable man of peace," and said the University "has a clear and unambiguous identity that rests on four pillars: academic excellence, non-sectarianism, a commitment to social justice and continuous sponsorship by, and service to, the Jewish community."

"None of these is easy to accomplish," he added. "None of these stands alone. I have always admired the clarity of our mission at Brandeis. Nowhere else are you likely to again experience the same confluence of principles. This clarity guides me every day."

The audience, for its part, seemed enthralled by both bin Talal and Kushner. Bin Talal's speech was halted for applause on numerous occasions-particularly when he called for non-military alternatives to conflict-resolution-and especially loud applause erupted from a large group of graduating students when Kushner was honored.

One elderly man in the audience stood on top of his seat when Kushner was honored, holding a sign that read "Bigot Kushner Hates Israel." Police approached the man, who sat down and lowered the sign. He held it up one more time shortly after, but once again sat down at the behest of police.

Speaking about the six honoraries, Reinharz said: "I hope you understand the connection between their achievements and Brandeis' deepest values."

In his address, bin Talal also highlighted the importance of what he called "smart power: the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion."

He said the United States possesses more smart power than any country, and that it is vital for the graduates to reach out with that power.

Bin Talal also spoke about the Internet and the ways in which it "brings us closer than ever, showing clearly how similar our hopes, fears and dreams really are." He implored the audience to work on developing "our inner-net," as well.

Urging students to express their views while also remembering "the noble art of conversation is not a martial art," bin Talal told students to travel and see the world through other perspectives. He urged them to always think creatively about the future.

"Learning by analogy is the best way to learn," he said.

Senior speaker Lev Davidson '06 spoke about heroism and his own adventure at Brandeis, one which he said he almost left behind prematurely. "Today, I am here because I chose to be here," he said. "I love Brandeis. My realization did not happen in a single moment, but day-by-day ... I began to understand the secret of Brandeis. Difference is its greatest triumph."

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