



**Cary Davidson**

**Graduation 2026, Los Angeles, Hebrew Union College**

Good evening. I'm Cary Davidson, a member of the Hebrew Union College Board of Governors. On behalf of our Board Chair, David Edelson, and the entire Board of Governors, I am privileged to greet you and perform a very important task for our graduates.

The Board of Governors extends its deepest congratulations to the Class of 2026 / 5786. And to your families and loved ones, who stood beside you through every challenge and triumph along the way, we thank and honor you as well.

We also thank Leo Baeck Temple for hosting us, welcome our new Los Angeles Jack H. Skirball campus dean, Rabbi Mari Chernow; applaud our former dean, Josh Holo, Ph.D., for his brilliant and inspiring remarks, and we offer special congratulations to those who received their honorary doctorates, the class of 2001, for completing 25 years of service to the Jewish people—following their graduation from Hebrew Union College. Wonderful to hear from Emeritus Professor Michael Zeldin, Ph.D., and we await the conclusion of this ceremony with the benediction from our new director of the Louchheim School, Karen Skinazi, Ph.D.



These past few years have not been the easiest for Jews, and especially for you, as students. This has been a time of profound uncertainty and pain for the Jewish world, when the weight of October 7th and its ongoing aftermath made your chosen work feel both more difficult and more urgent than ever. And yet, you met that moment with seriousness, commitment, and resolve.

The schools, organizations, and communities awaiting you are hungry for exactly what you bring: vision, integrity, creativity, and a deep commitment to Jewish life and the common good. You have the power to strengthen institutions, to shape learning and leadership, and through that work, to help build a more resilient and just future.

You now take your place among thousands of Hebrew Union College alumni. You become part of something far larger than yourselves.

What are we asking of you? It's a big ask. We will depend on you to be guardians of Judaism's ethical tradition. We expect you to lead with wisdom and courage, and to be voices for the values our world so desperately needs: justice, compassion, dignity, and hope. I know you're ready to far exceed our expectations.

May you be sustained by the wisdom of your teachers, the friendship of your classmates, and the love of those who will be there for you in all that lies ahead. May your work be



meaningful and sustaining. And may those whose lives you touch be enriched by your presence.

Now, let me perform my important task—the one with which I began these comments. I suspect all would be well without these words I’m about to say, but here goes: On behalf of the Board of Governors of Hebrew Union College, I’m honored to officially confirm your degrees. There you have it. Mission accomplished.

To all our graduates, a hearty mazal tov! We are incredibly proud of you.

Thank you.