

Ayanna Pressley stresses MLK's message in temple address



NATHAN KLIMA FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley gave high-fives to children on Friday after speaking at a Temple Israel gathering dedicated to the vision of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

By Alejandro Serrano | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT JANUARY 19, 2019

US Representative Ayanna Pressley on Friday delivered a message of righteous political indignation to a crowd of nearly 1,000 people at Temple Israel of Boston, urging those present to channel their frustrations into action toward equality and

change.

“I won’t apologize for being outraged because these times are outrageous,” Pressley said to roars of approval from the people gathered at Temple Israel’s annual Shabbat Tzedek, a Sabbath of justice dedicated to the vision of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

“In this moment in time, we cannot afford to compromise our values for fear of being too disruptive,” she added. Pressley said society is in a moment that is ripe for “the most inclusive change-making, progressive movement we have seen” since the civil rights era.

The new Democratic congresswoman was the guest speaker at the event, at which participants sang songs of peace, love, and light as Rabbis Elaine Zecher, Matthew Soffer, Suzie Jacobson, and Jen Gubitz opened the ceremony.

Tali Puterman, a social justice educator and community organizer who helped organize the service, said the annual event honors the legacy of King at a place that she called a “hub for social justice in the Jewish community.”

“This is a moment where we gather our communities and call on our Jewish community to continue the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. in the fight for social justice,” Puterman said before the service, as people trickled into the temple. “It’s an honor and a privilege to be in this work.”

Pressley was introduced by Georgia Branger-Klein, who said Pressley attended her bat mitzvah ceremony three years ago on this same weekend.

“I am not sure how old I was when I met Ayanna. She has been inspiring me and supporting me as long as I can remember,” Branger-Klein said in her introduction. Pressley got a standing ovation.

In her speech, Pressley said everyone was gathered to pray for peace and love, and

denounce all forms of hate.

The civil rights movement is still happening, she said, and the pursuit of justice is disruptive.

“The pursuit of justice is not a straight or linear line,” Pressley said. “To achieve those victories, there were many miles marched, many prayers offered, many doors slammed, many quiet defeats and derailments.”

Gregg Moree, 60, from Cambridge, said he attended the service to hear Pressley speak.

“She is going to help so many people to rise up,” Moree said. “It’s her turn. You have to always pass the torch to the next generation, and she worked very hard.”

Dan King, 46, of Roslindale, said he valued the message of the service.

“In these times, it’s really good to come together,” he said. “It feels like there is so much divisiveness right now, that anything that you can do to come together is such a wonderful thing.”

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