

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
UNIVERSITY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
UDC Resolution 2018 - 04**

**SUBJECT: Conferral of Honorary Degree upon Aviva Kempner, Producer, Writer and Director**

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to D.C. Code §38-1202.06(3), the Board of Trustees has authority to award degrees and to establish policy with respect to the award of degrees; and

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to 8B DCMR §315.2, the President, upon consultation with the Faculty Senate, has recommended that Aviva Kempner be awarded an honorary degree for her significant contributions and accomplishments as an activist, humanitarian and award-winning documentary filmmaker, exemplified in her latest film, *Rosenwald*, which recognized the importance of the historical connection between the African-Americana and Jewish-American communities in the struggle for freedom and quality; and

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to 8B DCMR §315.3, the Board of Trustees must approve the recommendation of Aviva Kempner by an affirmative vote of three-fourths (3/4) of the members present at the meeting of the Board following the meeting at which the recommendation was made;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Board of Trustees of the University of the District of Columbia hereby approve the recommendation of the awarding of the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters to Aviva Kempner, with all the honors, privileges, and duties pertaining thereto.

Approved by the Executive Committee

April 17, 2018

Ratified by the Board of Trustees

April 17, 2018



Christopher D. Bell  
Chairperson of the Board



## FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

**TO:** The Board of Trustees  
**FROM:** Managing Director of Finance *David L. Franklin*  
**DATE:** April 17, 2018  
**SUBJECT:** Honorary Degree upon Aviva Kempner

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### **Conclusion**

It is concluded that there is no fiscal impact associated with the University of the District of Columbia (UDC) awarding an honorary degree upon Aviva Kempner.

### **Background**

The President, upon consultation with the Faculty Senate, has recommended that Aviva Kempner, be awarded an honorary degree for her significant contributions and accomplishments as an activist, humanitarian, and award-winning documentary filmmaker.

Ms. Aviva Kempner is an attorney who has dedicated her life and time to serving the community, including human rights, and a long-time advocacy for District of Columbia voting rights. Her commitment to public service, serve as outstanding examples and sources of inspiration for students attending the University of the District of Columbia.

### **Financial Impact**

Based on the information provided, we do not anticipate any fiscal impact.

**Aviva Kempner**  
Producer, Writer and Director

Ms. Kempner is being recognized for her accomplishments as an activist, humanitarian and award-winning documentary filmmaker. Ms. Kempner's groundbreaking films have shed light on the lesser-known stories of Jewish-American heroes. In addition, Ms. Kempner has been a passionate activist working on local and national issues, including being an advocate for DC voting rights.

Ms. Kempner's latest film, *Rosenwald*, tells the story of Julius Rosenwald, who, together with Booker T. Washington, built more than 5,000 schools for African-American students across the Jim Crow South. Ms. Kempner has worked tirelessly to ensure that *Rosenwald* is shown throughout the United States, and has raised funds to support the production of expanded DVDs for school systems throughout the country.

Ms. Kempner recognizes the importance of the historical connection between the African-American and Jewish-American communities in their particular struggle for freedom and equality. Ms. Kempner's life-long commitment to social justice and equity, and her dedication to the Washington, DC community serve as an outstanding example and source of inspiration for the University's diverse students. For representing UDC's values so well, we are proud to honor her achievements.

**Aviva Kempner** is a nationally-recognized producer, writer and director, and a recently-elected member of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences (2016). She lives and works in the District of Columbia. Ms. Kempner's work has brought to the American public the stories of noteworthy Jewish and Native American figures such as philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, Major League Baseball legend Hank Greenberg, Jewish resistance fighters in Vilna, and Casuse, a Navajo activist.

Ms. Kempner's most recent film, *Rosenwald*, for which she enjoys production, direction and writing credits, won the Jury Award for Best Documentary at the Teaneck Jewish Film Festival and the Lipscomb Ecumenical Prize at the 2015 Nashville Film Festival. *The Life and Times of Hank Greenberg*, produced by Ms. Kempner and perhaps her best-known work, received widespread critical recognition, earning the Audience Award at both the Hamptons International Film Festival and the Washington Jewish Film Festival and the Spirit Award for Best Sports Documentary from the International Sports Video and Film Awards. The film won the CINE Golden Eagle and George Peabody Award and received top honors from the National Society of Film Critics, the National Board of Review, the New York Film Critics Circle and the Broadcast Film Critics Association.

Ms. Kempner began her writing career as a University of Michigan undergraduate working for the student newspaper. She has continued in the field as a film reviewer and feature writer for such prominent papers as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Boston Globe*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Baltimore Jewish Times*, *Washington Jewish Week* and the *Legal Times*.

Her personal activism began in college as a campaign worker on Robert Kennedy's presidential campaign in Indiana, Oregon and California, and continued as a Vietnam anti-war activist and advocate for Native American rights in New Mexico in the early 1970s. From there she moved on to human rights activism for a range of South and Central American countries. Ms. Kempner has long advocated for full voting rights for District of Columbia residents and, on a less political note, was active in the campaign to bring professional baseball back to Washington, DC.

Proposed Recipient of Honorary Degree for  
UDC's Spring Commencement, May 12, 2018

She has served on the boards of such organizations as DC Vote, CINE and the Washington Metropolitan Scholars.

Ms. Kempner is a 1976 graduate of the Antioch School of Law, now the University of the District of Columbia David A. Clarke School of Law, where she developed her passion for human rights and worked on immigrant and Native American rights. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from the University of Michigan and thereafter completed Post Baccalaureate work in Urban Planning, also at the University of Michigan.

She has been recognized by numerous organizations for her work in film, receiving the Visionary Award from the Washington Jewish Film Festival, the Freedom of Expression Award from the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival and the 2010 Miller Reel Jewish Woman Filmmaker Award, among others. For her human rights work, she recently was presented with the O'Higgins Award by the Government of Chile.