

**INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION  
(EAFORD)**



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**Speaking Truth to Power**



Rabbi Michael Lerner at Muhammad Ali's Funeral

10 June 2016

Text of Lerner's Eulogy:

Master of compassion, god of compassion, send your blessings to Muhammad Ali and send your blessings to all who mourn for him and send your blessings for all the millions and millions of People who mourn for him all over this planet. I come here speaking as a representative of American Jews — and to say that American Jews played an important role in solidarity with African-American struggles in this country and that we today stand in solidarity with the Islamic community in country and all around the world. [applause]

We will not tolerate politicians or anyone else putting down Muslims and blaming Muslims for a few people. [applause]

We know what it's like to be demeaned. We know what it's like to have a few people who act against the highest visions of our tradition to then be identified as the value of the entire tradition. And one of the reasons that we in Tikkun magazine, a magazine of liberal and progressive Jews but also an interfaith magazine have called upon the United States to stand up to the part of the Israeli government that is oppressing Palestinians [applause] is that we as Jews understand that our commitment is to recognize that God has created everyone in God's image and that everyone is equally precious and that means the Palestinian people as well as all other people on the planet. [applause]

I know the people of Louisville have a special relationship to Muhammad Ali and I had a personal relationship in the 60's when both of us were indicted by the federal government and for our various stands against the War in Vietnam. I want to say that although he was cheered on as the heavyweight champion of the world, you know the truth is — and all the honor to him — but heavyweight champions of the world come and go and sports heroes come and go. There was something about Muhammad Ali that was different. At the key moment when he had that recognition, he used it to stand up to an immoral war and say no, I won't go. [applause]

And it's for that reason that tens of millions of Americans who don't particularly care about boxing do care about Muhammad Ali, because he was the person who was willing to risk a great honor that he got and a great fame that he got to stand up for the beliefs that he had, to speak truth to power when the rest of the people around him said No, no, you're going to lose your championship, and it was taken away from him for five years, but he stood up and was willing to take that kind of a risk because of that kind of moral integrity. [applause]

So I want to say how do we honor Muhammad Ali? And the answer is the way to honor Muhammad Ali is to be Muhammad Ali today. [applause]

That means us, everyone here and everyone listening. It's up to us to continue that ability to speak truth to power. We must speak out, refuse to follow the path of conformity to the rules of the game in life. We must refuse to follow the path of conformity. Tell the 1% who own 80% of the Wealth of this country that it's time to share that wealth. [applause]

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 form of warfare, to close our military bases around the world, to bring the troops home. Tell those who created mass incarceration that it's time to create a guaranteed income for everyone in our society. [applause]

Tell judges to let out of prison the many African-Americans swept up by racist police and imprisoned by racist judges. [applause]

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

Tell our elected officials to imprison those who authorized torture and those who ran the big banks and investment companies that caused the economic Collapse of 2008.

Tell the leaders of Turkey to stop killing the Kurds. 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. [applause]

Tell the next president of the United States that she [sustained applause]— tell the next president of the United States that she should seek a constitutional amendment to make all national and state elections funded by congress and the state legislatures and all other sources of money be banned, including money from corporations, from individuals, all other money, make it all public funding. 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. [applause]

We could start with a global and domestic Marshall plan to once and for all end global and domestic poverty, homelessness — hunger, inadequate education, inadequate health care. [applause]

So I want to, as chair of the interfaith [Network of Spiritual Progressives](#), come and join us. I want to affirm our commitment to the well-being of all Muslims on this planet as well as the people of all faiths and secular humanists as well. We wish to pay honor to Muslims of the world as they continue today the fast of Ramadan and join with them in mourning the loss and celebrating the life of Muhammad Ali, a great fighter for justice and peace. Peace be upon him, peace be upon the prophet Muhammad, peace be upon all of humanity and peace on all of us. Amen. [prolonged applause and standing ovation]

Video of Lerner's Eulogy: [At Muhammad Ali's Funeral](#)

