

Partisan Politics at the Ali Memorial

I was watching the memorial for Muhammad Ali when a political rally for liberal Democratic causes broke out.

We can thank far left Rabbi Michael Lerner for that who after a few words about Ali began channeling Bernie Sanders or some other progressive pol, delivering a fiery speech lambasting all the usual things progressive Democrats find wrong with the country.

“Tell the 1% who own 80% of the wealth of this country that it’s time to share that wealth,” the rabbi said. “Tell the politicians who use violence worldwide and then preach nonviolence to the oppressed that it’s time for them to end their drone warfare and every other kind of warfare, to close our military bases around the world, to bring the troops home.”

And a memorial seemed just the right place, for Michael Lerner anyway, to demand a guaranteed income for all Americans and to attack those he, and many on the Left, sees as bigots.

“Tell those who invented mass incarceration that it’s time to create a living income for everyone,” he said. “Tell judges to let out of prison the many African-Americans swept up by racist police and imprisoned by racist judges.”

The audience loved it. The applause was loud and sustained.

“Many of them in prison today for offenses like possessing marijuana that white people get away with all the time.”

They loved that too.

“Tell our elected officials to imprison those who authorize torture and those who ran big banks and investment companies

that caused the economic collapse of 2008.”

“Tell Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu that the way to get security for Israel is to stop the occupation of the West Bank and help create a Palestinian state.”

“Tell the next president of the United states that she –

More cheers ...

“Tell her that the way to achieve homeland security is not for us to try new ways of domination. The strategy of domination of the world of the other to get security has been tried for the last 10,000 years and it doesn’t work. The way to get security is for the United States to become known as the most generous and caring country in the world, not the most powerful.”

More applause.

And finally, Rabbi Lerner delivered the laundry list of liberal grievances we probably will hear again soon, at Hillary Clinton’s convention this summer: “We could start with a global and domestic plan to once and for all end global and domestic poverty, homelessness, hunger, inadequate education, inadequate health care.”

It’s true that Ali was not only a boxer. He was a giant in the world of civil rights too. So, yes, he was part of the world of politics – but not partisan election year politics.

But some liberals just can’t help themselves. No venue is off limits. But is a memorial for Muhammad Ali really the place to bemoan the perceived ills of America? Well, yes, if you’re an angry progressive like Rabbi Lerner.