



Judgment Days: Lyndon Baines Johnson, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Laws That Changed America

Nick Kotz

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Opposites in almost every way, mortally suspicious of each other at first, Lyndon Baines Johnson and Martin Luther King, Jr., were thrust together in the aftermath of John F. Kennedy's assassination. Both men sensed a historic opportunity and began a delicate dance of accommodation that moved them, and the entire nation, toward the historic Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Drawing on a wealth of newly available sources -- Johnson's taped telephone conversations, voluminous FBI wiretap logs, previously secret communications between the FBI and the president -- Nick Kotz gives us a dramatic narrative, rich in dialogue, that presents this momentous period with thrilling immediacy. Judgment Days offers needed perspective on a presidency too often linked solely to the tragedy of Vietnam.

We watch Johnson applying the arm-twisting tactics that made him a legend in the Senate, and we follow King as he keeps the pressure on in the South through protest and passive resistance. King's pragmatism and strategic leadership and Johnson's deeply held commitment to a just society shaped the character of their alliance. Kotz traces the inexorable convergence of their paths to an intense joint effort that made civil rights a legislative reality at last, despite FBI director J. Edgar Hoover's vicious whispering campaign to destroy King.

Judgment Days also reveals how this spirit of teamwork disintegrated. The two leaders parted bitterly over King's opposition to the Vietnam War. In this first full account of the working relationship between Johnson and King, Kotz offers a detailed, surprising account that significantly enriches our understanding of both men and their time.

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