

2025 Dinner and Awards for Ethical Leadership Remarks

Vardit Ravitsky

Presentation of Ethical Leadership Award to David Goldman

Good evening, everyone.

Tonight, we have the privilege of honoring someone whose vision, determination, and moral imagination have shaped not just a program, but an entire community of ethical leaders around the world.

It's my great joy to celebrate the recipient of this year's Ethical Leadership Award: my dear friend, FASPE's Founder and Chair, David Goldman. We all know how much David loves the spotlight, so it must be killing him to have to sit here silently while I have the microphone.

Fifteen years ago, David did something that only the most courageous thinkers attempt: he turned the lens around. Instead of asking what can make some people heroic, he asked what makes ordinary people cross lines. He asked how professionals—people like all of us, who hold influence in hospitals, courtrooms, newsrooms, boardrooms, and community spaces—how can we slip into complicity or complacency.

And from that bold shift in perspective, he built FASPE: a program that challenges us to examine our own choices, our own power, and the ethical responsibilities embedded in our professions.

Even if David's legendary stories and jokes can often take a bit of time before they get to the punchline, David's insight here was straightforward and profound: that the path to ethical leadership starts with empathy, moral formation, and the courage to ask hard questions about ourselves. And if anyone ever wonders whether this vision worked, just look around this room. Or at FASPE's website "Where Are They Now" and "FASPE in the Press."

You'll find Fellows calling for justice, leading change, guiding institutions, shaping policy, reporting truth, and rebuilding trust. And you'll find faculty who keep returning because the program—and David's leadership—continue to inspire them. That is the power of a vision that doesn't fade.

And David hasn't stopped imagining. His creativity has kept FASPE evolving, growing, and refusing to become conventional. Under his leadership, FASPE has expanded into new professions and new geographies, into the corporate arena, into new modes of engagement, like the "Ethical Tension Conversations", and even a leap into theater, partnering on "Here There Are Blueberries" to spark conversations around the country.

And tonight, we also get to share exciting news: the Hastings Center for Bioethics and FASPE will be partnering to launch a new and unique voice, the Professional Ethics Forum, a platform elevating writing and ideas on the ethical challenges facing our professions today. I'm thrilled to

be partnering with David on this - although I think the biggest hurdle we will face is wrestling the editorial pen from him!

And this, these accomplishments, this is what a visionary does:

- imagines a better world
- designs a path toward it
- and pulls together extraordinary people to make it real.

Now, David, you claim to be a pessimist. You had said, “It is not so simple right now to identify areas of hope or avenues to redemption.” And then—almost in the same breath—you tell us where you do find hope: in FASPE’s Fellows. In their demanding, creative, impatient energy. In their intentional desire to lead ethically.

That blend of realism and faith-in-people is part of what makes you such a powerful mentor. Your integrity, creativity, care, and example, are woven into FASPE’s DNA. They have nurtured something transformative.

So your award tonight isn’t a glass plaque. Rather, you are receiving a bound booklet of letters from Fellows across 15 years—your ethical influencers, spread across the world. To give you a glimpse, here is a note from one of your newest Fellows, 2025 Medical Fellow Joel Adu-Brimpong:

And he says:

“David, I wasn’t always sure where your questions were leading, but if I stayed with the thread long enough, a deeper vision would emerge—the greater point you were guiding us toward. That, to me, is the mark of a great teacher and thinker.

Your final words at FASPE still ring in my ears: ‘We must be vigilant.’ Vigilant to the humanity of all. In times as complex and confusing as these, that reminder has become a landmark for me—a compass to help navigate these ever-present times of uncertainty.

David, your vision and leadership are extraordinary. May we never shy away from difficult conversations, and may we always remain vigilant as ethical leaders. Enjoy this evening of recognition and celebration—it is so well deserved.”

Please join me in raising a glass to the visionary creator of FASPE, David Goldman.