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Jordan Prince El Hassan bin Talal delivers speech at Brandeis

By **Christopher Rocchio**/ Daily News Staff

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WALTHAM -- The Waltham community shrank yesterday morning when Brandeis held its 55th commencement exercises, as the university sent more than 1,000 graduate and undergraduate students into the global community.

Jordan Prince El Hassan bin Talal, brother of the late King Hussein, delivered the keynote address at the ceremony, which was held at the Gosman Sports and Convocation Center on South Street.

"It is fantastic for me to be invited here to Brandeis, a university well-known for its academic excellence, unique cultural perspective and commitment to social justice," said bin Talal. "I am delighted to join you for what is a window into a successful and fulfilling future."

Bin Talal described Brandeis as a testament to the ideal of unity in diversity, and centered his speech around the importance of people throughout the world, regardless of religion or race, cohabiting and working together to address problems facing humanity.

"Our challenge, your challenge, is to draw on our collective wisdom to put a shared vision into action," he said. "We have no alternative."

Bin Talal also encouraged the graduates to express their views, and remember that the art of conversation is not a martial art. He added the graduates should never stop thinking creatively about the future, which will allow humanity to reach its unrealized potential.

"I believe that wisdom will prevail over prejudice, science over ignorance, freedom over oppression, and ecological wisdom over shortsighted waste," said bin Talal. "Our collective learning curve is getting steeper, not flatter. There are no problems that the human brain cannot solve, and there is always time."

Bin Talal was given an honorary degree at the commencement as a leading international advocate for interfaith dialogue and understanding, as well as in recognition of his achievements as an author and statesman. Also receiving honorary degrees at the ceremony were: Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Tony Kushner; co-founder and president of the Delancey Street Foundation Mimi Silbert; New Hampshire philanthropists Sidney and Judith Swartz; and president and chief-executive officer of the Nellie Mae Education Foundation Blenda Wilson.

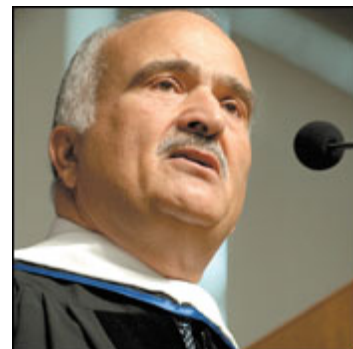
"These honorary degree recipients represent a unique combination of accomplishments that reinforce the principles of this university," said Brandeis President Jehuda Reinharz. "Brandeis is a model university in its openness to all on a basis of merit."

As graduates processed in at the opening of the ceremony, the lining of their commencement hoods gleamed with Brandeis' official school colors of blue and white. The procession was led by members of Brandeis' graduating Class of 1956, who were in attendance to celebrate the 50th anniversary of their commencement.

Yesterday, the university presented a total of 1,014 degrees: 675 bachelor's, 299 master's and 40 doctorates. Reinharz described commencement as a time for celebrating, reminiscing and reflecting. He said he is sure graduates will take what they've learned, face the challenges presented, and implement change effectively.

"There's a connection between the achievements of our graduates and the values of this university," said Reinharz. "As long as you are engaged in some way, whether it be in arts, philanthropy, dedication to community, social justice or fairness to others, you will find your own path in life."

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Jordan Prince El Hassan bin Talal delivers the keynote address during graduation ceremonies at Brandeis University. (AP photo)

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