'Death of a King: The Real Story of King's Final Year,' by Tavis Smiley

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Most Americans' memory of Dr. Martin Luther King is little more than his "I Have a Dream" speech delivered at the March on Washington on August 28, 1963. In fact, sometimes it seems that his legacy has been reduced to just the portion of that iconic address envisioning a world when people would "not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

While Dr. King did continue to lobby earnestly on behalf of that lofty ideal thereafter, he also subsequently spoke out forcefully against militarism, poverty and a host of other palpable evils plaguing the nation. And during the year before his assassination, he particularly voiced some pretty progressive positions which put him at odds not only with the government, right-wing ideologues and the mainstream media, but even with many liberals who felt the civil rights leader was stepping out of his element by taking stands against the Vietnam War and economic injustice.

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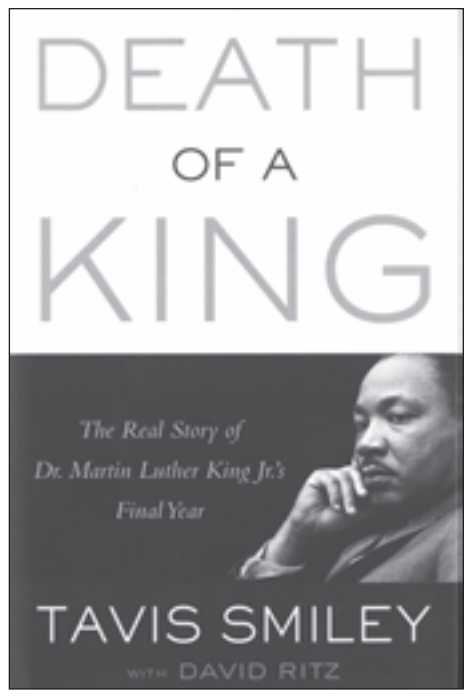
Death of a King revisits the martyred icon's last days in order to illustrate how, until his untimely demise, he resolutely followed a path dictated by his moral compass, often in the face of blistering criticism and wearying death threats. Author Tavis Smiley recognized a need for this enlightening bio because "history has sentimentalized King, rendering him heroic but harmless."

Tavis shares writing credits with David Ritz, with whom he previously collaborated on "What I Know for Sure." Ritz is the prolific author of over 50 titles, most as the uncanny ghostwriter of celebrity autobiographies for Aretha, Elvis, Sinbad, Etta James, Ray Charles, Smokey Robinson, Natalie Cole, Janet Jackson, Laila Ali, Paul Shaffer, BB King, Don Rickles and Tavis' close friend Dr. Cornel West, to name a few.

A haunting portrait of the trials and tribulations of an unwavering visionary who held fast to his core beliefs to his dying day.



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