



Burial for a King: Martin Luther King Jr.'s Funeral and the Week that Transformed Atlanta and Rocked the Nation

Rebecca Burns

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In the aftermath of Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, riots broke out in 110 cities across the country. For five days, Atlanta braced for chaos while preparing to host King's funeral. An unlikely alliance of former student radicals, the middle-aged patrician mayor, the no-nonsense police chief, black ministers, white churchgoers, Atlanta's business leaders, King's grieving family members, and his stunned SCLC colleagues worked to keep Atlanta safe, honor a murdered hero, and host the tens of thousands who came to pay tribute.

On April 9, 1968, 150,000 mourners took part in a daylong series of rituals honoring King—the largest funeral staged for a private U.S. citizen. King's funeral was a dramatic event that took place against a national backdrop of war protests and presidential politics in a still-segregationist South, where Georgia's governor surrounded the state capitol with troops and refused to lower the flag in acknowledgment of King's death. Award-winning journalist Rebecca Burns delivers a riveting account of this landmark week and chronicles the convergence of politicians, celebrities, militants, and ordinary people who mourned in a peaceful Atlanta while other cities burned. Drawing upon copious research and dozens of interviews—from staffers at the White House who dealt with the threat of violence to members of King's family and inner circle—Burns brings this dramatic story to life in vivid scenes that sweep readers from the mayor's office to the White House to Coretta Scott King's bedroom. Compelling and original, *Burial for a King* captures a defining moment in America's history. It encapsulates King's legacy, America's shifting attitude toward race, and the emergence of Atlanta as a new kind of Southern city.



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