



Fall 10-25-1999

Paul Winfield a.k.a Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. An Actor Comes Face-to-Face with History

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Recommended Citation

Aaron, Bob, "Paul Winfield a.k.a Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. An Actor Comes Face-to-Face with History" (1999). *News and Events*. 7139.
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Oct. 25, 1999

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Paul Winfield a.k.a. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

An Actor Comes Face-to-Face with History

Actor Paul Winfield—researching his upcoming portrayal of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., for a six-hour television mini-series—was chatting with Coretta Scott King, widow of the slain civil-rights leader, in her Atlanta home in 1977.

Over tea, they discussed the King family, how Mrs. King brought up four youngsters as a single parent, and other issues.

At one point, Mrs. King asked the actor if he would like to see Dr. King's suitcase—the satchel sent from Memphis after her husband was assassinated.

And, then Mrs. King revealed a startling detail: She had not opened the piece of luggage since her husband had been gunned down by a sniper's bullet in 1968.

They went to the family room and Mrs. King rummaged around shelves in a storage area, locating the overnight bag.

When the valise was opened, they found three white shirts, dress slacks, underwear, and parts of speeches the Nobel Peace Prize-winner was drafting.

A bouquet of plastic flowers, wrapped in plastic, rested nearby on the room's fireplace. It was the last thing Dr. King had sent his wife. Why plastic flowers? Mrs. King said that in their last telephone conversation Dr. King said he wanted to send his wife something that would last. The next day he was assassinated.

These types of insights run throughout Dennis Brown's book, *Actors Talk—Profiles and Stories from the Acting Trade*, which will be published this month by Limelight Editions of New York City.

Actors Talk is "not just actors talking about acting, it's actors talking about life," Brown said, referring to the Winfield-King incident.

(more)

Actors Talk-Sidebar/2

Actors Talk is a collection of interviews Brown conducted over several decades with some of Hollywood's screen sirens, ranging from Academy Award-winners Gregory Peck and Jessica Tandy to legendary funny man Danny Kaye and silent-movie pioneer Lillian Gish.

The book contains 11 major interviews and 23 smaller pieces, chronicling the acting philosophies of performers like Richard Chamberlain (*The Thorn Birds* and *Dr. Kildare*) and Patty Duke (*The Miracle Worker*), to Jon Voight (*Midnight Cowboy* and *Enemy of the State*) and Joan Plowright (*Enchanted April* and *Avalon*).

Brown is a 1967 drama graduate of Illinois Wesleyan University.